

GRASP News

SEPTEMBER 2017

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT -- SHANICE MCCORMICK

George Wythe High School, Class of 2013

James Madison University, Class of 2017



What have you studied/what is your major and what do you plan to do after college?

I majored in SMAD (Media Arts & Design) and my concentration was Interactive Media. In short, I want to become a User Experience manager and front-end developer. Front-end developers are basically the people who make sites easy to use and aesthetically pleasing to your eye (quite different from back-end coding). My dream job is to become a UX Designer for a music production company or a non-profit organization. I also minored in Spanish and hope to incorporate it into my life as much as possible, especially while traveling.

What is the best thing GRASP has done for you? After changing my major, I was behind and was told I would have to stay an extra semester to complete all of the required courses for

web development. Soon after, I realized I could take summer classes to catch up. I successfully completed three summer classes before my senior year. Unfortunately, I had to use part of my Fall financial aid to pay for the summer classes, which left a hold on my account for the fall semester, and I was unable to enroll in classes. Less than two weeks before my enrollment date, GRASP awarded me with a scholarship that allowed me to pay for the remainder of my fall semester bill. Because of my determination and GRASP's help, I am a Spring 2017 College graduate. Thank you!

What was the biggest hardship /challenge you faced in your path to college? Each year up until my senior year was a financial battle, but I managed to have an amazing experience at James Madison University and abroad despite this obstacle. I never gave up on what I wanted to do and exhausted my list of resources to get my questions answered and the help I needed.

What one piece of "educational advice" would you give to high school students? Don't be afraid to speak and ask questions; it is OK if you don't know everything. There are many people in schools and at your future university that are fully capable and willing to help you and answer your questions. I find that many students get into unfamiliar environments, and become hesitant to speak although they may have a problem or are uncertain about something. If you practice this in high school, your first year of college will go a lot smoother because you won't be as afraid to ask questions.



HERO'S CORNER

Thank you to an outstanding corporate citizen for helping to create a community of opportunity for all Virginians.

Altria Group has awarded a \$50,000 contribution to GRASP. This represents their support of the in-school advising program in Central Virginia, helping to provide highly trained, in-school advisors, assisting students and their parents and/or guardians in gathering the resources to access post-secondary education.



Q&A^{on} EQUITY

with

Laura Fornash

Senior Vice President & Co-Leader
of National Education Practice,
McGuireWoods

COLLEGE ACCESS AND GRASP HIGHLIGHTED IN THE HUNT INSTITUTE BLOG

An Equity Q&A with Laura Fornash Senior Vice President and Co-Leader of National Education Practice, McGuireWoods Consulting; Hunt Institute Foundation Board Member
September 11, 2017, Share This [Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) Email

Q: How do you define equity in higher education?

A: In higher education, a troubling opportunity gap exists. Year after year, we see minority and low-income students enroll in and graduate from institutions of higher education at lower rates than their more advantaged peers. A recent report by the National Student Clearing House Research Center found that the national six-year completion rate for students who start at a four-year institution is 62.4 percent. When you break this down by race, the rate drops to 45.9 percent for black students, 55 percent for Hispanic students, and 67.2 percent for white students. **These statistics highlight the ongoing challenge to not only increase the overall average number of students graduating with postsecondary credentials but also to ensure we are supporting success for all students.**

Further, we need more degree and credentialed citizens prepared to enter/re-enter the workforce to provide opportunities for growing our local, state, and federal economies. Thanks to the great work of the [Lumina Foundation](#), [HCM Strategists](#), [Complete College America](#), and other initiatives, the nation is laser focused on degree completion and credential attainment. States and higher education institutions are developing innovative ways to encourage timely degree completion through alternative degree and credential paths. Furthermore, some states like **Tennessee, Ohio, and Indiana** are financially rewarding institutions who retain and complete students through outcome-based funding models. In addition to the economic benefits of post-secondary education, numerous studies tout health and welfare benefits for students who earn degrees from institutions of higher education. **According to the [Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce](#), college graduates earn, on average, 84 percent, or \$1 million, more over a lifetime than individuals with only a high school diploma.**

Q: What programs are helping to address access to post-secondary institutions?

A: I am a big fan of postsecondary access providers. In Virginia, we are fortunate to have a number of non-profit organizations focused on creating greater access to our two- and four-year higher education institutions. For example, the [Greater Aspirations Scholarship Program](#) (GRASP), trains and embeds college advisors into local high schools. The advisors help students and families complete the FASFA, find scholarships, grants, and loans, as well as help identify colleges and universities that are a good match for the student's interests and capabilities. They also engage private philanthropists to provide students with last dollar scholarships.

The [College Advising Corps](#), a national program which originated at the University of Virginia, embeds recent university graduates in underserved areas to aid with FASFA completion and to assist students in navigating the complex application process. The Corps has grown to support 600 high schools in 14 states. **Without these types of programs, thousands of young people would struggle and potentially give up pursuing postsecondary education.**

Q: *How can elementary and secondary schools help address the equity challenges in college access?*

A: The nation's elementary and secondary schools can play a role in ensuring access to postsecondary education. **We need to ensure that all students are exposed to a wide range of experiences that get them to begin thinking about college and allow them to envision themselves attending an institution of higher education.**

We also need greater diversity in the classroom. We need more programs that put role models and mentors in our elementary and middle schools who can help begin to nurture a college-going culture. An initiative to watch is the [Leading Men Fellowship Program](#) in D.C. Public Schools. The school system has partnered with the Literacy Lab to embed D.C. Public School graduates in elementary schools to serve as literacy coaches. The program shows promise both for the students, who benefit from additional instructional support, and for the literacy coaches, who are encouraged to pursue an education degree after the program concludes. And lastly, I am hopeful through the impactful work of the [Hunt-Kean Leadership Fellows Program](#), we will have more leaders in our nation focused on equity in education and ensuring every person has access to a high-quality education, no matter what their zip code.

GRASP REACH FOR THE STARS GALA

WHEN

FRIDAY, OCT. 6TH, 6-9PM

WHERE

**211 EAST FRANKLIN STREET
RICHMOND, VA**

MORE INFORMATION

Jazz, heavy hors d'oeuvres, silent auction and inspirational program in support of college access in Virginia and student success. Please join us!

RSVP here: <http://grasp4va.org/reach-for-the-stars-217>

SUPPORT GRASP THROUGH "BIRDIES FOR CHARITY"


As part of the Dominion Energy Charity Classic, contributions can be flat donations or based on the number of "birdies" by players during the golf classic. PGA TOUR donates an additional 10% to participating charities' donations, too!



GRASP

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GRASP is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, charitable, college access organization that assists students and families in obtaining funding for post-secondary education.

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