I Believe in You

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

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

In April of 2015, my mother asked, “What happened to your plans of going back to school?” “I’ll go when my sons are in grade school”, I said. “That’s an excuse,” my 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.” I enrolled the next week.

Negative thoughts of yesteryears resurrected as I walked into the classroom, but they dissipated quickly. In my English Composition class, we created blogs that allowed us to network by offering feedback on each others essays. As the online socialization carried into the classroom, I felt a sense of social belonging. I learned about the fixed mindset, the belief that an individual’s intelligence is a fixed trait and cannot be increased. I 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. I adopted the growth mindset, realizing that it had always been a part of me. I am excelling and enjoying my studies. I am learning and growing.

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.