

Student Success Stories

"When you get right down to the root of the meaning of the word 'succeed,' you will find that it simply means to follow through."

-F.W. Nichol

"One important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation."

-Arthur Ashe

"Success is measured not so much by the position that one has reached as by the obstacles that have been overcome."

-Booker T. Washington

Every day, successful students walk through the LDC gates. For some, their rewards are public, as they are recognized with commendations and high grades. For others, the satisfaction of meeting a personal goal is reward enough. Each of these students has a story to tell. In this edition of *LDC Lately*, we share with our readers a sampling of these stories. We trust that you will find them as inspiring as we do.

At a recent Honors Banquet for Higher Education Opportunity Program students, the featured speaker was Kim Dudley, a recent RIT/HEOP graduate. As a thriving young professional, she offered six guidelines she considered essential for success: 1. Set SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely), 2. Be willing to take chances, 3. Make opportunities when they don't present themselves, 4. Build and maintain relationships, 5. Leave a positive impression, and 6. Give back. As you read the student success stories on the following pages, you will see evidence of Kim's principles at work.

In this era when America is looking for heroes, we don't have to look far. Our campus is full of students who display courage, determination, and dedication. We salute them, and we celebrate their success!



“Work on being focused. It’s a skill that can be learned and strengthened.”

Jocelyn Anama

4th year Computer Engineering Tech.

Jocelyn (Jay) Anama defines success as “being happy with what you’ve accomplished and feeling good about what you did.” Indeed, Jay is successful. As a fourth year Computer Engineering Technology student, she’s made Dean’s List at least four times. Currently, she’s looking for a summer co-op and planning for graduate school in computer science here at RIT. She can’t help it; she loves programming. She also loves being independent and doing well academically.

Entering college wasn’t an easy adjustment for Jay, who started out in the College of Engineering. The cursory study strategies that worked in high school didn’t fly for college. Jay had trouble remembering concepts and carrying knowledge over to subsequent classes and quarters. With a stubbornness she’d inherited from her mother, Jay continued to believe she could do it on her own; she didn’t need assistance. But there’s more to the story. Jay had been struggling with cancer since her junior year of high school, enduring surgery and frequent check-ups. She arrived as a freshman at RIT already distraught and disorganized. As her first few frustrating quarters unfolded, she became disillusioned about college. She was depressed and took to procrastinating.

By the end of her fourth quarter at RIT, she was suspended for low grades. Her department head suggested the College Restoration Program. Jay realized she needed help. She needed to learn how to be an independent learner, and she needed to prove to herself that she could succeed at RIT.

Jay attributes her success to three things: being organized and planning out a schedule; being able to focus on learning at a deeper level; and being able to relax when she’s not studying, in class, at the lab, or waiting tables at the Ground Round. Jay follows the strategies that work for her:

- using the *Source* planner for assignments
- creating a weekly schedule with study blocks and relaxation slots
- allowing herself enough time to truly learn the concepts
- forcing herself to remain focused and minimize procrastination.

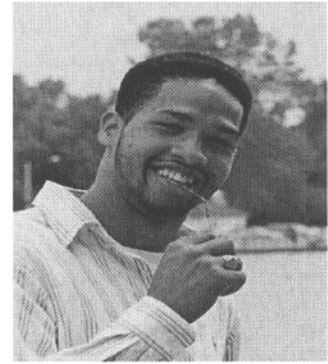
These strategies have allowed Jay, whose original goal when she entered college was to “get away from New Jersey,” to establish a rewarding independent life style. After she completed the College Restoration Program, she switched to Computer Engineering Technology and immediately applied the strategies she learned in CRP. The result was making Dean’s List her first quarter out. Since then Jay has continued to keep a cumulative GPA well over 3.0. Jay’s academic success has given her a new level of confidence. After her second year of college, she got her own apartment and a car. She lives alone with her cat, Lexus, and feels secure and comfortable with who she is and what she’s achieved. Her latest accomplishment is earning a B during winter quarter in the most difficult course she’s ever had. She’s proud of that B, and she’s proud of herself for sticking it out.

Her advice for other students:

- Recognize that seeking help isn’t a weakness. Professors are here to help students.
- Don’t be afraid to ask questions. College assignments are sometimes vague. Go to the prof, a classmate, anyone who can help you get back on track.
- Get organized, and keep organized.
- Schedule in study blocks, but also leave time for relaxation.
- Work on being focused. It’s a skill that can be learned and strengthened.

“It’s important to reassess your situation.”

Josue Zorrilla
4th year Public Policy



Josue began his career at RIT in the summer of 1998 as a pre-freshman in the Higher Education Opportunity Program. Along with the other pre-freshmen, he lived on campus, attended workshops and presentations on various aspects of RIT, and took skills-building classes for three weeks prior to entry. He entered RIT in the fall as a matriculated student in the Computer Engineering program.

Josue had an affinity for computer work and a strong determination to master the field. All in all, he had a good game plan. He worked hard on the technical classes; he was in touch with his professors on a regular basis, got academic support, and kept his eye on his goal. However, through the RIT Exploration Program, CRP, and the continued support of the HEOP program, Josue began to reassess his course portfolio in regard to his strengths.

In a fortuitous turn of events, the College of Liberal Arts had just developed a major in public policy. Josue’s proven skills and interests seemed highly suited to the program’s curriculum. With the support of his new department head, Josue changed his major and began a string of very successful quarters that will culminate this spring in his graduation. Josue feels that it is important for students to reassess their situation and to zero in on what they have to do. But it is just as important to find and talk to people who can offer support and help make changes happen.



“Create a buffer by getting assignments done early.”

Justin Brower
2nd year Biology

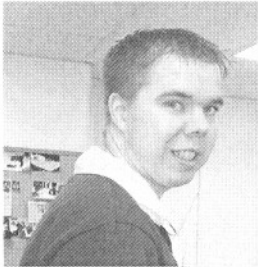
When Justin Brower arrived at RIT in the fall of 2001, he wasn’t sure of his direction. In addition, he struggled with the transition from a busy family life to life in the dorms. Being very friendly and accustomed to lots of company, he had an open door policy, and he was never alone! The distractions made focusing on his work a challenge.

He jumped into a major that he soon realized was not a good fit. He lost motivation and discovered that he could no longer pick up course work as easily as he did in high school. He was frustrated to discover he did not really know how to structure his time or to learn how to learn. He also lost interest in music, which had always been a source of personal satisfaction. He was referred to CRP, where he learned the skills he had been missing. He gives credit to Kristy Graves, Lisa Fraser, Jane Munt and Dr. Kozak for facilitating his turnaround. Another referral to the Career Exploration service at the Counseling Center proved to be very helpful.

This quarter, a 4.0 is within reach for Justin. The smile on his face tells the story of a life back on track. He now budgets his time, incorporates new study strategies, completes assignments ahead of time, and uses resources available to him at RIT. He has also become re-acquainted with his trumpet and electric bass! It’s amazing how his stress level has decreased now that he feels a sense of balance in his life. *(continued...)*

Justin feels he would have benefitted from discussions about a change of major earlier on. However, he values the connections he did make and the faculty who facilitated his new approach. His advice to students is “to create a buffer.” By this he means getting assignments done one to two days ahead of time to allow for flexibility and the unexpected. Additional advice from Justin:

- Don’t lose touch with the things that matter to you - they provide motivation.
- Focus on your work early and do a good job.
- Set reasonable goals and then follow through, taking things step by step.



“Seek out help and use it consistently.”

Daniel Owens
2000 Graduate
Printing Management

Daniel W. Owens is a Print Forwarder at Jay Advertising. He is happy and successful in his chosen career. Daniel’s journey to his current position was a long and challenging road that he traveled with skill and grace.

Daniel grew up in Everett, Washington. He was an adventurous and outgoing child with positive early experiences in school, but he was diagnosed with a learning disability in the third grade. He received extra help in reading and writing as he moved through his education.

Daniel pursued an Associates Degree in Print Production from Shoreline Community College in Seattle, WA. Then he set his sights on graduating from the top school in his field - RIT.

The stumbling stone on Daniel’s path turned out to be math. When his algebra teacher talked about $3xz$ and $3yz$, Daniel was lost. He knew he needed help. He says frankly, “I was not going to make it through my first exam if I did not seek out some assistance from somewhere on campus.” Now the challenge was to muster the strength and courage to figure out where to go, how to explain his concern, and then to hope for “better days.”

Daniel demonstrated that he had a true “response-ability” to his own academic needs. He discovered the Learning Development Center, the RIT TRiO Student Support Services (then Special Services), and the support services in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences. He also sought the services of Cooperative Education and Placement and the State of Washington’s Department of Vocational Rehabilitation.

By the end of his second quarter, he had gained the confidence that he could make it at RIT. He realized that the help he had sought would not let him down. “This is the main reason I was able to succeed,” says Daniel. The power that comes from developing good solid relationships, like Daniel did, cannot be underestimated. He now feels that he is able to get all of the help that he needs from a range of services.

Daniel’s advice to students: “Seek out the help and use it consistently.”

So, how does Daniel define success? He says that it is the ability to succeed in meeting goals, both professionally and personally. Six years after his arrival at RIT, Daniel sees himself as a success, and so do we. In addition to establishing his career, Daniel has married and made his home in Rochester with his wife, Chara. He has also successfully battled cancer with the same dignity and courage he used to meet his other challenges. We learn from our stars, and Daniel has taught us a lot.



“Have an open mind...”

Kwabena Ampofo
2nd year Packaging Science

The thrill of appearing on the Dean’s List finally became a reality for second year Packaging Science major, Kwabena Ampofo, in the fall of 2002. Kwabena had always been a hard worker and was motivated to succeed academically, but during his first year at RIT he had doubts about his major.

Sometimes it is difficult to let go of a dream. Kwabena had decided in high school that electrical engineering would be his major in college. He enrolled in the Electrical Engineering Technology program at RIT. Although he liked the instructors and the subject matter, he didn’t find the coursework as interesting and motivating as he’d expected, and he was not satisfied with his grades.

After many discussions with his department, his FYE coach, and his parents, Kwabena decided it was time to explore the reasons why he wasn’t performing as well as he knew he could. He enrolled in the College Restoration Program (CRP), where he was able to focus on polishing his academic skills and think seriously about a change of major. Ultimately, Kwabena decided that Packaging Science was a better fit for him.

In the fall quarter of 2002, Kwabena enrolled in the Packaging Science Department on a joint contract with the Learning Development Center’s CRP Transition Program. He did exceedingly well and earned a GPA of 3.58! The change of major was just what he needed to find his motivation again.

Kwabena credits many RIT faculty and staff members with helping him to figure out what he really wanted to do. In addition, he advises all students to have an open mind about changing majors and to do some career exploration if they begin to suspect that they are not in the right major. As he says, “Consider the options!” Who knows? It might lead directly to the Dean’s List.

“Make sure your major is a good fit.”

Lindsey Herberger
3rd year Social Work



Looking the picture of success in an elegant business suit, Lindsey Herberger had no trouble defining success, but she is just beginning to realize that she is actually living her description. She came to RIT as a photography major, expecting to become a photo editor for a magazine. She enjoyed photography in high school and it seemed like an appropriate major. However, it became evident that, for her, photography was a better hobby than a career. She encountered difficulties with her course work for the very first time in her life and endured a very frustrating first year. She lost motivation, and finally decided to seek help by participating in the College Restoration Program.

Over the span of two quarters, Lindsey made a 180 degree turn. She was screened and tested for a learning disability and learned that she had severe Attention Deficit Disorder. Taking the medication for this condition as well as incorporating academic strategies and time management skills in her approach to studying made an unbelievable difference. She values the support of Maggie Everhart, her Learning Specialist, and the RIT Exploration Program, where she identified Social Work as an appropriate major. Now life is different. She no longer dreads going to class, she can see the light at the end of the tunnel, and she finds it hard to believe that she will actually graduate on time. She is able to carry 18-20 credit hours per quarter and earn GPAs that put her on the Dean’s List the last four quarters. And she has just been awarded a Bennet Scholarship from the TRiO Program. *(continued...)*

Lindsey describes success as being at a place in her life that she is proud of. Because of her turnaround, she feels she now has many options and she is able to get where she wants to go in the real world. The faculty in Social Work believed in her potential and supported her. She proved them right when she was inducted into the Phi Alpha National Social Work Honor Society.

Her advice to students: “Make sure that your major is a good fit. If it isn’t, don’t stay because you think that’s what is expected of you. If it is right, stick with it. Your motivation will help you attain success.”

“I want my environment to be a product of me, not vice versa.”

Hysha Robinson
1997 Graduate
Financial Aid Counselor



Hysha Robinson, RIT Financial Aid Counselor, exudes confidence, positive thinking, and enthusiasm as she discusses her ambitions. Already she has gathered an impressive set of personal and professional credentials as student, beauty pageant winner, cheerleader, advisor, and mentor. In addition, she sings, she dances, she’s involved in community service, and in her spare time she’s learning Japanese. Not bad for a girl who grew up in a tough inner-city neighborhood.

Hysha’s list of accomplishments include the following:

- RIT graduate: BS (Information Technology), MS (Service Management, CAST), working on another MS (Public Policy, CLA)
- Pageants: Miss Black New York (2002), Miss Black USA 1st runner-up (2002), Miss New York Woman of Color (2003)
- Cheerleader: high school, RIT (3 years), Buffalo Bills (2 years), advisor to RIT cheerleaders
- Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority: member, advisor, on executive board of graduate chapter, advisor to Panhellenic Council
- Performing: sang anthem at RIT games, sang both American and Canadian anthems for Buffalo Bandits (lacrosse)
- Mentoring: in high school founded ELITE (Eliminate Losses in Teenage Self-Esteem), currently has two mentors and is a mentor to a high school student.

Hysha’s relationship with the Learning Development Center began during her freshman year. She had graduated from Brooklyn Tech High School, where she was spotted as a “potential gem,” capable of excelling in college. She was recommended for RIT’s University Program, which was designed to guide inner-city students in their transition to college. One requirement of the program was to attend LDC workshops. Hysha complied willingly, eagerly learning all she could about time management and study skills. She also discovered the Writing Lab and Math Lab, which she visited often during her undergraduate years. (*continued...*)

“I didn’t have to study in high school,” Hysha observed. “I had difficulty during the transition [to college] because I had to acquire new skills. It was important to acknowledge that and not be embarrassed or afraid.” To other students, Hysha says, “This service is here for you – go get it! It’s not negative. You’re paying for it – get the best out of it. This is the easiest time of your life to do it.” Hysha also points out that accolades lead to opportunities. Every accomplishment opens a door or makes a connection.

Hysha has always been a dreamer, and she’s making her dreams come true by her honesty with herself. She acknowledges her weaknesses, and she finds resources to help her address them. She also acknowledges her strengths, and she finds ways to develop them in her personal and professional life. Along the way, she has shared her dreams with others, guiding other young women in their success. Hysha gives back!



“Success is based on good relationships.”

Andrew Cooney
4th year Information Technology

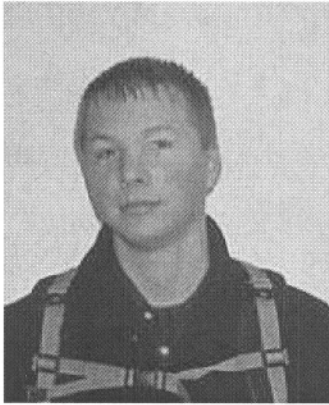
Andy Cooney does not define success by his grades, the school he attends, the job he has, or the amount of money he makes. Success to Andy is more interpersonal: it’s based on “good relationships.”

In terms of succeeding at RIT, Andy feels that learning about various resources, namely faculty with whom he can work closely, has helped him the most. Interacting with faculty who understand how RIT works and are receptive to students’ needs helped Andy to overcome some initial difficulties and discover what he really wanted to do with his college career.

Andy came to RIT in the fall of 1999 for Computer Engineering Technology. His goal was to expand his knowledge and take advantage of all the opportunities a college campus offers. But his freshman year was a struggle. He didn’t feel connected to RIT, and, at one point, he lost motivation to attend classes. He also became constantly tired and slept a great deal. This was an indication that something was wrong.

Andy knew he wanted to stop the downward cycle. Luckily, George Zion directed Andy to the Learning Development Center to seek assistance. At the beginning of his second year, he enrolled in the College Restoration Program. Determined to succeed, Andy hit the ground running. Since then, he’s made Dean’s List every quarter!

His journey was not an easy one. In addition to struggling with motivation, Andy wanted to change his major. At the time, his grades reflected the first year of struggle, and getting into Information Technology required a solid GPA. Once Andy was able to connect with faculty in the LDC, he regained his confidence, attended classes regularly, and made academics the highest priority. Eventually, he was accepted into IT, where he continues to excel academically and to feel connected to RIT. His advice to all students: You can’t *find* your place here, you have to *create* one for yourself. It all boils down to finding the people you relate with, whether it be a roommate, professor, or advisor. These relationships won’t just come to you – you must go out and seek them for yourself.”



“Take advantage of the services. It’s only practical.”

Chris Terheyden
2nd Year Information Technology

Chris Terheyden’s number one goal was to obtain a B.S. degree while avoiding the high cost of a private college education. Unlike most students, he wanted to graduate debt free, and he found a way for doing so.

The starting point of Chris’s plan was MCC, where he accumulated transferable credits for both liberal arts and technical courses. When he applied to RIT, he also got a full-time job here to gain tuition benefits. However, Chris quickly discovered the quandary faced by many of our non-traditional students – balancing full-time employment with academics.

Fortunately, Chris was able to move into a half-time employment position, which helped him find a balance between work and school. This May, it will be three years that Chris has worked half-time for RIT, earning money for living expenses and qualifying for a tuition waiver, thus fulfilling his initial goal of graduating without debt.

Chris feels that he has not encountered any serious academic difficulty; he has been proactive in this area, and he believes that this approach has saved him from setbacks in his RIT career. One example of his initiative was attending a summer program held by LDC in previous years – the College Anticipation Program (CAP). CAP allowed Chris to live on campus summer quarter, attend classes in study skills and time management, and become familiar with the RIT environment.

As an older student, Chris understood that he did not need to be struggling in order to ask for help or to learn to be a more successful student. He firmly believes that since students pay for the services offered on campus, it is only practical that they should take advantage of them. For instance, Chris uses the LDC’s Writing Lab because he knows that having his work reviewed before he hands it in gives him a smart advantage. “Whether an essay or a project, it should be quality work,” he says. Chris wisely anticipates RIT’s high standards, and his proactive measures have served him well.

Chris attributes his success in college to being proactive, taking classes he’s interested in, having good professors, and having an end goal in sight. Chris knows he needs a college degree to have a good career and attain the things he wants out of life, and he feels RIT is an excellent place to obtain this education and reach his goals.

Student Use of LDC Services 2001-2002

- 951** students used the LDC Math & Writing Labs
- 695** students attended LDC courses and workshops
- 234** students availed themselves of Structured Monitoring
- 658** students filed documentation for disabilities
- 239** used academic accommodations
- 118** students completed an academic assessment
- 123** students enrolled in CRP, **84** returned to RIT
- 106** students supported by the Higher Education Opportunity Program
- 260** students supported by TRiO Student Support Services

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