



How First Generation College Bound

CHANGES LIVES





Our Mission

A grassroots, private, non-profit celebrating 25 years of success, First Generation College Bound exists to empower youth from low to moderate income families to achieve social and economic success by providing guidance, encouragement, and support in obtaining a college degree. First Generation College Bound has helped young people realize a dream that often seemed out of reach: to be the first in their families to receive a college education. This unleashing of human potential has produced hundreds of college graduates and millions of dollars in added lifetime earnings- as well as productive, tax-paying citizens. Even more, they hold important positions in our regional and national workforce.



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Florence Akadje

Florence Akadje attended Laurel High School and graduated from Salisbury University in 2006 with a degree in finance. She now works in the Finance Department at Revere Bank.

I started with First Generation during homework club. I was in elementary school. We would go on field trips and visit different colleges. Fast forward to high school. My mom wanted me to go into the military so they could pay for college. But Mr. Fisher said, "Hey, we can help you pay for college without having to do that."

The program helped me with taking the SATs, helped me with my financial aid process. There are opportunities besides student loans. I got scholarships and then Salisbury gave me scholarships. It was a good mix of financial aid that helped me pay for college. First Generation College Bound guided me 100%, because without them I would not have known about the options.

In college they still kept in touch. College was difficult but I persevered. They always gave me encouragement: "You know, you can do it."

After college, Mr. Fisher knew of an opportunity with Revere Bank and called me up. I landed the job. So technically, First Generation College Bound brought me full circle, from elementary school to now, where I'm in a professional setting.

Nodia Ifill

Nodia Ifill came into contact with FGCB at Laurel High School, and later graduated from Parkdale High School. She is a student at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

I started the program at Laurel High School, my first year, because no one in my family had been to college, and I always wanted to go to college. I was living with my grandparents. During my junior year, they were getting older and didn't want the burden of having to take care of me, so they sent me down to my mother, who was in (the Caribbean island of) St. Lucia.

I came back my senior year and stayed with my aunt for a while, then moved from place to place, staying with friends. I ended up in a transitional housing program.

First Generation helped me go to college with full financial aid. I wanted to go into a hospitality program, and they advised me to go the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, which has one of the top programs. First Generation helped me get the Guaranteed Access Grant from the state of Maryland, where pretty much my room and board and everything is paid for. I don't have to worry about taking out loans, as most people would.

Mr. Raymond (Harrod, program manager) has gone through every single obstacle in order to get me into college, and I really appreciate that. I can call him and tell him what's going on in college, and if I need help with anything.

Eric Lane

Eric Lane graduated from Fairmont Heights High School and from the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, majoring in criminal justice. He has recently enlisted in the United States Army.

Late in my senior year in high school, I was headed to Wentworth Military Academy, a junior college in Mis-



souri. I was going to have to borrow between \$8,000 and \$10,000 per semester. My mentor, Delegate Michael Summers, told me I should talk to Mr. (Joseph) Fisher of First Generation College Bound.

Mr. Fisher had me apply to the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Morgan State University and Bowie State University. Due to my academic and financial situation, I qualified for the Guaranteed Access Grant and was able to attend any college in the state of Maryland with significant financial support. I was totally unaware of that. I was accepted into those three, and elected to attend the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Mr. Fisher helped me out with my grant application and my FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

Mr. Raymond helped me as well. Once I was at school, he would call me from time to time to check up on me and give me words of advice. He was there to be a hearing ear and mentor away from home. Through First Generation, I was also able to land a summer internship with Alonzo Washington, a fellow First Generation alumnus who worked as an aide for a Prince George's County Council Member.

Sharee Pearson

Sharee Pearson is a graduate of Central High School in Capitol Heights. She is a student at Georgetown University majoring in international health. Her mother, Sonya Parr, was an active participant in FGCB's College Access Program.

Sharee: My mother found out about First Generation College Bound through school. Mr. Raymond used to come up to our school a lot. I remember my mom telling him that her daughter wanted to go to Georgetown University. He said, 'Can we look at some other colleges too?' She was like, 'That's where she wants to go.' He took that and ran with it. He helped me apply, gave me tips about essays and when I interviewed. He was really supportive of my wanting to go to Georgetown, even though it was something different coming from Central High School.

Mrs. Parr: When it came to the FAFSA, they were a great asset. I could call Raymond after hours and question him about the FAFSA and let him review it. Any questions I had, even when we were doing the essays, he was always accessible. When I did the FAFSA again last year, I still reached out to them, to make sure all my i's were dotted and t's were crossed. We still rely on them. It's a great program.

Sharee: Mr. Raymond checks up on me once in a while to make sure I'm still sane. Anywhere I would have gone would have been an adjustment, but it's an adjustment that needed to be made. Georgetown University is hard, but I'm pushing myself more because I know I have to get it done. I was a speaker for First Generation at a Way2GoMaryland event for middle-school students last summer. I told them, 'Don't let anything limit you.' No one expected that someone from Central High School could, not only apply to Georgetown, but actually get in.

Dr. Clayton Steen

Dr. Clayton Steen, assistant vice president for enrollment management, Bowie State University.

Before I started with Bowie State University in May 2013, I opted to come attend an event with Way2GoMaryland. I was introduced to Joe (Fisher), who shared with me his vision for First Generation College Bound and all the wonderful things they were doing. I was immediately very impressed, and it reminded me at least of the mission of many of the other programs, such as TRIO-type programs, that are really designed to help students be successful academically in high school, as well as provide college preparation so they can also be successful and college-ready. The thing that stood out was that Joe decided to take this away from it being an institutional- or state- or federally sponsored program, and actually make it be what it was intended to be, which was something that was responsive to the needs of the students themselves and their families, in order to assist them with what they actually need in order to move forward in their endeavors. FGCB has a strong relationship with the parents of the youth in their programs. The process becomes a community or village where the

parents are as committed as the youth and the program they're aligned with. FGCB works very closely to keep the parents in the loop. Bowie State University has remained committed to supporting FGCB in their mission by attending their workshops. Joe and I both take pride in every aspect of helping students create opportunities, but I think our biggest pride, is seeing that students graduate and blossom into young adults. We recognize the role that we played, if not a small part, in helping them accomplish that. And that's all it really takes.

Sabrina Dobbs

Sabrina Dobbs, a graduate of Eleanor Roosevelt High School, earned an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering at the University of Maryland College Park and a Master's of Business Administration at Cornell University. She works as a consultant with Hewlett Packard.

My older sister found out about First Generation College Bound. She went to Laurel High School and she met Mr. Fisher there. First Generation was integral in making sure she got into college. My mother didn't go to college; she didn't finish high school either. Seeing my older sister go - seeing it was possible - made it more tangible for me and my other sisters.

I was at Eleanor Roosevelt High School, but I went to First Generation sessions at Laurel High School. I remember taking a lot of notes on how to apply to schools, being aware of financial aid and things of that sort. Going to the high school I went to, a lot of the other students had parents who were college-educated. It wasn't something I had. Here was an environment where it was okay to ask questions without feeling stupid or ashamed because you didn't know, and to meet other people who were in a similar place, and had similar goals and dreams.

I ended up being able to get a full scholarship to the University of Maryland College Park. FGCB was the first step I took to changing the trajectory of my life and future. I will always be grateful for Mr. Fisher's vision.

Divesh Rizal

Divesh graduated from Parkdale High School and is a student at Middlebury College.

My parents had college degrees from their native country, Nepal, but it's not equivalent to U.S. college degrees. Mr. Fisher and the organization helped me a lot. Mr. Fisher called me every week to make sure everything was good. He made sure I was in good standing with my financial status, and he looked at my financial application. He helped me decide which college to go to. He said, "Go and visit the campus, and you'll feel it if you think you will fit there." When I visited Middlebury, he set me up with a coach he knew there, Martin Beatty. After that visit, I had found my school.

Andrew Salenieks

Andrew Salenieks graduated from Laurel High School and the University of Maryland College Park, majoring in criminal justice. He is now a police officer.

I stayed after school one day my senior year and I was talking to Mr. Hickey (a former teacher). He introduced me to Mr. Fisher and the program. I met with Mr. Fisher and he told me about getting financial aid for college. Neither of my parents worked; we were low income. The first meeting we had, my dad was skeptical that the program was legit. I and Mr. Fisher always laugh about that. Mr. Fisher is probably the reason I ended up going to college because, had it not been for him, I wouldn't have had assistance with the FAFSA. I knew absolutely nothing about that. Everything had to be correct on there, every little minute detail.

Mr. Fisher would call occasionally and check up on me. With Mr. Fisher's advice and Mr. Hickey's, I got a senatorial scholarship and a few different grants. It was pretty much a full ride. If I had gone through the process all by myself, I might not have gotten all the financial aid or have gone to a full-time college right out of high school. I probably would have worked first and then gone to community college.



Tiwana Smith

Tiwana Smith graduated from Laurel High School and then earned two degrees at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore: a bachelor's in criminal justice and a master's in criminology. She is a senior probation agent for the Maryland Department of Public Safety.

I entered the program my freshman or sophomore year of high school. It let me know I could actually go to college. I came from a low-income family. I didn't think I could ever afford to go. My mother graduated from high school and my father didn't even make it that far. I'm the first one.

First Generation really helped me in learning about the financial aid that was available, and get through my FAFSA. I received help in applying to colleges that were financially accessible for me, and they made sure I got the applications in on time. My first two years I had no student loans, and I ended up getting a track scholarship as a walk-on my later years.

In college, every so often Mr. Fisher would get in contact with me. Anything I needed, I would call back to the program, and they would make sure I had it. And with Mr. Fisher and the First Generation program pushing me, I went on to graduate school. They really influenced my life. They were always there for me when I needed it.

Mohamed Bah

Mohamed Bah graduated from Parkdale High School and is a freshman at Stevenson University. He is currently a computer information systems major, taking 17 credits, and doing well receiving A's and B's.

While attending Parkdale High School in my senior year, my teacher encouraged me to go to one of the FGCB College Access workshops to learn about going to college. This was an interest to me because I knew I wanted to attend college but unsure of how I could pay for it. I ended up participating in the program for over a year learning about time management, financial

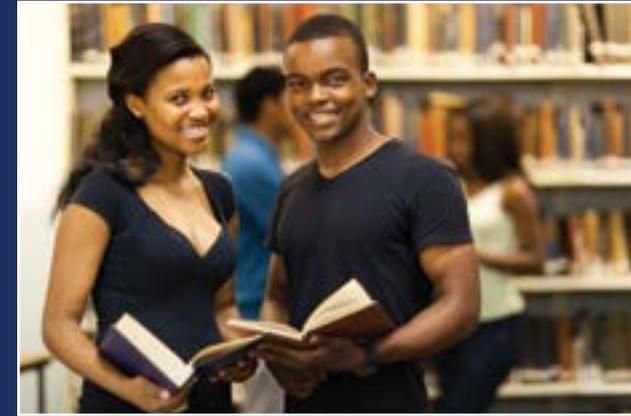


aid, SAT workshops, and taking field trips to colleges. A highlight for me and a very inspirational FGCB outing was going to the Supreme Court. The group learned about how important it is to attend college especially with us being first generation college students who are setting an example for our family and friends about the importance of furthering your education. This field trip inspired me and reinforced my desire to attend college. FGCB made it possible to see the real steps it takes to enter college. The two main benefits I received from the College Access Program were reaching out to talk with the admissions staff at the school that you wanted to attend and applying for as many scholarships that you are eligible for. I executed each of these steps as I applied to Stevenson University and was accepted. FGCB was there assisting me every step of the way. Since being in college I have reached out to other Parkdale students to tell them about the program and I have one friend who has been attending the workshops because he sees how the program has helped me.

Bibi Solano

Bibi Solano is the mother of Matthew Solano, who graduated from Laurel High School and is a student at St. Mary's College of Maryland with a major in psychology and a minor in computer science.

My husband and I are both from the West Indies. We came to the United States and unfortunately didn't have the opportunity to attend college, so we wanted different for our son. After doing our research we found that the whole process was overwhelming and confusing. Then we heard about the First Generation College Bound program. We attended all the FGCB workshops at Laurel High School, where they assisted us step by step. With our final two colleges narrowed down, Mr. Fisher visited us at our home to help us with our final decision as to which would be the best fit for Matthew and for us as a family. This is a wonderful program that has been around for over 20 years and hopefully for many more. I believe so much in this program that in the past I have assisted in fundraising efforts, and we will continue to support them in any way we can.



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