I Believe in You

The year was 1997. The new graduate was 18 years old and decided not to go to college when he declared, “I’m taking a year off to find myself.” After a year of stagnancy his parents gave the ultimatum; enroll in school, enlist in the military, or move out. As eviction became a possibility, panic ensued. His mother recommended he attend cosmetology school, as she had many years before. “It’s always good to know a trade”, she said, “You’ll always have work.” He obliged. Seven years flashed by with the blink of an eye. Dissatisfied with his career, he told a coworker, “I wish I went to college.” “Go for it,” she said, “I believe in you.”

In 2004, he registered for the fall semester at Delaware County Community College. Confidence skyrocketed as faculty members congratulated him on his enrollment, but self-doubt shadowed his ambition as he walked into his empty apartment. “You can’t manage a salon while attending college. You’re not smart enough and have no time for school”, he told himself. He was the student who never emerged in class, the faceless designation, and the ghost of ambition. He withdrew from his classes.

In April of 2015, his mother asked him, “What happened to your plans of going back to school?” “I’ll go when my sons are in grade school”, he said. “That’s an excuse,” his mother said, “You can go now, part time, while your kids are still young. Set the example for them. You can do it. I believe in you.” He enrolled the next week.

Negative thoughts of yesteryears resurrected as he walked into the classroom, but dissipated quickly. In his English Composition class, students created blogs that allowed them to network by offering feedback on each others’ essays. As the online socialization carried into the classroom, he felt a sense of social belonging. He learned about the fixed mindset, the belief that an individual’s intelligence is a fixed trait and cannot be increased. He also learned about the [growth mindset](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygx5nLtIFRI), which is backed by scientific research and concludes that we can [rewire and exercise our brains](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELpfYCZa87g) to become stronger through our studies. He adopted the growth mindset, realizing that it had always been a part of him. He is excelling and enjoying his studies. He is learning and growing.

He was who I used to be, but he is not who I am today.

Despite my past insecurities, I am now attending college with confidence thanks to a few people who believed in me. Though their kind words inspired me to further my education, I wish that when I was younger I had known someone who could have helped me to diffuse my irrational fears, someone who had experienced and overcame the fears of transitioning to college. I can now say, “I’ve been there and done that.” If you have the desire to go to college, go for it. Have no fear. You can do it. I believe in you.