

2026

A COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS GUIDE PROVIDED BY
THE MARYLAND BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE FOR EDUCATION

WAY TO BE

Can't get enough?

Discover how to lead
with MBRT as a Student
Ambassador on page 14.

**Career advice and inspiration
from REAL professionals
starting on page 33**

YOUR GUIDE TO PATHWAYS FOR SUCCESS!

Details on page 7



MARYLAND
Business Roundtable
for **EDUCATION**

MARYLAND
THE DAILY RECORD



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REACH YOUR
GOALS**

300+
PROGRAMS

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WORKFORCE
CERTIFICATIONS

\$14,808
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MARYLAND
Business Roundtable
for **EDUCATION**

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MARYLAND

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For over 30 years, Maryland Business Roundtable for Education (MBRT) drives meaningful partnerships between business, government and education that empower student achievement to meet Maryland's talent needs.

At the very heart of our mission is an unwavering resolve to foster career and college pathways that empower students, bridge opportunity gaps and ensure that every individual has the tools and opportunity to thrive.

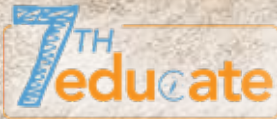
The Way to Be magazine connects thousands of students to resources and information that allow them to identify and reach their education goals and explore a variety of college and career pathways.



MARYLAND
Business Roundtable
for EDUCATION

7E Pathways:

A Programmatic Approach to College and Career Readiness



GRADE 7: EDUCATE

- Introduction to The MBRT Way
- Establish courses matter, choices matter
- Discover career opportunities



GRADE 8: EMPOWER

- Providing future options
- Providing a strategy for high school
- Demonstrate the power of connections



GRADE 9: ENGAGE

- Leveraging personality and interest tools
- Meeting industry professionals through hands-on experiences
- Creating a vision for their future, beginning with high school planning



GRADE 10: EXPLORE

- Learning content and skills through real-world application
- Building career skills and knowledge
- Investigating career and college pathways
- Developing a plan of action



GRADE 11: EXECUTE

- Taking part in job shadowing opportunities
- Visiting colleges and employers
- Interviewing with industry professionals
- Preparing for SAT/ACT and the college application process



GRADE 12: ELEVATE

- Completing applications for financial aid, scholarships, and college admissions
- Finding internships
- Creating a post-HS transition plan



POST-GRADUATE: ENRICH

- Networking and mentorship opportunities
- Provide ongoing support and connections
- Reinvest in the school community

Discover You

You are made of many bright pieces: your talents, interests, experiences and ideas. Each one reflects a new possibility for your future. As you explore what excites you and what you're good at, you'll start to see the many directions your path can take. There's no single right answer, no one path to follow, just your light, your choices and your chance to shine in your own direction.

Start with **YOU**. **Ask yourself**

- What are my **three favorite subjects** in school?

- What do I **love doing when I'm not in class?** (*Think clubs, hobbies, sports, gaming, music, creating art—even solo stuff like reading, hiking or coding.*)

- What are some things I'm **naturally good at?**

- What's **a challenge** I'd like to improve on?

- What's my **ultimate dream job**—even if it seems far off?

As you turn the page, notice how new possibilities come into focus.

What's Next:

- Check out page 12 in this magazine to explore **Career & Technical Education (CTE)** options at your school.
- Are you a leader? Check out the **MBRT's Student Ambassador program** on pages 14-15.
- Try a career, interest or personality survey to discover careers that match YOU. Your school might use **Naviance** or other career-readiness tools—ask your counselor!
- Talk to your counselor about other awesome **resources your school offers**.

What sparks your interest?

Pick your top 3 from this list—no wrong answers here!

- ☐ Arts, Media & Communication
- ☐ Business Management & Finance
- ☐ Construction & Development
- ☐ Consumer Services, Hospitality & Tourism
- ☐ Environmental, Agricultural & Natural Resources
- ☐ Health & Biosciences
- ☐ Human Resource Services
- ☐ Information Technology
- ☐ Manufacturing, Engineering & Technology
- ☐ Science, Technology, Engineering and Math
- ☐ Teaching/Education
- ☐ Transportation Technologies

DID YOU KNOW?

Career pathways are smaller groups of jobs within each career field (also called “career clusters”). They help you dive deeper into the kind of work you might love, reflecting on your interests and strengths.

What Does it Really *Cost* to Live?

Ever wondered how much money it actually takes to live on your own? Whether you're thinking about life after high school, college or your first job, understanding the cost of living is essential.



One bedroom
apartment/studio
\$1650



Car Payment
\$650



Car Insurance/
gas/maintenance
\$450



Gas/
electricity
\$250



Phone/
internet/cable
\$250



Groceries/
food
\$450



Entertainment
\$200

TOTAL
\$3,900
Estimated monthly expenses

PAY STUB SAMPLE (MARYLAND EXAMPLE)

Rate: \$15.00/hour Hours worked: 160

EARNINGS

Description	Amount
Regular Pay (160 hrs x \$15.00)	\$2,400.00

DEDUCTIONS

Deduction	Rate	Amount
Federal Income Tax	10%	\$240.00
State Tax	4%	\$96.00
Social Security	6.2%	\$148.80
Medicare	1.45%	\$34.80
Total Deductions:		\$519.60

NET PAY (TAKE-HOME PAY)

\$1,880.40

This is the amount of money you actually receive and use to budget.

GROSS PAY

total money earned before
anything is taken out

DEDUCTIONS

taxes and
withholdings
like Social
Security,
Medicare
and health
insurance

NET PAY

the money you receive
and use to budget

\$1,880.40
- \$3,900.00

- \$2,019.60
Over Budget

Net Monthly
Pay

Total Monthly
Expenses

PATHWAY CHOICES

*Shine Your Way –
Reflect, Explore, Choose*

Your future reflects the choices you make, the skills you grow and the opportunities you chase. The good news? You can shape it every day.

What Feels Like YOU?

Put a ✓ next to everything that sounds like you:

- ☐ I show up for school, on time, ready to learn.
- ☐ I challenge myself in class and go beyond the basics.
- ☐ I explore math, science, arts or world languages.
- ☐ I participate in clubs, sports, arts or other extracurriculars.
- ☐ I volunteer or give back to my community.
- ☐ I think before I post – my digital footprint reflects me.
- ☐ I know my high school pathway options (AP, CTE, dual enrollment, IB, apprenticeships, internships and certifications).
- ☐ I can picture a plan for after high school.
- ☐ I ask questions, seek help and set personal goals.
- ☐ I reflect on my skills, passions and potential – and I'm ready to act.

TOTAL CHECKS: _____

Mirror Score – What It Says About You

8–10 Checks: You're Reflecting Your Best Self!

You're on track to shine in school and beyond. Students who engage fully in academics, community and self-growth often unlock more opportunities and even higher lifetime earnings. Keep reflecting and acting – your mirror is smiling at you.

5–7 Checks: Reflection Needed – Shine Brighter!

You've got strong habits, but there's room to level up. Try a new class, join a club, seek mentoring or explore a work-based learning experience. Every step you take builds your mirror image of success.

0–4 Checks: Time to Reflect & Act!

Your mirror is ready for a glow-up. Take small steps:

- ☐ Talk with your school counselor
- ☐ Set achievable goals
- ☐ Explore new pathways
- ☐ Ask for help and resources

A mirrorball takes one source of light and reflects it into hundreds of bright, unique directions – just like students discovering their future possibilities. No student is just one thing. They are made of many reflections: interests, strengths, experiences, cultures and dreams.



PICK YOUR PATH

Goal	Pathway Options	What You Gain
4-Year College	AP / IB / Honors / Advanced Coursework	College-level skills, competitive admissions, scholarships
2-Year College	Dual Enrollment / Early College / Community College	Earn college credits while in high school, save money, stay local
Career After High School	Career & Technical Education (CTE), Work-Based Learning, Apprenticeships	Hands-on skills, industry credentials, job experience
Military / Service	ROTC / Military Careers / National Service Programs	Leadership, discipline, career training, educational benefits
Industry Credentials / Gap Year / Entrepreneurship	Professional certifications, startup programs, global experiences	Real-world skills, professional network, personal growth

Every path leads to success – it's all about what reflects YOU!

CHOICES MATTER

Your education – your life – is a reflection of the choices you make. Sounds obvious, right? But how much do you really think about the choices you're making? These choices – positive or negative – show up as you're building your future. They're reflected on your transcript, in your letters of recommendation and on your resume.

Let's break your choices down into three major categories to focus on supporting your long-term goals, no matter your path. It's as easy as **A-B-C!**

Not just your choices...

Employers, recruiters and admissions counselors make choices, too. Put yourself in their shoes. Would you choose someone who shows up late, skips responsibilities and avoids challenges? Or someone who is punctual, takes initiative and strives for excellence?

Your future isn't decided for you—it's built by you. Make choices today that reflect the tomorrow you want.

Legal Name Pat Smith
ID Number 625-559-5799
Birth Date 01/01/2009
Class of 2027
Graduation Date 05/27/2027
Parent/Guardian Patrick and Patricia Smith

SECONDARY SCHOOL INFORMATION

School Name Centennial High School
Address 123 Second Street
City Baltimore State MD Zip Code 21222
Phone 410-555-2121 Fax 410-555-3131

Principal Mary Jackson Counselor Jim Lawrence

SUBJECTS	INSTR LEVEL	FINAL		CREDIT EARNED	QUALITY POINTS
			GRADE		
Gr. 9 SCHOOL YEAR 2023 - 2024					
English 9	H		A	1.00	5.00
Amer. Govt.	H		B	1.00	4.00
Geometry	H		C	1.00	3.00
Biology	H		A	1.00	5.00
French 2	ST		A	1.00	4.00
Foundations of Art	GT		C	1.00	4.00
PE Fitness	ST		A	1.00	4.00
Present: 175.0	Absent: 5.0			7.00	29.00

SUBJECTS	INSTR LEVEL	FINAL		CREDIT EARNED	QUALITY POINTS
			GRADE		
Gr. 10 SCHOOL YEAR 2024- 2025					
English 10	H		B	1.00	4.00
World History	H		A	1.00	5.00
Algebra 2	ST		B	1.00	3.00
Chemistry	H		B	1.00	4.00
French 3	ST		A	1.00	4.00
Studio Drawing/Painting	GT		B	1.00	5.00
Tech./Pers. Comp.	ST		B	1.00	3.00
Present: 172.0	Absent: 8.0			7.00	28.00

SUBJECTS	INSTR LEVEL	FINAL		CREDIT EARNED	QUALITY POINTS
			GRADE		
Gr. 11 SCHOOL YEAR 2025-2026					
English 11	H		B	1.00	4.00
U.S. History	H		A	1.00	5.00
Pre-Calculus	ST		B	1.00	3.00
Physics	ST		C	1.00	2.00
Figure Drawing 1	GT		B	1.00	5.00
Health	ST		B	1.00	3.00
Telemedia Design 1	GT		B	1.00	5.00
Present: 175.00	Absent: 7.00			7.00	27.00

SUBJECTS	INSTR LEVEL	FINAL		CREDIT EARNED	QUALITY POINTS
			GRADE		
Gr. 12	SCHOOL YEAR 2026 - 2027				
English 12	H		A	1.00	5.00
Economics/Public Issues	H		B	.50	2.00
College Algebra	AP		B	1.00	5.00
Latin 1	ST		A	1.00	4.00
Figure Drawing 2	GT		A	1.00	5.00
Painting	GT		B	1.00	5.00
Telemedia Design 2	GT		B	1.00	5.00
Present: 173.0	Absent: 7.0			6.50	32.00

ACADEMIC SUMMARY					
SUBJECTS	9	10	11	12	TOT
English	1	1	1	1	4.0
Social Studies	1	1	1	.5	3.5
Mathematics	1	1	1	1	4.0
Science	1	1	1	1	4.0
World Language	1	1		1	3.0
Business Education					
Art	1	1	2	3	7.0
Music					
Physical Education	1				1.0
Health			1		1.0
Technology Education		1			1.0
Career & Tech Ed. (CTE)			1	1	2.0
TOTAL					30.5

MARYLAND HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS (X WHEN PASSED)			
PARCC Algebra I	X	HSA Biology	X
PARCC English 10	X	HSA Government	X

Serv. Learning Hrs.	MET
---------------------	-----

GPA: 3.3

Weighted GPA: 4.2

ACADEMIC COURSE CODES	COURSE GRADES AND NOTIFICATIONS		
GT: Gifted and Talented H: Honors ST: Standard SE: Special Education	Passing A: 90-100% B: 80-89% C: 70-79% D: 60-69% S: Satisfactory	Failing E: Below 60% I: Incomplete U: Unsatisfactory AW, BW, CW, DW: Credit Withheld	Notations NG: No Grade R: Repeated Course
		<i>June 7, 2027 Mary Jackson</i>	
		Date	Official Signature

Attendance

Showing up matters! Consistent and timely attendance shows your level of responsibility and dedication. And – real talk – attendance has real financial consequences. If you enroll in post-secondary education and you don't show up for your classes on time or in full, you're throwing away money you've spent on tuition! If you're in the career world, a business won't waste their money on someone who isn't showing up reliably.

Behavior

Consistently making responsible choices helps build a positive reputation and demonstrates maturity, which others take into account when evaluating your potential. By staying focused and maintaining good conduct, you set a strong foundation for achieving your goals and planning for a successful future.

Courses

Ideally, you're selecting your classes with more intention than just meeting graduation requirements. Course selection can show your ability to take on a challenge; AP, honors, and dual enrollment courses show your ability to handle rigor and push yourself. Completing a CTE pathway shows your dedication and commitment to an industry. Having space for internship blocks shows that you can manage your time well and have skills at the ready.

Legal Name Kelly Jones
ID Number 111-22-333
Birth Date 02/02/2009
Class of 2027
Graduation Date 05/27/2027

Parent/Guardian Kenny and Kim Jones

SECONDARY SCHOOL INFORMATION

School Name Centennial High School
Address 123 Second Street
City Baltimore State MD Zip Code 21222
Phone 410-555-2121 Fax 410-555-3131

Principal Mary Jackson Counselor Jim Lawrence

SUBJECTS	INSTR LEVEL	FINAL		CREDIT EARNED	QUALITY POINTS
			GRADE		
Gr. 9 SCHOOL YEAR 2023 - 2024					
English 9	ST		C	1.00	2.00
Amer. Govt.	ST		B	1.00	3.00
Algebra 1	ST		E	0.00	0.00
Biology	ST		D	1.00	1.00
Spanish I	ST		C	1.00	2.00
Tech./Pers. Comp.	ST		A	1.00	4.00
PE Fitness	ST		C	1.00	2.00
Present: 165.0	Absent: 15.0			6.00	14.00

SUBJECTS	INSTR LEVEL	FINAL		CREDIT EARNED	QUALITY POINTS
			GRADE		
Gr. 10 SCHOOL YEAR 2024 - 2025					
English 10	ST		D	1.00	1.00
World History	ST		C	1.00	2.00
Algebra 1	ST	R	D	1.00	1.00
Environmental Science	ST		C	1.00	2.00
Spanish 2	ST		C	1.00	2.00
Health	ST		D	1.00	1.00
Graphic Arts	ST		B	1.00	3.00
Present: 162.0	Absent: 18.0			7.00	12.00

SUBJECTS	INSTR LEVEL	FINAL		CREDIT EARNED	QUALITY POINTS
			GRADE		
Gr. 11 SCHOOL YEAR 2025 - 2026					
English 11	ST		D	1.00	1.00
U.S. History	ST		D	1.00	1.00
Geometry	ST		D	1.00	1.00
Oceanography	ST		C	1.00	2.00
Spanish 3	ST		C	1.00	2.00
Music	ST		E	0.00	0.00
Comp. Aided Design 1	ST		A	1.00	4.00
Present: 167.00	Absent: 13.00			6.00	11.00

SUBJECTS	INSTR LEVEL	FINAL		CREDIT EARNED	QUALITY POINTS
			GRADE		
Gr. 12 SCHOOL YEAR 2026- 2027					
English 12	ST		D	1.00	1.00
World Cultures	ST		D	1.00	1.00
Consumer Math	ST		C	1.00	2.00
Ecology	ST		C	1.00	2.00
Fundamentals of Art	ST		D	1.00	1.00
Sign Language	ST		D	1.00	1.00
Comp. Aided Design 2	H		B	1.00	4.00
Present: 160.0	Absent: 20.0			7.00	12.00

ACADEMIC SUMMARY					
SUBJECTS	9	10	11	12	TOT
English	1	1	1	1	4.0
Social Studies	1	1	1	1	4.0
Mathematics	0	1	1	1	3.0
Science	1	1	1	1	4.0
World Language	1	1	1	1	4.0
Business Education					
Art		1		1	2.0
Music			0		
Physical Education	1				1.0
Health		1			1.0
Technology Education	1	1			2.0
Career & Tech Ed. (CTE)			1	1	2.0
TOTAL					27.0

MARYLAND HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS (X WHEN PASSED)			
PARCC Algebra I	X	HSA Biology	X
PARCC English 10	X	HSA Government	X

Serv. Learning Hrs.	MET
---------------------	-----

GPA: 1.9

Weighted GPA: 1.9

ACADEMIC COURSE CODES	COURSE GRADES AND NOTIFICATIONS		
GT: Gifted and Talented H: Honors ST: Standard SE: Special Education	Passing A: 90-100% B: 80-89% C: 70-79% D: 60-69% S: Satisfactory	Failing E: Below 60% I: Incomplete U: Unsatisfactory AW, BW, CW, DW: Credit Withheld	Notations NG: No Grade R: Repeated Course <i>June 4, 2027 Mary Jackson</i> Date Official Signature

BUILDING THE WHOLE STUDENT:

Why Social & Emotional Skills Matter

Success after high school isn't only about grades, test scores or resumes. How you manage emotions, build relationships and make responsible decisions are critical for long-term success.

Social and Emotional skills help you:

- Navigate stress and change with confidence
- Communicate effectively with peers, professors and employers
- Build resilience after setbacks
- Develop a sense of purpose and self-awareness

Five Social & Emotional Skills for Success

1

SELF-AWARENESS

- Understanding emotions, strengths, values and goals.

- Recognizing stress triggers
- Identifying interests and career motivations
- Knowing when to ask for help

Students who understand their strengths can choose a major and career path aligned with their values and abilities.

2

SELF-MANAGEMENT

- Effectively managing emotions, time and behaviors.

- Coping with anxiety and pressure
- Balancing academics, work and activities
- Staying motivated and organized

Collaborators value reliability, adaptability and time management as much as technical skills.

3

SOCIAL AWARENESS

- Understanding and respecting others' perspectives and backgrounds.

- Demonstrating empathy
- Working with people from diverse cultures
- Understanding social norms in different settings

Group projects require collaboration and respect for differing perspectives.

4

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

- Building and maintaining healthy, positive relationships.

- Clear communication
- Conflict resolution
- Teamwork and collaboration

Strong teamwork skills often lead to leadership opportunities and career growth.

5

RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

- Making thoughtful, ethical and informed choices.

- Evaluating consequences
- Managing peer pressure
- Making financial and academic decisions

These abilities support choices around majors, internships, finances and personal well-being.

Make sure you know how to find these resources in your space

Visit the Counseling Department in your high school, Student Services on your college campus or Human Resources to explore your options in the workplace.

Zones of Regulation: Emotional Zoning in Real Moments

Green Zone

Ready to Engage or Optimal

What it looks like during transition:

- Feeling motivated in a college class or new job
- Participating in group discussions or team projects
- Following schedules and expectations independently



This is important to recognize when they're at their best and lean into opportunities, networking, asking questions, applying for internships or taking on responsibility.

Yellow Zone

Pressure Is Building or Cautious

Potential transition triggers:

- First college exams or job evaluations
- Balancing classes, work and personal life
- Unclear expectations from professors or supervisors

How zoning helps: Students learn that stress or anxiety doesn't mean failure. By labeling the Yellow Zone, they can:

- Use coping strategies (breathing, planning, asking questions)
- Prevent escalation into shutdown or conflict
- Practice professional self-regulation

This is especially important in workplaces and college settings, where emotional outbursts are often misinterpreted as lack of maturity.



Red Zone

Overwhelmed or Reactive

Potential transition triggers:

- Conflict with a supervisor, professor or roommate
- Academic probation or workplace mistakes
- Feeling embarrassed, angry or out of control

How zoning helps: Instead of reacting in ways that could damage relationships or opportunities, students learn to:

- Step away before responding
- Request time to regroup
- Seek support appropriately

This builds workplace professionalism and self advocacy, two skills employers and educators consistently value.



Blue Zone

Discouraged or Disengaged

Potential transition triggers:

- Homesickness or feeling isolated
- Not performing as well as expected
- Feeling behind peers

How zoning helps: Students recognize that low energy or sadness are signals—not failures. Emotional zoning encourages them to:

- Reach out for academic, emotional or peer support
- Adjust expectations without quitting
- Maintain persistence through challenges

This is critical for retention in college and long term success in jobs.



Career and Technical Education:

See Your Future Shine in Maryland

Imagine your future like a mirror ball—each facet reflects a new skill, a new opportunity, a new version of yourself. Maryland's Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs let you explore every angle while still in high school, giving you the skills and confidence to step into college, a career or both.

CTE is more than classes; it's hands-on, real-world learning. Whether you're designing buildings, saving lives, coding apps, fixing engines or running a business, Maryland CTE programs help you reach your goals faster and smarter.



Career Clusters: Reflections of You

Maryland's 10 CTE Career Clusters are like mirrors showing different sides of your potential. Explore each one and see which reflection sparks your curiosity.

Career Research & Development (CRD)

This highly individualized CTE pathway helps students build the academic, technical and workplace skills needed for further education and future employment based on your own interests and research. It simultaneously prepares you for post-secondary education and the workplace!

Maryland CTE by the Numbers (2024-2025)

Maryland's CTE programs are **thriving**—helping students explore interests and build future-ready skills.

- ➔ **High School CTE Programs:** 222 programs of study across 24 school systems
- ➔ **High School Enrollment:** 139,000 students (approx. 49% of all high schoolers)

CTE Reflects Your Possibilities

- Earn industry-recognized credentials and/or certifications
- Gain college credit while in high school
- Get real-world work experience
- Boost academic performance
- Build skills for high-demand, high-wage careers
- Graduate ready for college or workforce



Every reflection shows a potential version of you. Spin the mirror ball, explore your interests, and step confidently into your future.

Explore your pathway today: Scan the QR code to discover Maryland CTE programs.



Catapult Your Career

What are these opportunities? Let's break down Industry-Recognized Credentials, Internships, Apprenticeships & Job Shadowing to find the right fit for you!

Industry-Recognized Credential (IRC)

- A certificate, license or credential obtained by a testing process
- Receive validation of career-connected skills
- Recognized by industry and employers – establish your expertise
- Examples: Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA), Paraprofessional Certification.



Internship

- Get hands-on experience in a workplace – paid or unpaid.
- Great for exploring a field, boosting your resume and building connections.
- You'll work under supervision, learn valuable skills and sometimes even earn school credit!
- *Tip:* Start early and gain confidence for college, career and beyond.

Apprenticeship

- Earn while you learn! Yes, you get paid to train for a career.
- Combines real job experience with classroom instruction.
- Includes a mentor who guides you step-by-step through everything you need to know.
- 450 hours of paid on-the-job training (OJT)
- 144 hours of related technical instruction (RTI)

Job Shadowing

- Spend a day (or more) following a professional and see what their job is really like.
- Ask questions, explore career paths and see the behind-the-scenes action.
- Not paid – but the experience is priceless when it comes to planning your future.

WHY THESE OPPORTUNITIES MATTER



"Whether it was organizing slides, making folders, or facilitating intern meetings, I felt the weight and the heart behind it all. The Summer of Service events, especially our weekly visits to the community food pantry, gave me a chance to reconnect with my hometown in a new, meaningful way. I'm leaving with a full heart, so much hope, and a big smile knowing I got to be part of something that once helped me." - Lupe Duarte, MBRT Intern

Every opportunity opens a door. Whether it's a connection, a new skill, or a boost in confidence – your future is waiting, and these experiences help unlock it.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☑ Earn while you learn – Interns and apprentices can get paid to gain real skills. | ☑ Gain a competitive edge – Graduate with experience, confidence and a professional network. |
| ☑ Test drive your future – Find out if a career path is right for you before committing time and money. | ☑ Build lifelong friendships – Join a diverse community of ambitious students just like you! |

READY TO DIVE IN?

Scan the QR code to discover internships, apprenticeships and job shadowing opportunities near you and don't forget to check with your counselor or career coach to learn about industry recognized credentials (IRC) and other opportunities in your local area!



These real-world opportunities don't just help you learn about careers – they help you experience them.



Empowering Maryland's Future Leaders: Inside the MBRT Student Ambassador Program

A Statewide Youth
Leadership Pipeline



Be a Student Ambassador

Leadership starts now.

As a Student Ambassador, you're not just preparing for your future—you're helping shape Maryland's future *today*.

Student Ambassadors from all 24 school districts come together to:

- Participate in conversations with state and local education leaders
- Engage with Maryland business professionals
- Advocate for improvements to inspire change
- Serve as a voice for their peers in statewide discussions
- Exclusive invitations for Way to Be magazine features



Why Join?

A Launchpad for Leadership

Ambassadors build strong leadership and public-speaking skills through hands-on experiences, statewide events including Youth Congress Day and Industry Day and interactions with civic and business leaders.

A Network That Matters The program connects students with peers from across Maryland, fostering a statewide network of young leaders driven to make a difference.

A Seat at the Table Ambassadors directly contribute to discussions shaping the future of education—ensuring student voices are heard and respected.

You'll build real- world skills through

- Mock interviews
- Advocacy and meeting with professionals
- Goal-setting sessions
- Presenting to local leaders

See the Impact

The MBRT Student Ambassador Program is cultivating a generation of informed, confident and civically engaged leaders. By empowering students to speak up about their educational experiences and aspirations, the program helps shape policies and practices that better align education with workforce demands.



Sakshi T. Former Student Ambassador and MBRT Alumna, Class of 2026

"To me, being a student Ambassador means being committed, dedicated, and focused on making a difference. It has helped me grow in confidence and develop my leadership skills. Most importantly, it gives me the opportunity and responsibility to create a positive change and support others in my community."



Spotlight: Current Student Ambassador Profile

Meet Yasmine I. Howard County, Class of 2028

Passion: Healthcare, Nursing and providing other students with access to learning opportunities

Strengths: Problem solving

Yasmine joined the MBRT Student Ambassador Program after learning more about the opportunity through her older sister who has also participated in the program. Yasmine was inspired by the access and opportunities her sister were exposed to through her participation and was encouraged by her sister to apply.

As an Ambassador, Yasmine has:

- Presented and shared her journey to student ambassadors in staff trainings and board meetings
- Developed her Women in Nursing Club in order to provide access to nursing career exploration to other students in her high school
- Participated in statewide conversations alongside other Maryland students to learn more about post-secondary pathways and develop durable skills such as resume writing and public speaking.

"The program is fun and low-pressure. I've met people from all over Maryland, and it's helped me feel more confident. I really liked the mock interviews—they gave me a boost!"



Ready to Lead?

- Do you stand up for what you believe in?
- Are you someone who sets big goals—and goes after them?
- Do you enjoy helping others grow, succeed or learn?

If that sounds like you, leadership might be a big part of your future! If you're curious, passionate or just looking for a place to grow—this is it.

Learn more and apply today.



Finding Your Path. Finding Your Place.

COLLEGE VISIT GUIDE

Visiting the schools you are considering attending for your post-secondary education is an essential step in the selection process. As you walk through different spaces, you have a chance to reflect on who you are and what kind of environment will help you grow. Each visit becomes a step forward on your journey toward finding the place where you truly belong.

Before You Go:

- ☐ **Register for a visit.** Most schools regularly offer undergraduate admissions tours, which usually involve a student-led tour of campus and short information session. You'll be with other prospective students and their caregivers. Try to visit when students are on campus – not during a break – so you get the full campus feel. Check the school's website for full details!
- ☐ **Plan travel.** Distance is a typically a top consideration for students. How long does it take to get home? How easy is it? (Even in Maryland, traveling from one side of the state to the other can take up to five or more hours! Lots of options!) Plan for how you will get to your destination and any accommodations that might be needed for your visit.
- ☐ **Conduct a little research.** Have a basic understanding of the school, so you walk in with clarity. Prepare questions about the school.

During the Visit:

- ☐ **Take notes.** Make a copy of our full campus visit guide to help you know the information you should look for and questions to ask. Scan the QR code to the right to access!
- ☐ **Sit in on class.** If possible, ask to sit in for a class. Get a feel for class size, resources and support. Just remember that each professor will have a different style of teaching.
- ☐ **Have a meal.** You will likely be eating most of your meals on campus for at least the first two years of college. Give the dining facilities a test run! Keep in mind offerings usually change daily, so if you don't love a singular meal, don't let it change your whole opinion. (This step is especially important if you have allergies or dietary restrictions!)
- ☐ **Make conversation.** Talk to students and professors. Ask them about their experiences, campus life, safety, support and opportunities. They'll be more than happy to share!



Follow Up:

- ☐ **Reflect.** Look at your notes. What did you like or dislike? Did the environment feel like a reflection of you and the life you want to have for the next four years? How did this school compare to others? (Add the comparison/ranking to your notes!)
- ☐ **Connect.** Follow the school's social media. Sign up for newsletters. Try attending a virtual event, if offered. Send a thank-you email to admissions or any specific people you met.

Shine Your Light: Make Your College Applications

Sparkle

Your college applications are like a mirrorball – made up of different pieces that reflect your unique and multidimensional story under the spotlight.

Prepare:

Build Your College List

Consider factors like location, majors, campus size, and tuition when making your college list. Apply to safety (2-3), target (3-5), and reach (2-3) schools for a balanced selection.

Create Your Common App Account

The Common App opens in August. Register, complete the FERPA Release and sync with your high school's college planning platform (like Naviance or Xello) to transfer your documents easily.

Gather Documents:

Transcripts

Get the transcript release form from your counselor, complete it once in your senior year. Submit the College Application Transcript Request Form via the Common App at least two weeks before deadlines.

Letters of Recommendation

Ask teachers for recommendations, aiming for 2-3 letters. Before sending an official request, send an email to your teacher asking if this is okay. Consider teachers who instruct courses related to your intended major or ones that you've really connected with. Make it easy for them to write you a personalized letter by sending them your resume or brag sheet and reminding them of your intended major/future goals.

Reminder: Allow 3-4 weeks for completion. Check in with your counseling department for their specific application processes.

Tell Your Story:

Academics

Your GPA and test scores are important for college admissions and scholarships. Know each college's criteria. Highlight any academic awards and feature challenging courses or classes related to your major.

Extracurriculars

Colleges want passionate students! Highlight your activities to show your activities and commitment. Ideally, focus on a few experiences that you've been involved with for a longer period and relate to your future goals (think quality, not quantity).

College Essay

Your essay is a chance to show your voice, writing skills, personality and important life experiences. What do you want the admissions committee to know or understand about you? This can help you stand out; you're more than just a transcript or test score! Ask a trusted mentor to proofread before submission.

COLLEGE TUITION FOR THE 2026-27 SCHOOL YEAR

THE FOLLOWING ARE ESTIMATES BASED ON FULL-TIME UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS
(AT LEAST 12 CREDITS) – FALL 2025*

TUITION IS BASED ON IN-STATE RESIDENCY. RATES ARE PER YEAR.

HOUSING IS BASED ON DOUBLE-OCCUPANCY (MID-RANGE) AND ROOM CHARGES ONLY (NOT ROOM & BOARD) **

PUBLIC COLLEGES

NAME	LOCATION	WEBSITE	# OF FT UNDERGRADS FALL 2025	TUITION & FEES	HOUSING
Bowie State University	Bowie	www.bowiestate.edu	4,071	\$10,206	\$8,668
Coppin State University	Baltimore	http://www.coppin.edu	2,022	\$7,524	\$7,275
Frostburg State University	Frostburg	http://www.frostburg.edu	2,396	\$10,778	\$6,776
Morgan State University	Baltimore	http://www.morgan.edu	8,885	\$8,466	\$11,610
Salisbury University	Salisbury	http://www.salisbury.edu	5,950	\$11,466	\$8,150
St. Mary's College of MD	St. Mary's City	http://www.smcm.edu	1,587	\$16,148	\$9,183
Towson University	Towson	http://www.towson.edu	14,613	\$12,690	\$8,672
University of Baltimore	Baltimore	http://www.ubalt.edu/index.cfm	633	\$10,412	N/A
University of MD – Baltimore County	Catonsville	http://www.umbc.edu	9,741	\$14,101	\$9,654
University of MD – College Park	College Park	http://www.umd.edu	29,879	\$12,708	\$10,755
University of MD – Eastern Shore	Princess Anne	https://www.umes.edu/home	2,334	\$9,680	\$6,666
University of MD – Global Campus	Adelphi	http://www.umuc.edu	13,760	\$337 per credit	N/A

PRIVATE COLLEGES (FOUR-YEAR INDEPENDENT COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES)

NAME	LOCATION	WEBSITE	# OF FT UNDERGRADS	TUITION & FEES	HOUSING
Capitol Technology University	Laurel	https://www.captechu.edu	307	\$28,614	\$8,020
Goucher College	Towson	http://www.goucher.edu	1,003	\$57,800	\$9,480
Hood College	Frederick	http://www.hood.edu	1,139	\$50,900	\$8,600
Johns Hopkins University	Baltimore	https://www.jhu.edu	5,679	\$68,670	\$13,073
Loyola University, Maryland	Baltimore	http://www.loyola.edu	3,981	\$61,810	\$12,290
Maryland Institute College of Art	Baltimore	https://www.mica.edu	1,126	\$58,310	\$12,978
McDaniel College	Westminster	http://www.mcdaniel.edu	1,615	\$54,745	\$7,416
Mount St. Mary's University	Emmitsburg	http://www.msmary.edu	1,648	\$50,000	\$8,160
Notre Dame of Maryland University	Baltimore	http://www.ndm.edu	678	\$45,450	\$8,509
SANS Technology Institute	Rockville	https://www.sans.edu	248	\$20,825***	N/A
St. John's College	Annapolis	http://www.sjc.edu	454	\$44,860	\$8,442
Stevenson University	Stevenson	http://www.stevenson.edu	2,921	\$41,896	\$9,896
Washington Adventist University	Takoma Park	http://wau.edu	382	\$29,600	\$5,000
Washington College	Chestertown	http://www.washcoll.edu	906	\$58,704	\$9,350
Women's Institute of Torah Seminary & College	Baltimore	http://wits.edu	111	\$410 per credit	N/A
Yeshiva College of the Nations Capital	Silver Spring	http://www.yeshiva.edu	49	\$54,500	N/A

A **community college** is a locally focused, usually public institution that offers affordable two-year degrees, certificates and transfer programs, often with more flexible admissions.

A **public college** is funded in part by state or local governments, typically offering lower tuition—especially for in-state students—and a wider range of programs and larger campuses.

A **private college** is funded mainly through tuition, donations and endowments rather than government support, and often has higher tuition but smaller class sizes along with more specialized programs.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

THE FOLLOWING IS BASED ON ALL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS ENROLLMENT – BOTH FULL & PART-TIME - Fall 2025

NAME	LOCATION	WEBSITE	# OF UNDERGRADS FALL 2025	COST PER CREDIT HOUR (IN COUNTY)
Allegany College of Maryland ****	Cumberland	http://www.allegany.edu	2,628	\$166
Anne Arundel Community College	Arnold	http://www.aacc.edu	12,112	\$135
Baltimore City Community College	Baltimore	http://www.bccc.edu	4,196	\$110
Carroll Community College	Westminster	http://www.carrollcc.edu	3,278	\$145
Cecil College	North East	http://www.cecil.edu/Pages/default.aspx	1,871	\$140
Chesapeake College	Wye Mills	http://www.chesapeake.edu	2,250	\$135
College of Southern Maryland	LaPlata, Leonardtown, Prince Frederick	http://www.csmd.edu	5,352	\$175
Community College of Baltimore County	Catonsville, Dundalk, Essex, Randallstown and Trapp, Hunt Valley	http://www.ccbcmd.edu	17,692	\$124
Frederick Community College	Frederick	http://www.frederick.edu	7,504	\$169.50
Garrett College ****	McHenry	http://www.garrettcollege.edu	740	\$99
Hagerstown Community College	Hagerstown	http://www.hagerstowncc.edu	5,233	\$132
Harford Community College	Bel Air	http://www.harford.edu	5,358	\$146
Howard Community College	Columbia	http://www.howardcc.edu	8,868	\$144
Montgomery College	Germantown, Rockville, Silver Spring	http://www.montgomerycollege.edu	19,972	\$207
Prince George's Community College	Largo	http://www.pgcc.edu	12,354	\$119
Wor-Wic Community College	Salisbury	http://www.worwic.edu	3,029	\$136

*Enrollment data provided by Maryland Higher Education Commission - "Enrollment by Term and Year Fall 2025 Maryland Colleges and Universities"

** Tuition & Fees and Housing prices from institutions' direct website or contacts.

*** SANS Technology Institute's total cost for their bachelor degree program is \$41,650

**** Allegany College of Maryland offers housing on Cumberland Campus at \$6,800 per year for a four bedroom apartment – includes wifi & washer/dryer. Garrett College offers housing at \$5,833 per year for mid-range, double occupancy.

Yes, you can afford to go to college!

Other Financial Aid statistics show:

- The U.S. Department of Education awards an estimated \$46 billion in scholarship money annually.
- As of June 2026, "state of MD gave \$134 million in grants and \$59 million in scholarships to 275,565 Maryland students with an average aid of \$15,200."
- Around 30% of Maryland undergraduate students receive Pell grants.
- A total of 90 Class of 2026 graduates from MBRT programs received \$1,435,683 in state aid—averaging over \$15,952 per student—to attend Maryland colleges and universities.
- 183 MBRT Class of 2026 students received some form of financial aid. The total financial aid awarded to students is \$5,244,231.00. The aid per student was \$28,657.00.

Sources: <https://educationdata.org/scholarship-statistics> | Trend Generator

Paying for Post-Secondary Education

What is post-secondary education? Higher education? Actually, it means any continued education after your high school graduation. Many people first think of college, but this also includes trade school and credentials. It can be difficult to figure out what it will really cost and what help is available. See the sample financial aid offer letter to learn more and remember no matter your path, there is funding available to help you!

Direct Costs are items that are billed from the university. You can think about these like your "core" expenses. Note: On your package, they will likely place standard meal and housing plans. Be sure to look into different options here.

Indirect costs are additional college-related expenses you are likely to incur while in college. These are not billed from the college, but important to consider when budgeting.

Work study is a federally funded program that allows eligible students to earn money through part-time jobs while attending college.

Federal loans are money you would be borrowing to help pay for college. It is very important to note loans must be paid back, plus interest.

Subsidized loans are need-based federal loans where the government pays the interest while you are in school, while **unsubsidized loans** are available regardless of financial need, and you are responsible for all interest from the time of disbursement.



SAMPLE FINANCIAL AID LETTER AWARD YEAR 2026 - 2027

Student Name
Student ID
Date of Offer

ESTIMATED DIRECT COSTS

Tuition	\$48,000
Fees	\$975
Meal Plan	\$5,500
Housing	\$7,200
TOTAL	\$61,675

ESTIMATED INDIRECT COSTS

Books/Supplies	\$1,500
Personal Expenses	\$1,500
Transportation	\$850
TOTAL	\$3,850

ESTIMATED TOTAL COST OF ATTENDANCE

\$65,525

SCHOLARSHIPS & GRANTS

Presidential Scholarship	\$20,000
Campus Visit Scholarship	\$1,000
College Need-Based Grant	\$5,000
Federal Pell	\$7,395
TOTAL	\$33,395

FEDERAL LOANS & WORK STUDY

Direct Subsidized Loan	\$3,500
Direct Unsubsidized Loan	\$2,000
Work Study	\$3,000
TOTAL	\$8,500

ESTIMATED NET COST OF ATTENDANCE

\$32,130

ESTIMATED REMAINING BALANCE

\$23,630

Please note this is a sample award letter for educational purposes only. These dollar amounts are not a reflection of any school-specific rates or awards, but represent a realistic sample. All awards and letter formatting will vary based on the institution.

Your **Cost of Attendance (COA)** includes both direct and indirect costs. This number is annual expense. (Note: You may see portions of your aid letter broken down by semester.)

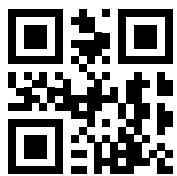
Scholarships and grants are money that you don't have to pay back! Your package will reflect offerings directly from your institution and federal funding based on your FAFSA filing.

The **net cost of attendance** is your total cost of attendance minus scholarships and grants. (Note: some schools will include your loans and work study in your overall aid - it is important to look at this separately as this is money you would owe or need to work for.)

Your **remaining balance** is what you will owe after all possible award money has been accepted. (Some schools will also consider estimated parent contribution before calculating the remaining balance.)

If your financial aid package doesn't offer you enough assistance, you can complete a Financial Aid Appeal. You will need a legitimate reason for this request, which would consider changes in circumstances since the taxes submitted for your FAFSA, like job loss, medical bills or divorce. Some schools are also considering appeals if there are children from the same household enrolled in college at the same time. The process and accepted reason vary from school to school.

Note: At the initial offer, your aid likely does not include state aid or local scholarships. There is still much more money on the table!



**7th-10th grade
Next Generation
Scholars students,
prequalify now!
Prequalifying
may secure your
eligibility for
the Guaranteed
Access Grant
before you apply
for college. Find
your local MBRT
staff member for
more information.**

**Submit FAFSA & One-App
by March 1 for priority
consideration.**

FINDING FUNDING

- ☐ Complete the FAFSA: Opens October 1 annually. Apply at fafsa.gov.
 - Submit your FAFSA as soon as possible! Some scholarships or grants are based on FAFSA completion on a first-come, first-served basis.
 - The FAFSA process is easier than you think! It typically only takes about 15 – 20 minutes for each person to complete.
 - Don't forget to add all the schools you've applied to – add these, as needed.
 - Consider adding one or more Maryland-based schools, regardless of your plans, to help keep your options open!
 - Choose the Work-Study option on your FAFSA to qualify for many on-campus positions.
- ☐ Create an MDCAPS account and submit the MHEC One-App, if needed.
 - The One-App is for Maryland state aid, including undocumented students who cannot complete FAFSA.
- ☐ Search for and submit scholarship applications!
 - There are lots of places to look for scholarships:
 - High school counseling office
 - College financial aid office
 - Scholarship websites: Fastweb.com, BigFuture, Naviance, Scholarships.com
 - Community groups + churches
 - Employers (yours or your parents')
 - MHEC One-App: mhec.maryland.gov
 - Have a portfolio of materials ready:
 - Personal essay
 - Recommendation letters
 - Résumé or list of activities
 - Transcript or GPA
 - Peak scholarship season for local scholarships is typically February – the end of April.

MAINTAIN ELIGIBILITY

- Academic Performance: Meet GPA requirements for aid renewal.
- Enrollment Status: Remain enrolled in eligible programs.
- Timely Applications: Reapply for aid each year.



**The Maryland
Higher Education
Commission
(MHEC) administers
more than \$130
million each year to
50,000+ Maryland
students who
are attending a
Maryland college or
university through
programs like
Next Generation
Scholars/
Guaranteed Access
Grant and Maryland
Community
College Promise
Scholarship.**

The More You Know, The More You Grow

Investing in yourself and your education is one of the most valuable decisions you can make. Whether you pursue a certificate or a degree, each learning experience helps you build a strong foundation of knowledge and skills. That foundation is exactly what employers are looking for—and what they are willing to invest in.



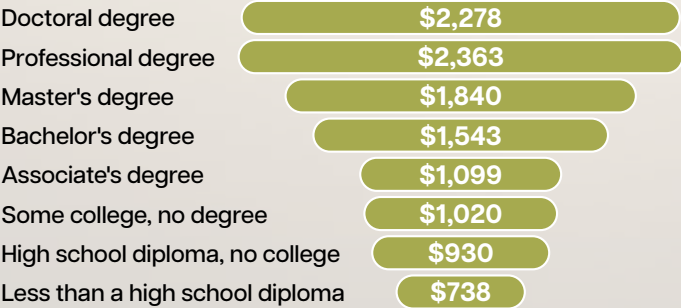
Every path leads somewhere – know your direction!



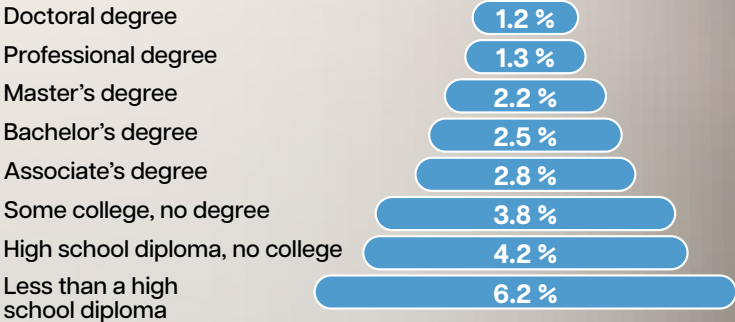
Level of Education	Example Careers	Time to Earn	Where You Can Earn It
Certificate	Web Developer, EMT	A few weeks–2 years	Career Schools, Community Colleges, High School Programs
Associate's	Dental Hygienist, Nurse	2 years (60 credits)	Community Colleges
Bachelor's	Teacher, Engineer	4–5 years (120 credits)	Colleges & Universities
Master's	Social Worker, Economist	1–2 years (30–60 credits)	Graduate Programs
Doctoral	Researcher, Professor	2–5 years + Dissertation	Universities
Professional	Doctor, Lawyer, Architect	2–5 years + Licensure	Professional Schools

Earnings & Employment Status

Median Weekly Earnings by education attainment, 2024



Unemployment Rate by education attainment, 2024



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey. <https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>

HERE'S WHAT SOME MARYLAND JOBS PAY

Occupation	Annual Wage	Monthly Wage	Hourly Wage	Education Required
Surgeon	\$349,250	\$29,104.17	\$167.91	Doctoral or professional degree
Orthodontist	\$315,840	\$26,320.00	\$151.85	Doctoral or professional degree
Psychiatrist	\$260,100	\$21,675.00	\$125.05	Doctoral or professional degree
Aerospace Engineer	\$158,290	\$13,190.83	\$76.10	Bachelor's Degree
Lawyer	\$143,490	\$11,957.50	\$68.98	Doctoral or professional degree
Nurse Practitioner*	\$129,210	\$10,767.50	N/A	Master's degree
Actuary*	\$125,770	\$10,480.83	N/A	Bachelor's degree
Information Security Analyst*	\$124,910	\$10,409.17	N/A	Bachelor's degree
Data Scientist*	\$112,590	\$9,382.50	N/A	Bachelor's degree
Biochemists and Biophysicists	\$105,920	\$8,826.67	\$50.92	Bachelor's degree
Speech Language Pathologist	\$100,560	\$8,380.00	\$48.35	Master's degree
Veterinarian	\$100,370	\$8,364.17	\$48.23	Doctoral or professional degree
Financial/Investment Analyst	\$98,890	\$8,240.83	\$47.54	Bachelor's degree
Technical Writer	\$98,350	\$8,195.83	\$47.29	Bachelor's degree
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products	\$95,640	\$7,970.00	\$45.98	Associate's degree
Farmer/Rancher	\$88,770	\$7,397.50	\$42.68	High school diploma
Accountant/Auditor	\$84,890	\$7,074.17	\$40.81	Bachelor's degree
Environmental Scientist	\$82,100	\$6,841.67	\$39.47	Bachelor's degree
Forensic Science Technician	\$78,220	\$6,518.33	\$37.60	Bachelor's degree
Police Officer	\$77,440	\$6,453.33	\$37.23	High school diploma
Teacher (Secondary)	\$77,030	\$6,419.17	N/A	Bachelor's degree
Producer/Director	\$75,900	\$6,325.00	\$36.49	Bachelor's degree
Physical Therapist Assistant*	\$65,510	\$5,459.17	N/A	Associate's degree
Carpenter	\$60,130	\$5,010.83	\$28.91	High school diploma
Real Estate Sales Agent	\$49,770	\$4,147.50	\$23.93	High school diploma
Dental Assistant	\$48,280	\$4,023.33	\$23.21	Certificate
EMT (Emergency Med. Technician)	\$47,390	\$3,949.17	\$22.78	Certificate
Fitness Trainer	\$45,260	\$3,771.67	\$21.76	Not listed
Photographer	\$44,890	\$3,740.83	\$21.58	High school diploma
Waiter/Waitress	\$35,140	\$2,928.33	\$16.89	High school diploma
Retail Salesperson	\$34,310	\$2,859.17	\$16.50	High school diploma

*One of Maryland's fastest growing jobs!

*Maryland Averages based on BLS Occupational and wage data.

* Projection data for the year 2023.

* Veterinarian data from 2022 year.

For more occupations, visit https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_stru.htm and click on "Occupational and Wage Data" and/or "Projection Data"

Careers in blue represent some jobs in Maryland's Key Lighthouse Industries: Life Sciences, Aerospace & Defense, Quantum Science & IT and Manufacturing. Work in these industries is currently booming and a high priority for the state!



LAUNCH YOUR CAREER WITH SERVICE YEAR OPTION

After high school, work full-time while building real-world experience, grow your skills, and gain confidence through meaningful service that strengthens Maryland communities. Discover what's next with a support system around you.

About the Program

- ✓ Full-time paid jobs
- ✓ No experience required
- ✓ Training & mentorship
- ✓ \$6,000 completion award

Why Apply?

- ✓ Get paid, mentored, & supported
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Service Alumni
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Future Pivot:

A Student's Reflection

By: Kamari H.

Kent County High School, Class of 2026

Before my senior year, I had my future completely planned out... or at least I thought I did. For a while, I wanted to become an esthetician. I was interested in skincare, beauty and helping people feel confident in themselves. It seemed like the perfect career path for me, and I never really considered doing anything else. Even though I had always been great with children and spent much of my life around younger kids, teaching was never something I imagined for myself.

Looking back, the signs were always there. Throughout my childhood, I naturally connected with younger children. Family members and friends often trusted me to help watch their kids because I was patient, responsible and genuinely enjoyed spending time with them. Despite this, I viewed those qualities as personality traits rather than indicators of a future career. In my mind, being good with children and becoming a teacher were two completely different things.

Everything changed during the second semester of my senior year. As part of my Teacher Academy of Maryland class, I was placed in an internship within a three-and-four-year-old preschool program. Although I was very excited, I kind of saw the internship as just another requirement to complete. I expected to gain some experience, finish the course and continue pursuing my original plan of becoming an esthetician. What I did not expect was for the experience to completely change the direction of my life.

From the moment I began working with the children, I felt a connection that surprised me. Every day brought new challenges, but it also brought

countless moments of joy. Whether I was helping a child learn a new skill, comforting them when they were upset or simply watching them grow more confident throughout the day, I found myself looking forward to being in the classroom. I realized that teaching was about much more than academics. It was about building relationships, creating a safe environment and helping children develop socially, emotionally and intellectually.

The more time I spent in the classroom, the more I began to question the plans I had made for myself. For months, I had been so focused on one career path, that I never stopped to consider other possibilities. This internship opened my eyes to a passion I did not know I had. It showed me that sometimes the right opportunity appears when you least expect it, and it is important to remain open to change.

“One of the most valuable lessons I learned from this experience is that it is okay to pivot when life takes you in a different direction.”

Many people believe they must have their entire future figured out by the time they reach high school graduation. However, personal growth often comes from being willing to adapt when new experiences reveal something unexpected about yourself. Choosing a different path does not mean your original plan was a mistake. Instead, it means you have



gained new knowledge and are making decisions

based on who you are becoming.

Because of my internship experience, I made the decision to apply to Morgan State University as an Elementary Education major. This was not a choice I ever imagined making at the beginning of my senior year, but it became the decision that felt most authentic to who I am. Working with preschool students helped me discover a passion for education and a desire to make a positive impact on children's lives.

My journey taught me that sometimes the unexpected opportunities are the ones that shape us the most. Although I began my senior year planning to become an esthetician, I finished it with an entirely new vision for my future. By embracing change and remaining open to new experiences, I discovered a career that aligns with my strengths, values and passions. Most importantly, I learned that it is never too late to change directions when you find something that truly inspires you.



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DURABLE SKILLS

Success isn't just about having the right answers. It's about how you think, communicate, adapt and lead—skills you carry with you no matter where you go. These are called **durable skills**, and they are what employers across Maryland are looking for in the next generation of talent.

Your knowledge might open the door but your durable skills help you shine once you're in the room.

Each skill is like a mirrored tile reflecting your strengths and shaping your path. Here are five that will help you stand out in school, careers and beyond:



Future-Ready Fact:

93% of employers say soft (durable) skills play a critical role in hiring decisions.

— ZipRecruiter Job Market Outlook for Grads

ADAPTABILITY —

Stay Flexible

Plans change. Challenges happen. What matters is how you respond.

Employers value people who can adjust, stay focused and move forward with confidence.

COLLABORATION —

Reflect Strength Together

Great things don't happen alone. Whether in class or on the job, teamwork shows you're dependable and ready to contribute.

Try This: Join a club, team or group project—every experience builds your ability to work with others.

COMMUNICATION —

Let Your Voice Shine

Clear communication helps your ideas stand out. Listening is just as powerful as speaking.

Power Move: Create your own 30-second "elevator pitch" about who you are and what excites you. (See page 31)

CRITICAL THINKING —

Look Deeper

Future-ready thinkers don't just accept information—they question it, analyze it, and connect ideas.

Shift Your Thinking: Instead of asking "What's the answer?" try asking "Why does this work?"



"As you begin to navigate your future, use your own critical thinking during your journey. Always remember it is okay to change your course as you adjust and adapt to your future: whether for a moment, a season or a lifetime."

—Carrie Douthit, SHRM-CP
Office/HR Manager, Greenscapes Land Care, LLC

PROBLEM SOLVING —

Turn Challenges Into Opportunities

Every problem is a chance to lead, create and grow.

Quick Tip: Break big challenges into smaller steps and celebrate progress along the way.

ADD MORE TILES TO YOUR STORY

Your story gets stronger and brighter with every skill you build. Level up with these additional durable skills:

 **Time Management**

 **Empathy**

 **Work Ethic**

 **Growth Mindset**

 **Leadership**

Each one adds depth to your abilities and helps you navigate any path you choose.

NEXT STEPS - Start building your **SHINE** today.

- ☒ Join a school club, sport or organization
- ☒ Volunteer in your community
- ☒ Set goals and track your progress
- ☒ Ask for feedback and use it to grow
- ☒ Make time for real conversations (offline!)

Every small step adds another reflective tile to your future.

BUILDING YOUR BRAND:

You are not just one thing. You're a collection of experiences, passions, strengths and possibilities and your resume is where those reflections come together to shine. Whether you're applying for your first job, internship or college program, this is your chance to show the world all the different directions your light can go.

Use this worksheet to start building a resume that doesn't just list what you've done but also highlights who you are becoming.

STEP-BY-STEP STARTER:

1. Choose a FREE resume builder: Google Docs, Naviance, Canva Resume Templates, etc.
2. Pick a clean format (one page, bold headings, easy to read)
3. Fill out the worksheet below – no experience? Focus on school, classes & activities!
4. Highlight your skills, training, and unique story
5. Ask a teacher, mentor or family member to proofread

PRO TIP ZONE:

- ☒ Be honest – no exaggerating
- ☒ Keep it updated and highlight the positives
- ☒ Use AI to brainstorm for key words based on the specific company/opportunity
- ☒ Use an appropriate email (no partygirl77@...)

FILL IN YOUR BRAND INFO

CONTACT INFO / OBJECTIVE

Name: _____ Phone: _____

City/State: _____ Email: _____

Career Goal or Resume Objective:

Example: "To secure a part-time job that helps me grow my skills in technology and customer service." _____

WORK EXPERIENCE / SKILLS

Company & Job Title (1): _____

Dates (Start – End): _____

Duties (3-5 bullet points):

- _____
- _____
- _____

Skills & Special Training: _____

Company & Job Title (2): _____

Dates (Start – End): _____

Duties (3-5 bullet points):

- _____
- _____
- _____

Skills & Special Training: _____

EDUCATION

School Name: _____ Graduation Date (actual or expected): _____

Relevant Courses (AP, Honors, College): _____

GPA (if 2.5+): _____ Certificates/Licenses: _____

EXTRA-CURRICULAR & INVOLVEMENT

(List group/role/years involved. Check all that apply.)

- 🏆 Sports: _____
- 📚 Academic Groups: _____
- 🌐 Foreign Language Clubs: _____
- 🎵 Music/Talent Groups: _____
- 🎒 Career Training Programs: _____
- 🤝 Community Service: _____
- 🏠 Faith-Based Involvement: _____
- 🎮 Hobbies (related to job): _____

AWARDS / HONORS / ACHIEVEMENTS

(List up to 3 strong examples that show you stand out!)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Your resume is your brand. Your story. **Your power move.**

THE BASICS

- ☑ Be honest – all info should be true and complete
- ☑ Keep your layout consistent, neat and easy to scan
- ☑ Proofread! Check for spelling and grammar mistakes

TIPS ON HOW TO USE AI TO IMPROVE YOUR RESUME:

- Create an AI-generated resume outline to kickstart the process
- Prompt to summarize your career history and work experience
- Generate resume keywords customized to each opportunity to strengthen impact

Reminder to review, personalize and ensure the final work reflects your own experience and voice.

QUICK RESUME CHECKLIST – Think Like a Recruiter

Look at your resume like it's being seen for the first time. Does it reflect your strengths? Your growth? Your potential? Every section should add another part of your story.

EMAIL

Is your email professional?
Avoid nicknames or jokes.
Try: `firstname.lastname@gmail.com`

Jane Eyre

444 Main Street
Ellicott City, MD 21042
(410)-555-6789
jane.eyre@gmail.com

Education

Central High School

Pending 2027

- Perfect Attendance during first semester
- CTE Nursing Program
- Expected graduation: May 2027

Employment

Ellicott City Community Pool, Lifeguard

Summer 2025

- 16 hours of work every weekend
- Trained in CPR and First Aid
- Maintained pool cleanliness and safety

Activities

J.V. Soccer, Team Captain

2024-2025

- 8 hours of practice and two games every week
- Led team to 14-2 record
- Highest goal percentage on team
- Won Spirit Award at end-of-year banquet

Helping Hand Nursing Center, Volunteer

2023-2024

- 4 hours of volunteer work twice a month
- Talked to residents, designed activities and assisted nurses
- Recruited two more volunteers

Skills

- Bilingual: Spanish and English
- Basic computer skills, including Microsoft Word and PowerPoint
- Organizational skills learned through balancing school, sports and family obligations
- Dedication and hard work proven through athletic success.

Interests

- Reading
- Photography
- Spending time with family

EDUCATION

+ GPA

Only include GPA if it's 2.5 or higher. Highlight CTE, Honors, AP, or College-Level Courses relevant to the job or program.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Don't have much experience yet? No stress. Focus on your **skills, volunteer roles and achievements**. Don't forget to add internships and apprenticeships.

DATES MATTER

Always include start and stop dates. Shows **consistency and commitment**.

ACTIVITIES / AWARDS

Played sports, joined a club or won an award? Mention your **leadership roles** and what you learned.

VOLUNTEER WORK

Helped at your church, school, or local center? Include it! Explain your role and what skills you picked up.

KEY SKILLS

Employers love to see real-life qualities like: **Responsibility, time management, teamwork, leadership, creativity, multitasking**

INTERESTS

Add interests that match the job or career field. Want to work at a vet clinic? Mention your passion for animals.

Influence the Room

Interview Prep Worksheet – Show Up. Speak Up. Stand Out.

You're not just answering questions. Interviews are your chance to reflect your full story, not just one side of it: your experiences, your voice, your culture, your growth and your goals.

Preparation = Power

Reflection = Impact

Want to influence the room? Start here.

RESEARCH – What's the company, college or program all about? What do they value and how do you connect to that?

ANSWERS – Think through common questions. How can your unique experiences and goals be reflected in your responses?

EXAMPLES – Tell real stories. What moments from your life show your strengths, growth or leadership?

PRACTICE – Rehearse your shine. Practice answering questions with a friend, family member or record yourself to build confidence.

INTERVIEW PREP: FILL IT IN & OWN YOUR STORY

1. Introduce Yourself:

(Who are you, and what are one or two highlights that show you're ready for this role?)

2. What are your future goals?

(College, career, new skills or working right after graduation?)

3. Why should they hire you?

(What makes you interested in this role, and what do you bring to the table?)

4. What are your strengths?

(Real strengths – with a story or achievement to back it up.)

5. What's one weakness you're working on?

(Be honest – show growth and reflection.)

6. Share a teamwork or leadership example:

(Think about group projects, clubs, sports or volunteer work.)

7. How did you handle a tough situation?

(Problem-solving is a skill – show you've got it.)

8. What hobbies relate to the job?

(This is where swimming, coding, writing or music could help you shine.)

9. Questions YOU want to ask:

(Be curious. What are the next steps in the hiring process? It shows you're serious.)

This worksheet is your starting point. Every answer you prepare adds another reflection to your story. When you walk into that room, remember: You're not just one thing—you're a whole spectrum. **Now go reflect it.**



THE BIG PITCH – Your Future, Your Voice, Your Time to Shine

It's time to own your moment. Here's how to bring your A-game to any interview, internship or college meeting.

STEP 1: INFLUENCE THE ROOM

Your presence is your power. Make them feel it before you even speak.

- **Dress the part.** Clean, sharp and confident. Show you mean business.
- **Be a notetaker.** Bring a pen and notebook to show you're paying attention.
- **Start strong.** Shake hands firmly if in person or make eye contact via webcam. First impressions stick!

STEP 2: THE BIG PITCH

This is your moment – sell your story like a pro.

- **Do your homework.** Research the company or school. What do they stand for? Where do you fit in?
- **Bring your resume.** Even if they already have it – bring one to hand over and one with notes for yourself to quickly reference if you feel stuck.
- **Prep your answers.** Think ahead! Practice answering common interview questions with confidence.



STEP 3: ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Keep the energy going after the interview.

- **Say thanks.** Always thank the interviewer before you leave. Gratitude = professionalism.
- **Follow up fast.** Send a thank-you email or note within 24 hours. Mention something you talked about to keep it personal.
- **Stay ready.** Let them know you're excited and available to move forward!

WHAT IS AN ELEVATOR PITCH?

Practice introducing yourself including some highlights to last no more than a minute. Think of it as a personal sales pitch that makes your audience want to learn more about you and have a longer conversation about your ideas and perspectives.

From School to Service:

PATHWAYS TO THE MILITARY

Choosing to serve opens doors to education, global travel, personal growth and rewarding careers in a wide range of fields – and there are a variety of ways to join the military. There isn't just one path to military service, and you don't have to jump right in. If you're considering military, understand your options: enlist directly with a recruiter, join a ROTC program in college or attend a federal service academy.

You must be a U.S. citizen to join or be a lawful permanent resident with a valid green card. You may enlist at 17 with parent consent or 18 or older without and have a High School diploma or GED.

Branches of the Military

Air Force

(<https://www.airforce.com/find-a-recruiter>)

Army

(<https://www.goarmy.com/locate-a-recruiter.html>)

Coast Guard

(<https://www.gocoastguard.com/Careers>)

Marines

(<https://www.marines.com>)

Navy

(<https://www.navy.com/local>)

Space Force

(<https://www.spaceforce.com/how-to-join/enlisted-guardians>)

Steps to Enlist

Step 1: Take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) to determine your qualifications.

Step 2: Pass the physical examination.

Step 3: Meet with a counselor and determine a career.

Step 4: Take the Oath of Enlistment.

Step 5: Receive orders for basic training and start on your path towards your new chapter in life.

<https://www.todayismilitary.com/joining-eligibility/enlisting-military>

Attend a Maryland ROTC Program

- **What is ROTC?** Reserve Officers' Training Corps - A college-based program that prepares students to become officers in the U.S. military while earning their degree.
- **How does ROTC Work?** You enroll at a college that offers ROTC (or cross-register at one nearby) and pursue any major you want! At the same time, you take military specific classes and participate in military activities like specialized classes, physical training and field training. You have some time to try the classes and activities. Service commitment typically happens in junior year.

Where can I attend? Maryland has lots of options!

The schools listed below are known as host schools. This means that their institution houses the actual ROTC detachment or battalion.

Other schools may not directly offer ROTC programs, but may participate as a "crosstown" school. Students enrolled can still join ROTC by attending military science classes and labs at a nearby "host" institution. Check school-specific resources for more information!

- **University of Maryland - College Park**
 - Army ROTC + Air Force ROTC + Naval ROTC
- **Johns Hopkins University** Army ROTC – Blue Jay Battalion
- **Loyola University Maryland**
 - Army ROTC – Greyhound Battalion
- **McDaniel College**
 - Army ROTC
- **Bowie State University**
 - Army ROTC + Air Force ROTC

Attend a Federal Service Academy Option – including one in Maryland

- **What is a Federal Service Academy?** Federal service academies are U.S. government-funded colleges that educate and train students to become officers in the military. In exchange for a free education, graduates commit to serving a minimum number of years in active duty after completing their studies. Admission to these institutions is considered highly competitive.
- **Maryland Option:** United States Naval Academy (USNA): Located in Annapolis, MD. It offers a four-year bachelor's degree, fully funded, leading to a commission as a Navy or Marine Corps officer.





Meet the Pros and Future Pros

This year, “Meet the Pros” pairs a Maryland student with an early-career professional in the same field to explore how interests and experiences reflect within pathways. These stories offer a glimpse of what is possible. No two journeys look exactly alike - and that is the point.

Accounting



Briana B.
p.34



Daquan B.
p.35

Agriculture



Paris B.
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Nicholas O.
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Defense



Jennica B.
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Education



Rylie T.
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Healthcare



Navti E.
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Fatu B.
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Information Technology



Derek C.
p.44



Robbie C.
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Law



Savannah H.
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Nicholas O.
p.48

Accounting



Briana B.

Current High School Student

High School: Queen Anne's County High School, Anticipated 2027

Field(s) of Study: Accounting and Business

Intended Pathway: Four-Year College

What interests, subjects or activities first sparked your curiosity? What about them made you feel excited to learn more?

My joy of math is what sparked my interest in accounting, and I knew I wanted a career that involved math.

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

I knew I wanted to become an accountant since the third grade. I really enjoy math and it came easily to me. Our family used to run an auto shop, and my mom would always do the bookkeeping. The shop was like my second home growing up, so I have fond memories of being there and watching my mother complete the bookkeeping. My sister and I would always file for her. My father worked in banking during high school, and he always wanted to be an accountant, but he became a mechanic at the shop instead. So accounting is kind of a family thing.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

At four years old, I had eye surgery to correct my lazy eye and crossed vision. My eyes have been an ongoing challenge in my life. It is difficult for me to drive, see in 3D, stare at a screen for long periods of time and read. I have always had to work harder than others to keep myself from falling behind. I believe that from this struggle I have developed a strong work ethic and drive that keeps me motivated. I have never let my eyes prevent me from doing anything, but sometimes it does make things difficult. I recently had a prism installed in my glasses, and that has helped

my head tilt. I have learned how to keep going even when things seem impossible.

Who or what helped reflect your potential along the way? (Mentors, teachers, programs, internships, family, community resources, etc.)

My mother, Kristy, is the one who inspired me to become an accountant. She has helped motivate me and guided me when I was stuck. Queen Anne's County High School has always been such a strong support system for me. My teachers have helped along the way. There are too many to name them all, but some stand out. Mr. Lawrence, my accounting teacher, is very motivational and supportive. When he grades my assignments, he always says, "You are going to make a great accountant." He is such a great teacher. Mrs. Welsh has always believed in me, and in her class we always built things, like catapults. Whenever someone did not understand or needed help improving their project, Mrs. Welsh would have me assist them, and that taught me teamwork and patience. Ms. Rossbach, my eighth grade English teacher, always knew I could do whatever I set my mind to. She encouraged me and helped me grow and become the person I am today. Mrs. Ricketts, my career coach, called me down to her office one day and said, "Hey, do you want an internship in an accounting office?" It was so random, but I was lucky she thought of me, and it provided me with such a wonderful experience.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

I was fortunate to have found what I love doing at such a young age. My advice is to try new things while in high school and take chances. Find something that brings you joy. Do not settle for a job; look for a career, and do not chase money, at least at first. Picture yourself in your dream career, and if that brings you happiness and feels right, then go for it. It is okay to change your plan and switch careers. There are too many options to count, so it is okay to change your path. I think I have been pretty lucky throughout my high school career. I have the support of my parents, sister and teachers. But I want students to know, do not get lazy your junior and senior year. Those are crucial years and it all matters.





Daquan B.

Audit Associate, KPMG LLP

High School: Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, 2020

College(s)/ Grad Year: Mount St. Mary's University (Emmitsburg, MD), 2024

Degree(s): Bachelor of Science

Field(s) of Study: Accounting (major); Data Science and Mathematics (minors)

What interests, subjects or activities first sparked your curiosity? What about them made you feel excited to learn more?

I have been intrigued by numbers since I was five years old, so math was naturally always my favorite subject. During my time at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute, I loved challenging myself within the rigorous curriculum and putting my math skills to the test. I always knew my future career would involve numbers, which ultimately paved the way for me to become an accountant and study both mathematics and data science during my undergraduate years.

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

I first realized I wanted to be a forensic accountant back in the eighth grade at Loch Raven Technical Academy, thanks to one of my teachers, who noticed how much I loved the subject. As an undergraduate, I became really interested in how big data is transforming accounting. I ended up taking a data science class and liked it so much that I made it my minor. My internship experiences showed me how exciting the auditing side of the industry is, and now that I am working in the field full time, I absolutely love what I do every single day.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

During my first two years of high school, I attended Calvert Hall College High School, a phenomenal private school in Towson, Maryland. Unfortunately, due to financial reasons, I had to transfer at the end of my sophomore year. It was a challenging transition because I was excelling at a school I had dreamed of attending since the second grade. However, that experience taught me how to adapt to life's unexpected changes. I transferred to Baltimore Polytechnic Institute for my remaining years, where I leveraged the foundation and experiences from Calvert Hall to excel in a highly rigorous curriculum. Looking back, I am incredibly thankful for both environments. The relationships I built and the unique experiences at both institutions have ultimately shaped me into the professional and person I am today.

Who or what helped reflect your potential along the way? (Mentors, teachers, programs, internships, family, community resources, etc.)

Growing up in a single parent household, I was fortunate to have a strong network of family members who stepped up to be the village that raised me into the man I am today. My teachers also played a pivotal role in my development, constantly challenging me and ensuring I never grew

complacent with my academic progress. That foundation prepared me well for both high school and my undergraduate studies. Additionally, playing basketball helped shape my leadership skills, while my active involvement in mentorship groups equipped me with the tools I now use to mentor young men in my own community.

What skills, habits or mindsets help you succeed now? How did you begin building them as a student?

Developing analytical and critical thinking skills, along with the ability to bridge the gap between knowledge and experience, has helped me find value in everything I do. These skills have grown out of my forward thinking approach, as I constantly focus on the bigger picture and understand how my current contributions affect long term goals.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

I have learned the importance of taking time to reflect on experiences, opportunities, challenges, mistakes and accomplishments. Looking back at my time in high school, I realize we are often in such a rush to reach the next stage of adulthood that we forget to master our present circumstances or truly enjoy the journey. My advice is to slow down. Stability and endurance are just as important as your pace.

What's one goal you're working toward next? How are you staying open to new possibilities?

Beyond my professional goal of obtaining my CPA, I am continuously working to grow as a servant leader in every area of my life. For me, servant leadership has nothing to do with titles; instead, it is all about presence and making a difference. I am always looking for new ways and possibilities to positively impact both my colleagues and my community.





Paris B.

Current College Student

High School: North Carolina High School, 2026

College(s): University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES),
Anticipated 2030

Field(s) of Study: General Agriculture (Animal and
Poultry Pre-Vet)

What interests, subjects or activities first sparked your curiosity? What about them made you feel excited to learn more?

Growing up, I was always interested in learning how animals live, how their bodies work and how veterinarians help keep them healthy. What excites me most is knowing that animals depend on people to care for them and advocate for their well-being. I have always had a deep compassion for animals and I enjoy learning ways to help them live healthier and happier lives. I enjoyed science classes because they allowed me to ask questions, solve problems and better understand the world around me. The more I learned about animal health and care, the more passionate I became about pursuing a career where I can make a positive difference in the lives of animals every day.

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

I have always loved animals, but I was not always sure exactly what career path I wanted to take. As I became involved in agriculture and animal science courses, I discovered how much I enjoyed learning about animal health and care. These experiences helped me realize that a career connected to agriculture and veterinary medicine would allow me to combine my interests while making a positive impact on animals and the people who care for them.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

At times throughout high school, I felt overwhelmed by the deadlines and expectations of balancing academics, extracurricular activities and preparing for college while trying to make important decisions about my future. However, I learned the importance of staying organized, asking for help when needed and trusting myself throughout the process. This experience taught me that I am resilient and capable of overcoming challenges when I stay focused on my goals.

Who or what helped reflect your potential along the way? (Mentors, teachers, programs, internships, family, community resources, etc.)

Many people have helped me recognize my potential, but one person who has made a significant impact on me is Mrs. Neal, my agriculture teacher through the Caroline Career & Technology Center program at North Carolina High School. She has encouraged me to pursue my interests in agriculture and animal science and has always pushed me to do my best. Through her guidance, I gained confidence in my abilities and learned more about the opportunities available in the agricultural field. My family, teachers and other mentors have also supported me along the

way, but Mrs. Neal's encouragement and belief in me played a major role in helping me pursue my goals and prepare for my future at UMES.

What skills, habits or mindsets help you succeed now? How did you begin building them as a student?

Time management, responsibility, reliability, perseverance and a willingness to learn are qualities that help me succeed. I began developing these skills by balancing schoolwork, extracurricular activities, leadership opportunities and college preparation. Being reliable means that others can count on me to follow through on my commitments and complete tasks to the best of my ability. Setting goals and staying organized taught me how to manage my responsibilities while continuing to grow as a student and future professional.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

I would tell students not to be afraid if they do not have everything figured out right away. It is okay to explore different interests and opportunities before deciding on a path. I wish I had known earlier that trying new experiences and asking questions can help you discover interests and strengths you may not have known you had. Every experience can teach you something valuable about yourself and your future.

What's one goal you're working toward next? How are you staying open to new possibilities?

My next goal is to begin my studies at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and continue building the knowledge and skills needed for a career involving agriculture and animal care. I stay open to new possibilities by seeking out learning opportunities, connecting with mentors and remaining willing to explore different areas within agriculture and veterinary medicine. I know that each new experience can help shape my future and broaden my perspective.





Nicholas O.

Student Research Assistant, University of Maryland Eastern Shore

High School: North Caroline High School, 2022

College(s)/ Grad Year: University of Maryland Eastern Shore, 2026

Degree(s): Bachelor of Science

Field(s) of Study: Aviation Science with a concentration in Aviation Management

Other: Pursuing Master of Science (M.S.) in Food and Agriculture with a concentration in Plant Science, Anticipated 2028

What interests, subjects or activities first sparked your curiosity? What about them made you feel excited to learn more?

My interest in the aviation industry expanded to seeing how aircrafts operate, how airports function and how complex systems work together safely.

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

No, I wanted to be an airline pilot, but after sophomore year I found myself more interested in the management side of aviation. I grew up on a farm, so I have always been around agriculture. I finished my last few hours of flight training in Ocean City at Ocean Aviation and obtained my private pilot license, so I can still fly for fun. After earning my PPL, I was able to get my Part 107 remote operator certificate, a drone license that allows you to get paid for flying. Starting my senior year, I accepted a paid internship in the engineering lab at UMES as a student research assistant, operating the drones that would scout crops and provide a plant health analysis. During this time, I was invited to apply to the master's program in food and agricultural science to do research with their newly purchased Hylío AG-216 sprayer drone on spot spraying and sustainable farming practices.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

Flight costs are a major setback. The cost is different for everyone, but to go from a student pilot to an airline transport pilot is going to be between \$70,000 and \$125,000. It could be more or less depending on how long it takes you to learn, the program you are in (141, 61, normal ATP or R-ATP) and the economy (fuel costs, aircraft rental, instructor rates). Time is another factor. In an accelerated flight program like a 141 school, you are constantly studying for another stage check, check ride and new material. It is hard to balance working and learning completely new skills at a faster than normal pace, especially if your work is outside of aviation. I learned that my dream was to be in aviation and have the ability to fly, not necessarily to be an airline pilot.

Who or what helped reflect your potential along the way? (Mentors, teachers, programs, internships, family, community resources, etc.)

My family and loved ones, along with my internship with the engineering robotics lab under Dr. Abhijit Nagchaudhuri, definitely opened the doors of agriculture. My aviation program advisor and professor, Chris Hartman,

was the one who referred me to the internship, thinking it would be a great fit for me, and he was right. The postdoctoral researcher I work under, Dr. Jesu Raj Pandya, made my transition into UAS precision agriculture exciting and has already taught me a lot about plant science.

What skills, habits or mindsets help you succeed now? How did you begin building them as a student?

Pivoting, determination and communication. As a student, I learned to adapt when plans changed, stay committed to my long term goal of working in aviation and communicate effectively with everyone. It took one email to the right professor, asking if there were any internship opportunities, and now I am involved with evolving research and continuing my education on a new pathway.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

Go to school for something you are passionate about, not just for a specific job title. Industries and career opportunities are constantly evolving, and there are often pathways you never knew existed. Stay connected with your advisors, professors and faculty members about your interests, because they may know of opportunities that can help you turn your passion into a career.





Jennica B.

Chemist, Protective Coatings, Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division

High School: Leonardtown High School, 2014
College(s)/ Grad Year: St. Mary's College of Maryland, 2020
Degree(s): BS Chemistry, AS Applied Science
Field(s) of Study: Chemistry (major); Materials Science (minor)

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

No, this was not the path I originally imagined for myself. When I graduated high school, I wasn't sure what career I wanted to pursue.

I explored several different subjects in community college before eventually taking chemistry courses and realizing how much I enjoyed the combination of problem-solving and hands-on experimentation.

What ultimately helped me realize this was a good fit was seeing how chemistry could be applied to solve real-world problems. I enjoyed that there was always a reason behind what I was observing and that I could use science to investigate, understand and improve a process or material. As I gained the experience working with coatings and aircraft, I found that I especially enjoyed the investigative aspect of the work in order to develop solutions.

Looking back, I didn't find my career through a single moment of certainty. Instead, it became clear over time as I gained experience and discovered the types of challenges that motivated me. The combination of science, problem-solving and contributing to something larger than myself is what made me realize I was in the right field.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

Early in my career, I worried that I hadn't learned "enough" in school to be successful in this role. When I was first assigned to work in this field, I panicked because it seemed unrelated to anything I had studied in my chemistry courses. I certainly hadn't taken classes in aircraft systems or protective coatings, and I doubted whether I would be able to keep up.

When I shared these concerns with one of my mentors, they reminded me that my degree wasn't meant to teach me every specialized subject I would encounter throughout my career. Instead, it had provided me with the foundation and problem-solving skills needed to learn new things.

That conversation helped me shift my mindset from, "I lack this specialized experience," to "This is an opportunity to gain that experience."

That change in perspective has allowed me to embrace unfamiliar challenges, learn well beyond my traditional chemistry background and

build meaningful connections with experts in a variety of fields. Most importantly, it taught me that being successful doesn't require knowing everything; it only requires being willing to learn.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

My biggest piece of advice is not to worry if you don't have everything figured out right away. There is a lot of pressure in high school to choose a career path early, but many people discover their interests through experience, not by having a perfect plan from the start.

After graduating high school, I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I explored different subjects through community college before finding a field that truly interested me. Looking back, I realize that every class, job and experience taught me something about what I enjoyed and what I didn't. That process of exploration was just as important as eventually finding the right path.

What I wish I had known in high school is that your first choice does not have to be your final choice. It's okay to change directions as you learn more about yourself. Stay curious, be willing to try new things and don't be afraid to ask questions. Sometimes the career that ends up being the best fit is one you never would have predicted when you were 18.

What's one goal you're working toward next? How are you staying open to new possibilities?

One goal I'm working on next is continuing to expand my technical expertise and take on more complex projects. The field I work in is constantly evolving, and there are always new technologies, materials and challenges to learn about. I want to continue developing my skills while finding new ways to contribute to the team and the mission we support.

I stay open to new possibilities by giving things a chance and being willing to step outside my comfort zone. Some of the most rewarding opportunities in my career have come from projects or experiences I hadn't originally planned for. Because of that, I try to approach new challenges with an open mind and view them as opportunities to learn and grow.





Megann G.

Manufacturing Analyst, Northrop Grumman

High School: Arundel High School, 2014

College(s)/ Grad Year: Anne Arundel Community College,
University of Maryland, 2026

Degree: Bachelor's Degree

Field of Study: Business Management

Other: Center of Applied Technology, Automotive Refinishing

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

This was not the path I imagined for myself at all. Coming out of high school, I was going to work on cars forever and I had no desire to go to school, nor was college an easy financial option for me. After working a few years in the automotive industry, I learned that there was more potential to be earned in life. Since getting this position at Northrop Grumman, I have worked in three different career fields. Northrop Grumman is where I have felt the most utilized. I have had support and growth, and I work alongside some of the brightest minds in the defense industry, providing our customers with the technology of tomorrow, today. We have employees in all 50 states who are working in some of the most cutting edge manufacturing facilities and engineering design labs. That excites me and pushes me to be as successful as possible.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

I have had a few challenges along the way. Early on in the automotive industry, I learned how challenging it can continue to be, even today, to be a woman in a male dominated industry. Women have to prove themselves by results rather than resumes, so it can feel difficult to be given a chance when facing male counterparts. What I learned from that is that building confidence in yourself and your skills is crucial. You are your own biggest advocate in life. Own your skills, know what you bring to the table and never make yourself smaller to fit a mold.

The next biggest challenge I faced was losing a job. I got laid off at a critical time in life, and that can feel overwhelming and life changing. It led me to find my drive and my strength, and I realized in the moment how important professional relationships and my people skills would be in supporting me. Prior relationships I had developed throughout all my previous careers gave me people who were able to support and vouch

for me, and that is what brought me to Northrop Grumman. For that I am always thankful.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

I wish I had known when I was still in high school that I did not have to decide right now. Life will take you down many different avenues and you will meet people from all walks of life. You can try multiple career fields, and you can switch after being in one field you thought was what you wanted, and that is okay. You will not let anyone down.

What you do have to decide now, before you start your journey in life, is that you are worth everything you bring to the table. Own the skills you have, highlight them and never make yourself smaller to fit in someone else's box. Be professional, and understand how to construct emails and speak in front of others confidently. Learn how to listen to others, take in what they say and respond. Learn how to handle criticism and build on yourself to address it. Those are the fundamentals you need in any career path.

What's one goal you're working toward next? How are you staying open to new possibilities?

I am currently working on building a new role for the production team at Northrop Grumman. The ability to build a role from scratch, find its successes, find its downfalls and understand what tasks need to be done daily to help support all teams in achieving their goals is an amazing opportunity to continue learning myself. After building the role, my next small step would be to teach and lead others in doing that same role to support other teams within the company.

Every day there are opportunities presented at Northrop Grumman. There are so many different jobs within the company that utilize different skill sets. If I wanted to learn a different aspect of the company or find new skills to build on, there are positions in all different areas that would allow me to grow.





Rylie J.

Current College Student

High School: Kent County High School, 2026
College(s): Washington College, Anticipated 2029
Field(s) of Study: Elementary Education Pathway

What interests, subjects or activities first sparked your curiosity? What about them made you feel excited to learn more?

One activity that officially sparked my curiosity towards the education field was my senior year capstone project. I was given the opportunity to observe the social and emotional effects pet therapy has on elementary school students. I was able to watch students interact and engage with a therapy dog from a local organization.

What are you currently studying or working toward?

I am currently working towards a degree in Education with my state of Maryland education license.

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself, or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

This is not the path I had imagined for myself! I saw myself being a veterinarian. I realized I would rather share my knowledge and values with children of the next generation. I would say babysitting and volunteer opportunities have pointed me in this direction!

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

Not being in the Teachers Academy of Maryland CTE pathway was my biggest moment of doubt. I had assumed I would be behind most of my peers because I was not involved the way they were. During this time I learned that it is possible to find your own niche, at a different pace.

Who or what helped reflect your potential along the way? (Mentors, teachers, programs, internships, family, community resources, etc.)

My biggest inspirations that helped reflect my potential along the way were my first mentor teacher, Mrs. Isaacson and my Agricultural Science CTE teacher Ms. Kuhl-Depp. Mrs. Isaacson and Ms. Kuhl-Depp were phenomenal role models for who I want to be as an educator.

What skills, habits or mindsets help you succeed now? How did you begin building them as a student?

One mindset that helps me succeed now is positivity and patience. Being patient and positive in the process of success is very important to me. Good things take time, and it is helpful to yourself to enjoy the experience for what it is. Not what it could be.

What does a typical day look like for you right now? What parts of your day feel most rewarding or energizing?

A typical day for me right now is working as a summer camp counselor at the

Kent Family YMCA. The most rewarding part of my day is always seeing my campers succeed after putting forth their best efforts, no matter the activity. It is so rewarding to see their personality shape throughout the summer.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

One piece of advice I would share with students who are still finding their passion and direction is engagement. Get involved with your school, and try out new things! Find activities that spark your interest. Also, don't feel obligated to know your next step at every moment. Everybody is working towards their goals at a different pace.

What's one goal you're working toward next? How are you staying open to new possibilities?

One goal I am working toward next is gaining a deeper understanding of diverse abilities in the classroom and how students with different needs can be best supported. I am staying open to new possibilities by reminding myself that everything happens for a reason.



Education



Kate L.

CRM Specialist, Frostburg State University Office of Admissions

High School: Fort Hill High School, 2021

College(s)/ Grad Year: Goucher College, 2025 and Frostburg State University, Anticipated 2027

Degree(s): Bachelor of Arts

Field(s) of Study: Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Integrative Data Analytics with minors in Public Health and Biology

Other: Pursuing Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Business Analytics

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

Absolutely not! When I first entered college, I always thought I wanted to be a doctor. My first year of undergraduate study, I sat in many biology and chemistry courses, getting all of the necessary prerequisites for medical school. I knew that I did not enjoy what I was learning and could not see myself in that field long term. College is a time when you finally get to study what you enjoy, and it led me to explore other options. I decided to go to a faculty panel that our LAUNCH program was hosting. There were faculty from departments all across campus, including the biology professor I had just finished doing a summer of research with. I connected with a faculty member in the economics department. I decided to take one semester of classes outside of the pre-med path to see if there was a better fit for me. After one class, I knew I needed to explore a math related field. Everything in those courses just came naturally to me, and switching back to something I loved and was passionate about truly changed my college experience.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

As I mentioned previously, I faced a lot of difficulties transitioning to college. Being from a rural, low income area and learning to live life in a city was not easy. I faced imposter syndrome, questioning whether I was truly meant to go away for school. Going away felt like a time of rediscovery, and this is something that followed me for much of my time in college. I decided my sophomore year that it was time to stop just following what all my friends wanted to do and to start doing what was best for me. I started my internship with Maryland Business Roundtable for Education (MBRT) and picked up two jobs. That year, I amazed myself with how much I could handle. This feeling lingered, and these same feelings are what I felt when I decided to study abroad in Hong Kong. All of the other international students were well traveled, meanwhile that was my first time outside of the country. Studying abroad seemed so easy to everyone around me. Being in this uncomfortable situation forced me to dive deep into the culture, solo travel, try new foods, and manage money and bills internationally. All of these things completely changed

my thought process about the world and gave me a better sense of self. Imposter syndrome feels terrible, however overcoming that feeling makes you feel so powerful.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

It is okay to not know what you want to do, and it is okay to change your mind. It is okay to worry about what may come, or that you might mess up, but not pursuing it will only deprive you of the opportunity.

What's one goal you're working toward next? How are you staying open to new possibilities?

So many of my goals are ongoing. I am the kind of person who consistently moves my own finish line to push for more. This past fall was my first semester working full time in a career and being a full time student. Especially while on the road traveling for work, this was the first semester that did not come so easily to me. I confidently knew that it would only get easier as the semesters continued and I gained this experience. Little did I know that at the beginning of this semester I would be expecting a little baby boy in October. After finishing this semester taking 12 credits with a 4.0, I have decided my biggest goal is to slow down and enjoy where I am. I love my job and where I am in life. I love the opportunity I have gotten to connect with individuals I have looked up to, such as working with Leonard Webb, MBRT Next Generation Scholars Program Manager in Allegany County. I've been able to build a lost connection between Frostburg State University and my alma mater. My biggest goal is to learn to appreciate the goals I have already reached and to realize that I will reach my future goals. There is no need to rush toward that finish line.





Nanti E.

Current College Student

High School: Wicomico High School, 2023

College: Johns Hopkins University, Anticipated 2027

Field of Study: Biology

What interests, subjects or activities first sparked your curiosity? What about them made you feel excited to learn more?

Biology was one of the first subjects that sparked my curiosity. Its focus on memorization aligned well with my strengths, which initially drew me to the field. As I continued learning, I became fascinated by how fast-paced and detailed biology is. The deeper I explored it, the more I realized the complexity of the subject and how much there is to discover beyond what most people imagine.

What are you currently studying or working toward?

EMS training.

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

It was the same general path, but there have been many direction changes. Even though the path is relatively the same, I have pivoted from what I originally intended because I grew up and learned more about myself and what I want to experience in this lifetime.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

I think my first time on campus was a challenge; during those days imposter syndrome was running high. You always overcome it. My biggest takeaway is that you are not alone in this journey. You should never feel like you are alone or that you have to get through things alone. Lean on the people around you. Everyone has friends or people they connect with, so use that support system.

Who or what helped reflect your potential along the way? (Mentors, teachers, programs, internships, family, community resources, etc.)

I think we are a product of our environment. There are people I do not even remember who have helped me thrive along the way. The biggest thing is to be open and receptive to the opportunities and people around you.

What skills, habits or mindsets help you succeed now? How did you begin building them as a student?

Learning that failure is how you grow; you must fail in order to prevail. It is not embarrassing, and you should not feel bad or guilty

because of failure. Use it as fuel to move in the right direction, and learn from it.

What does a typical day look like for you right now? What parts of your day feel most rewarding or energizing?

I am in my fitness era right now, so most days I am working out and taking a lot of walks, just to clear my head and make sure I complete everything I need to get done that day. If I have work to do, I will find a spot in the city to go hang around, and not a day goes by where I do not hang out with my friends.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

It is okay to change your mind at any point in your path. Listen to yourself, trust yourself, put in the work and you will succeed no matter what you do.

What's one goal you're working toward next? How are you staying open to new possibilities?

I am working toward getting my degree from Johns Hopkins University (JHU). That alone is a goal I have been working on for a while.





Fatu B.

Registered Nurse Fellow, Kaiser Permanente, National Ambulatory Fellowship Program

High School: Eastern Senior High School

College(s)/ Grad Year: Prince George's Community College,
Chamberlain University, 2023

Degree: Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)

Other: Sanz Medical School, Medical Assistant, Applied Professional

**What interests, subjects or activities first sparked your curiosity?
What about them made you feel excited to learn more?**

My sibling was hit by a car when he was about 12. He was admitted to the hospital and his face was disfigured. A nurse saw him crying and spoke to him gently; I do not remember what she said to him, but it made him smile. I remember thinking that if she could make his day with kind words and care when he felt discouraged, I would love to do the same for others. I was a young teenager at that time, but I never forgot that moment.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

A challenge for me at the time was being a mother, working full-time and the thought of going back to school; I would just have to wait. My hours at work rotated, so figuring out a sitter to accommodate my schedule was difficult, and family was unreliable. I accepted a shift to work nights only, and this schedule worked for me. I would drop my son off at school, go home to sleep and then go back to work. I later got a better shift, and I could go to school in the evening, so I started at Prince George's Community College. My experience was not as I had hoped and I started to doubt if I would ever finish. I started to doubt if I would ever finish. I stopped attending PGCC and looked into other schools. I spoke with an advisor at Bowie State University who informed me that I would need to practically start over with the classes due to the length of time that had lapsed. I did not want to redo those classes again. I figured by this time I was done trying to complete nursing school.

I will never forget, I was in church and I told my husband I was done with school. My son was sitting in front of me, and he started choking on a piece of candy, and I jumped into action. I gave him the Heimlich maneuver, and after I successfully performed it, my husband asked me, "You still think you're not cut out for nursing school?"

What does a typical day look like for you right now? What parts of your day feel most rewarding or energizing?

I wake up in the morning, do my morning stretches, pour myself a cup of coffee and head into work. While on my lunch breaks, I try to go for a walk and enjoy the outdoors. The most rewarding part of my day is reminding myself that I can do hard things. I did it. I completed my nursing degree. All those years of being told to wait, and I finally did it. I get energized when I have had a long day and I walk into my home and my husband greets me by saying there goes his nurse, and I smile because I can see how proud of me he is as well.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

Do not give up on your dreams. Sometimes life throws us a lot of curve balls; dodge those balls and remember to be gentle with yourself. We are our biggest critics. No matter how many no's you hear, it is only motivation to try harder. If you need to take a break that is okay as well, just don't give up. You will also be your biggest supporter. You can do hard things.

What's one goal you're working toward next? How are you staying open to new possibilities?

My next goal is to continue to encourage my children, grandchildren, family and others that with hard work and dedication all things are possible.



Information Technology (IT)



Derek C.

Current College Student

High School: Cambridge South Dorchester High School, 2025

College(s): Chesapeake College (Anticipated 2028), University of Maryland, College Park, Anticipated 2030

Field(s) of Study: Computer Science or Electrical Engineering

What interests, subjects or activities first sparked your curiosity? What about them made you feel excited to learn more?

The interests that immediately come to mind are the arts (editing, motion graphics, music production and drawing) and technology (in all shapes and sizes, physical or digital, programming or designing). What I find most enjoyable is the process of learning the skills, creating the result and the rabbit holes you can go down in the process.

What are you currently studying or working toward?

I'm currently studying computer science at Chesapeake College, with plans to transfer to University of Maryland, College Park to continue my studies.

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

I've always had an interest in technology and art. My fascination with these topics as a kid and always being interested in the process behind how it all works has stayed with me to now, which reassures me that I've chosen the right field for myself.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

Failure and wasted potential used to be one of the biggest challenges I had to overcome, but now I've learned to use that feeling as motivation to do more. I can still think of times when I didn't reach my full potential, whether in academics or hobbies, and rather than dwelling on them, I use those moments to help me push myself to achieve my goals.

Who or what helped reflect your potential along the way? (Mentors, teachers, programs, internships, family, community resources, etc.)

Definitely the role models along the way, such as teachers, friends, family and even the unfamiliar people of everyday, which I have a lot of gratitude for.

What skills, habits or mindsets help you succeed now? How did you begin building them as a student?

I believe practice and discipline are important. Practice develops skill, while discipline helps build consistency over time.

I've also learned the value of practicing with purpose. Rather than simply solving problems, I try to understand why the result works. I've used this mindset throughout my academic studies in high school, especially in math.

What does a typical day look like for you right now? What parts of your day feel most rewarding or energizing?

I usually spend my time balancing work and social life, work being college or personal hobbies, and I also make time for friends and family. Being productive is the most rewarding to me, mainly since I've set a goal to learn a couple of new skills this year. On other days, I just enjoy the moment.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

One piece of advice I'd give is to not feel pressured into having everything figured out now. Make a mental blueprint for your high school career and your future. Like a blueprint, things change: you will gain and lose interests, find new opportunities and experience new things.

The goal isn't to have everything figured out now, but rather to learn, adapt and grow to be how you envision success for you.

What's one goal you're working toward next? How are you staying open to new possibilities?

One goal I'm working toward is opening myself up to more opportunities and experiences. Right now, that includes improving my consistency with learning the piano, as well as exploring new things and places.



Information Technology (IT)



Robbie C.

Director of Engineering, Mindgrub

High School: Shenendehowa High School, 2010

College(s)/ Grad Year: Johns Hopkins University, 2014

Degree: Bachelor of Arts

Field(s) of Study: Neuroscience (major); French Language and Culture and Theatre Arts and Studies (minors)

What interests, subjects or activities first sparked your curiosity? What about them made you feel excited to learn more?

I've always been fascinated by complex systems and their underlying logic. When I was younger, I loved adventure stories and puzzle-based games, not just because they were fun, but because they seemed to have hidden structures underneath: rules, patterns, clues and consequences that fit together. Learning geometric proofs in high school was the first time I recognized that same kind of structure in an academic setting. I loved the process of starting with a few known facts and reasoning step by step toward something new. It made me realize that what excited me was not just solving a puzzle, but understanding the system behind it. I felt that same joy later in Organic Chemistry at Johns Hopkins, where complex reactions began to feel like systems with their own internal logic. A lot of my current career still draws on that same curiosity: looking at complex problems, finding the underlying logic and figuring out how the pieces connect.

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

I explored several directions before finding the right fit. I loved the arts, solving puzzles and helping people, so at different points I considered paths ranging from acting to medicine to nonprofit fundraising. Over time, I realized that software development brings those interests together. It gives me the creative challenge of designing something people can actually enjoy using, the intellectual challenge of solving complex problems and the human purpose of building tools that can improve people's lives. What helped me realize it was a good fit was seeing that the parts of me that once seemed like separate interests were actually strongest when they worked together.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

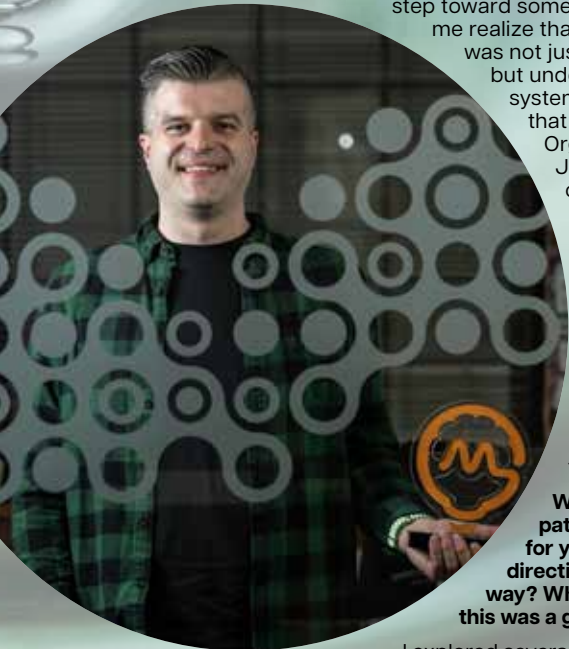
One of the hardest moments for me was finishing my neuroscience degree while realizing that my original plan to go to medical school was not the right path for me. It was difficult because I had spent a long time imagining that future. That time forced me to listen closely to my instincts instead of following the path I had already chosen. That experience helped me trust my own judgment, believe that my value was not tied to one specific career and eventually chart a path that was much better suited to who I am.

Who or what helped reflect your potential along the way? (Mentors, teachers, programs, internships, family, community resources, etc.)

My freshman year of high school, I was lucky to have an exceptionally strong group of teachers. They held me to high standards, showed me what excellent work could look like and took my potential seriously. Later, I also had bosses who encouraged me to put aside self-doubt and look at my work more objectively: what I had built, what problems I had solved and where I was genuinely adding value. Their validation helped me trust the evidence of my own growth. That experience taught me how important it is to do the same for others: to recognize good work clearly, name people's strengths and help colleagues and mentees see the value they are creating.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

Almost everything is going to change many times before your career actually takes shape. The specific jobs you imagine now may not even exist by the time you get there, and the path you're sure is right can turn out to be the wrong one. Rather than betting everything on one narrow specialty, invest in the broad skills that travel with you anywhere: how to learn quickly, how to reason through unfamiliar problems, how to work well with people and how to adapt. The interests that feel scattered or unrelated right now may end up being your greatest strength, once you find the place where they all come together. Stay curious, stay flexible and trust that the pieces will connect.





Savannah H.

Current College Student

High School: Wicomico High School, 2026

College(s): Towson University, Anticipated 2030

Field(s) of Study: Law and American Civilization

What interests, subjects or activities first sparked your curiosity? What about them made you feel excited to learn more?

The clubs that I frequented were theater and my school's book club, which both impacted my interest to learn more about literature and storytelling.

What are you currently studying or working toward?

I'm currently studying law and American civilization to obtain a degree in law.

Was this always the path you imagined for yourself or did your direction change along the way? What helped you realize this was a good fit?

This path has been what I imagined for myself for a long time. Part of what solidified the idea was being a part of my school's criminal justice ATEX (Applied Technology Exploration) program.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

One of the biggest challenges I faced was during a mock trial where my team lost. At the time, I felt discouraged and defeated, but the experience taught me the importance of time management—a skill that has continued to help me throughout my education and will serve me well in my future career.

Who or what helped reflect your potential along the way? (Mentors, teachers, programs, internships, family, community resources, etc.)

My criminal justice teacher, Mr. Kaiser, helped me to believe in my potential to become a good lawyer. He was a strong role model for me and encouraged me to see that what I saw

as weaknesses were really my strengths inside and outside the courtroom. I owe a major part of my appreciation of law enforcement to him.

What skills, habits or mindsets help you succeed now? How did you begin building them as a student?

The mindset that helped me was that "every day is a new day." This helped me to make clear and constructive choices for myself. It's helpful as a student to not focus too much on things that are no longer in the moment, like bad grades or failed academic goals, into the real world where you may face social challenges or problems in your career that can no longer be changed.

What does a typical day look like for you right now? What parts of your day feel most rewarding or energizing?

A typical day for me now consists of going to work, hanging out with friends and getting ready for college. The best part is definitely getting to relax and see the people I care about.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

A piece of advice I'd share with students is that you don't have to have everything figured out in a day. It seems really scary, but if you find something you really care about that you have fun doing, chances are you're already heading down your path in life.

What's one goal you're working toward next? How are you staying open to new possibilities?

My current goal is to succeed in college while building meaningful connections that will support my personal and professional growth. I'm also exploring new clubs and extracurricular activities to expand my interests, develop new skills and gain exposure to a variety of experiences.



Nicholas O.

Attorney, Venable LLP

High School: Laurel High School, 2017

College(s)/ Grad Year: University of Maryland, College Park, 2021

Degree: Bachelor of Arts

Field(s) of Study: Criminology and Criminal Justice (major); Law and Society (minor)

Other: Howard University School of Law, Juris Doctor in Law, 2024

What interests, subjects or activities first sparked your curiosity? What about them made you feel excited to learn more?

I have always been an avid reader and chess player. Reading exposed me to different schools of thought, cultures and perspectives, while chess trained me to think strategically and to view challenges as interconnected moves on a larger board. Together, these interests sparked my curiosity about how the world works and why people, institutions and societies make the decisions they do.

In school, subjects such as politics and Theory of Knowledge further deepened my desire to learn. They encouraged me to question assumptions, analyze competing viewpoints and think critically about complex issues. This intellectual curiosity eventually led me to law. I became fascinated by how legal systems serve as the foundation of society, shaping our rights, responsibilities and daily interactions. The opportunity to understand and influence the rules that govern society continues to motivate me to learn and grow.

Can you share a challenge, setback or moment of doubt you experienced and how it shaped you? What did you learn about yourself during that time?

Like many people, the COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most challenging periods of my life, particularly during my senior year of college. What should have been a time of excitement and preparation for the future was instead marked by uncertainty, disruption and health complications affecting members of my family.

During that time, I learned the importance of staying focused and persevering through circumstances beyond my control. While there were moments of doubt and concern about what the future would hold, I remained committed to my education while also supporting and prioritizing my loved ones during a difficult period. Balancing those competing demands was not always easy, but it taught me how to remain disciplined and adaptable in the face of

uncertainty. Most importantly, I learned that resilience is not simply about pushing forward for yourself; it is also about being present for others when they need you most. This experience strengthened my ability to persevere through challenges, maintain perspective and stay committed to what matters most.

What skills, habits or mindsets help you succeed now? How did you begin building them as a student?

Time management, discipline and the ability to say no have been some of the most important factors in my success. As a student, I learned that managing my time effectively was essential, so I relied heavily on calendars and detailed schedules to keep track of assignments, deadlines and long-term goals.

I also developed a disciplined mindset by focusing on continuous self-improvement. I often reminded myself that my true competition was "the man in the mirror," which motivated me to focus on becoming a better version of myself each day rather than comparing myself to others.

Finally, I learned the importance of saying no to distractions. As a student, I realized that if I wanted to achieve my long-term goals, I needed to stay focused on what mattered most, even when other opportunities or activities competed for my attention. These habits continue to guide me in my professional and personal life today.

What's one piece of advice you'd share with students who are still figuring out their direction? What do you wish you had known in high school?

My biggest piece of advice is that exposure is the doorway to direction. It is difficult to know what path is right for you if you have not been exposed to different opportunities, careers and experiences. Quite simply, you do not know what you do not know.

I encourage students to join clubs, participate in internships, volunteer with community organizations and have conversations with teachers, professionals and mentors about their experiences. The more you expose yourself to different fields and perspectives, the more likely you are to discover what genuinely interests and motivates you.

One thing I wish I had known in high school is how valuable teachers can be as resources. Toward the end of high school, I realized that many of my teachers were a goldmine of knowledge, advice and life experience. Had I recognized that earlier, I would have spent more time asking questions, seeking guidance and learning from the paths they took to get where they are today.





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Meade High School,
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Middletown High
School,
Frederick County



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High School,
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WHO: MARYLAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

(Grades 9 – 12, selecting one student per school district)

WHAT: STATEWIDE RECOGNITION OF

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- School Involvement (Compassionate Leaders)
- MBRT Program Participation (Extra Points Awarded)
- Future Career Interests (STEM – Extra Points Awarded)

WHEN:

- Applications Due: **October 30, 2026**
- Review Applications: **November 2 – November 25, 2026**
- Notify Recipients by: **December 4, 2026**
- Event Recognition: **February 23, 2027**

WHERE: MBRT'S YOUTH CONGRESS DAY EVENT (ANNAPOLIS, MD)

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