A Journey Worth Taking
a nontrad story

"I have taken full advantage of this second-chance opportunity to set an example for my children by showing them that despite all we have been through, we will still come out on top."

When Earlee Corbin was in high school, his ideas for college and the direction he would take was already set, at least in his own mind. Born and raised in the Eastern Shore of Maryland, it only made sense that, without question, he was going to play baseball for the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. In 2004, Mr. Corbin would begin this journey at the university just as he expected, until an unexpected family illness changed his life forever.

When Mr. Corbin learned that his father was diagnosed with cancer, he felt that as the youngest sibling, he had an obligation to his family, and that helping his family any way that he could was more important than attending college. Understanding the toll that his father’s illness was having on the family, he decided to drop out of college after two years, and returned home to work and help take care of the household. In between taking his father back and forth to treatments, he worked at United Parcel Service, and eventually was promoted to supervisor. He later began looking for other, higher paying jobs. Although he was qualified for the jobs he was applying for, he was turned down for them because he did not have a college degree.

This realization, along with the desire to provide a better life for his wife and children, would give him the push he needed to return to college, and besides, he had promised his dad that he would finish college. With strong support from his wife, Mr. Corbin decided to return to college, and began taking classes at the Metropolitan College at Johnson C. Smith University.

"Accomplishment will prove to be a journey, not a destination."
-Dwight D. Eisenhower
At 30 years old, Mr. Corbin is now a junior at JCSU in the accelerated program for non-traditional students, Metropolitan College. His goal is to complete his Master of Arts degree in teaching, and become a certified teacher after graduation. He hopes to get certified as a business instructor and would like to be able to teach at a high school and teach as an adjunct in the evenings.

Mr. Corbin states that since being at JCSU, he has looked at Mr. John Bannister and Dr. Laura McLean as mentors. He admires the fact that Mr. Bannister has been through the adult learner stage in life and yet he continues to pursue higher education. Dr. McLean doesn’t even know that he looks to her as a mentor because it’s not the guidance and advice that he looks for from her. Instead, he admires how she operates on campus and her passion for her students. Mr. Corbin says he has tried to have that same passion for his education as Dr. McLean has shown when helping her students succeed. As a nontraditional student, you always have those moments to where you question, “is it worth it?” Having to manage time in between work, family and school has been probably the toughest thing to grasp, and Mr. Corbin feels blessed that he has a family who understands the importance of his journey and what it will mean for them in the future.

Since returning to college, Mr. Corbin has maintained a 3.5 GPA while working full time, being a husband and a father – which he states, have been his greatest achievements in life. When Mr. Corbin started back to college he sought out ways to get involved, which led him to ANTSHE. He learned that the campus works with adult students, and with the help of other nontraditional students, he worked to revive the ANTSHE group on campus. The ANTSHE group has a sense of purpose to finish their degrees and to help others transition along the way. Each member of the ANTSHE group comes with a different story, and each person can learn from one others’ experiences. Mr. Corbin wanted to help other nontraditional students to be successful and took on the role of the President of ANTSHE at JCSU.

Since becoming the President of ANTSHE at JCSU, Mr. Corbin and the other members of the ANTSHE organization on campus have worked hard to motivate and encourage nontraditional student success. With the support of the college and the other members of the ANTSHE group, they are able to hold a tailgate party every year, donate to local charities, and do commercials for the university, raising awareness of the programs and support available to nontraditional students and spreading the word about the college and their focus on adult learners. ANTSHE at JCSU provides support and gives students the confidence they need to be successful. The ANTSHE group also have meet and greets at the beginning at each term, as students come on campus, and allows new students the opportunity to meet current students and see what the college is like. The members of ANTSHE will go to great lengths to make new students feel as comfortable as possible, even walking them to class if needed. The goal is for the new students to feel that they are not alone and they have a support system in ANTSHE. As the President of JCSU’s ANTSHE team, Mr. Corbin has had many opportunities to help other nontraditional students to succeed. He was also given the opportunity to represent his institution at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as a part of their
"AMONG HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES, JOHNSON C. SMITH UNIVERSITY AND DELAWARE STATE UNIVERSITY ARE TWO OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE WHEN IT COMES TO RECRUITING AT-RISK STUDENTS, KEEPING THEM IN SCHOOL, AND GIVING THEM THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO GRADUATE."

-Bill Gates

Town Hall Meeting. The Town Hall Meeting was successful and was meant to shine light on the disadvantages that minorities have when it comes to post-secondary education.

Mr. Corbin describes the other members of ANTSHE as a great group of individuals. He states that the ANTSHE group takes pride in serving their students and the community. When asked who his mentor is, Mr. Corbin describes how it was his wife’s idea for him to go back to college. He explains how his wife encourages him to continue, even when he loses focus, and she pushes him to get his work done. Other things that help him focus include his need to set an example for his children, showing them that despite all that they have been through, they will still come out on top, and his ability to set goals for himself. Mr. Corbin is also an avid sports fanatic and enjoys playing football, basketball, and softball.

When asked what advice he would give to other nontraditional students just beginning their educational journey, he states that the challenges and struggles to get scholarships, have a family, and maintain a high GPA are not easy, but, it helps to get involved and share your story and experiences with others. It also helps to have the support of others around you who understand the work load and late nights. He also states that it is important to find mentors through networking and build relationships along the way, which can help you to get a job in the future.

Communication, according to Mr. Corbin, is the base to anything that happens on campus, as well as knowing who and what is needed in order for you to succeed. For example, it is important to know who your Dean is if you have specific questions. Find out if there is a support system on campus, and get involved. If you are able to, seek out professors that care as much as you do about your education. You can do this by building relationships with other students and talking about their professors and their experiences. When professors understand the students and their needs, and care about the materials, that makes a difference. If you are fortunate enough to get involved in an organization such as ANTSHE, it is important to get the support of the college. This can be done by inviting college/university leaders, professors, etc., to parties and encouraging them to get involved.
Mr. Corbin explained how the JCSU President takes pride in the ANTSHE organization on campus and has been able to see what the organization has done for the college and the community, and he has been able to watch the organization grow to be an important part of the college structure. Mr. Corbin states, "of course it would be easier to give up and continue the life you are living, but wouldn’t it be better to work hard for 2-3 years and find the job you want. Returning to school allows you to set an example for your family and trying to better yourself. Education, as Mr. Corbin puts it, is one thing no one can take from you, and with education you can bounce back to where you want to be."