

Angello was a one in a million student – or at least, he was one in 60,000.

As a sophomore in high school, Angello, a first-generation American, had to have brain surgery. He had a tumor that needed to be removed. His mother and step-father didn't speak English, so when his diagnosis and options were announced, they were announced to him – a sixteen-year-old boy, who already had too many responsibilities.

Fast-forward three years, when Angello met Cyndi Freeman at a workshop. A freshman at Ohio State University, Angello went through what many students experience: disengagement, and wondering, "Why am I here?" When he was re-introduced to Freeman the following year, at a workshop that she herself was running, she decided to step in.

As a mentor in the sciences at Ohio State, Freeman recognized the potential in Angello. She challenged him to enhance his own experiences outside of the classroom, and to take some responsibility. With Freeman's influence, Angello applied for and was accepted into the Summer Research Opportunities Program at the University of Iowa. Uncertain and afraid to leave his comfort zone, Angello was reluctant to attend. But Freeman insisted, and Angello decided to attend the summer program – and continued to live outside of his comfort zone from then on.

So how do we encourage and mentor students in Angello's situation? According to Freeman, in an institution with 60,000 students, only one undergraduate Latino male is in computer science and engineering. "He's not going to find another Latino face. He's not going to find a Latino a faculty member. He's the one. So when you find that student, and you're able to connect in a way that is personal and professional, it really means something."

Angello truly benefitted from Freeman's intervention. Aside from attending the Summer Research Opportunities Program, Angello conducted research at Purdue University, and was accepted into the PhD program in Computer Science and Engineering at the University of Illinois.

What was it that made Angello such a success story? Says Freeman, "I think one of the big pieces was forcing him to go to Iowa." Angello was accepted into a research program during the summer of his sophomore year, where the average tuition is \$15-20,000 per student. He left his comfort zone and his family for three months... and returned a conquering hero. From there he took off: networking with other students and encouraging them apply for programs, becoming a mentor himself.

We all know that one in 60,000 student, who is disengaged but has enormous potential. Why not tap that potential, and see how many lives we can change?