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## The College Essay

Most applications for college include an essay component. Liz Russell, Director of Admissions at Eastern Maine Technical College, says "I am looking for the adult student to tell me how they are going to use their life experiences and move those experiences into a new career field." The essay written by Brenda Wagner illustrates this nicely:

When I attended high school in the early 60's I enrolled in the college track. I applied to and was accepted at 3 colleges. Then my parents decided that they were getting a divorce. My father accepted the responsibility of caring for the three remaining children at home. Most of the responsibility of maintaining the house, cooking, caring for the children fell onto me because Dad worked every day. We moved 8 times in the 4 years that I went to school. I did manage to graduate in June of 1965, probably because I have always been able to challenge myself.

I went to work, met and married my husband, and spent the next thirty years raising my 5 children. I have always felt that my life [was] meant to be a learning experience. I taught myself many things, how to knit, crochet, sew, cook, play the piano, keep a budget, design and help build two houses. Over the last 15 years, I have had a cake shop. I took a course and before I knew it I was making all kinds of cakes.

Last November I purchased a computer. I said that it was for my children that are still in school, but I knew that I intended to learn how to use it too. I have spent many hours trying to accomplish this goal, with some limited success. With the encouragement and help of my friends and family, I am ready to take the necessary steps that are required for me to go to college. I have doubts about my abilities to succeed, but I really only have to take one step at a time up the mountain. One step? I CAN DO THAT!

The Maine Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC) is one of 74 EOC's located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. Operating in the State of Maine since December 1991, the MEOC will serve approximately 2,800 individuals in their educational and career-planning endeavors during 1998.

Educational Opportunity Centers are funded through the U.S. Department of Education. The grant award for 1998-99 is \$517,117. The Department of Education is also the funding source for Upward Bound, Student Support Services, Talent Search and McNair Scholars Programs. These TRIO programs all target low-income, first-generation college youth and adults.

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# Opportunity knocks

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## The Myth of Balance

By David Megquier, MEOC Director

Being able to do it all by pursuing a balanced life is a popular idea today. But if you've tried to attain this elusive balance, you very well may have encountered frustration instead of fulfillment. Does the attempt to balance the demands of your job with those of family life often lead to a sense of failure? The good news is that with some fundamental changes in your approach, you can succeed.

In the '60s, '70s, and '80s, mental health professionals saw people consumed by things that were not important to them. The idea of balancing all the areas in life arose runs counter to this. When balance itself becomes a goal, however, a common result is weakening commitments to even more things. Instead of feeling fulfilled, you find yourself tired and dissatisfied, burned out.

Rather than trying for balance in your life, learn to focus. Identify what's most important to you and concentrate on those activities. If you know what you're living for, you have a focus and know exactly what you want to accomplish. Being aware of what's important to you lets you know on what things NOT to spend time, energy, and resources. If you don't define what's central, work often becomes the focus by default.

How can you achieve this kind of focused life? Clarify your values and goals and what's most important to you, both professionally and personally.

- Decide what to give up. Realize that you will have to sacrifice in less important areas to achieve the things that are of greatest value to you.
- Set boundaries and limits. Decide on clear limits to of time, energy, and resources to expend on each of your focal activities. Establish boundaries, and make others aware of them.
- Monitor your progress. Old habits are hard to break, so take a look periodically at how you're spending your time. Make corrections as needed.
- Reevaluate when necessary. Remember that your focus may change as goals are met or circumstances in your life change.

**You should contact your counselor when you need assistance or have a question about:**

- Time management
- Career decisions
- Financial Aid
- You need an application fee waiver
- You have accomplished a goal
- A goal needs revision
- You have a question

Leave a message for your counselor at

**1-800-281-3703**

**To register for a MEOC  
Workshop near you call  
1-800-281-3703**

## Netiquette: Internet Manners

By Rebecca Salisbury, Technology Coordinator

These days, most of us use technology to help us communicate. As you prepare for college, you should become familiar with some of the DOs and DON'Ts of electronic communication. The term "netiquette" is often used to refer to the ways in which people ought to use their email, and tips to help keep you on track! Here are some of my favorite tips:

1. If you don't want something read, don't write it! There are many ways that your email message can fall into the wrong hands... someone could print it out & then lose it, for example! Once your thought is put in writing, its pretty hard to take it back.

2. Don't send email to people you don't know! People tend to be are very sensitive about receiving unsolicited email...which is usually sent by someone they don't know. If you have a good reason to email someone who might not know you, be sure to explain who you are and why you're writing.

3. Avoid chain mail! Chain mail is any message which encourages you to send forward it to another group of people. Often, chain mail tugs at the heart strings, suggesting that you'll be helping a charitable cause by forwarding this email message – wrong! These are false statements!

4. Choose your words carefully! Remember that the reader has only your words to help them understand what you are trying to say. You're now without the other clues people use to understand – the smile on your face, or the tone of your voice. Read email carefully before sending!

5. Double-check the address of the person! You could embarrass yourself by sending an email message to the wrong person, just because of a typo! Also, make sure you aren't accidentally replying to a whole list of people!

### Some web sites of interest:

Internet Hoaxes & Urban Legends  
<http://urbanlegends.miningco.com/library/blhoax.htm>

Cornell University's Rights & Responsibilities (more netiquette)  
<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Computer/responsible-use/Index.html>

## Welcome Maryellen Sockabasin

Maryellen Sockabasin joins the staff at the Maine Educational Opportunity Center as the Administrative Assistant. We are pleased she has joined the team as she brings a wealth of experience and a wonderful sense of humor. You will find Maryellen in the Orono office.

"I am a member of the Penobscot Nation. The 9th child of Theodore & Eleanor Mitchell, 8 brothers and 5 sisters. I have been married almost 27 years to Patrick Sockabasin and have four children, Scott (27), Ron (26), Julie (24) & Derick (10). I have 2 beautiful granddaughters, Lacey & Marie (3 yrs & 3 mos.) and 3 step granddaughters Tashina, Nancy & Carly and one step grandson Patrick.

I am a member of Abundant Life Church a non-dominational church located in Bangor. Last year I moved back to Maine after having lived in Tennessee for 5 years working for Indian Health Service a federal program that serves all Native American tribes from Maine to Texas. I was an Accounting Technician for 1 1/2 years and secretary for the Environmental Health Services Branch for 3 1/2 years. I enjoy reading, fishing, boating & camping."

*Possibility is the thread that weaves your vision into a living tapestry.*

## Parents as Scholars

Adapted with permission from the Maine Equal Justice Partners Brochure

The Parents as Scholars (PaS) program is a student aid program that helps low-income parents in two or four-year college programs. It was created by the Maine Legislature in 1997 as part of our state welfare reform plan. PaS is run by the Maine Department of Human Services (DHS) through the ASPIRE Program. Only parents who are eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families with Children (TANF, formerly AFDC) are eligible for PaS.

Maine is one of only two states in the country that has set up a special program to support college-level education for parents who qualify for TANF. We did this by creating a new, state-funded program called Parents as Scholars. Since we are using our own state dollars to fund this program, we can make our own rules. This means that we can transfer TANF recipients who want to go to college into the PaS Program where they will have that opportunity.

Students in PaS Program will receive a monthly PaS check for the same amount that they would have received in the TANF program. The PaS Program provides the same support services that you would get in the ASPIRE Program. This includes most services necessary to complete your educational plan. A list of the support services currently available to PaS students are featured below.

PaS is limited to 2,000 participants at any one time. If you were receiving TANF in August of 1997, and were already enrolled in a two or four-year college program through ASPIRE, you should have been automatically transferred into the PaS program at that time.

### You are eligible for the PaS program if all of the following are true:

- You are eligible for TANF,
- You are "matriculated" (enrolled) in a two or four-year degree program,
- You do not already have a bachelor's degree in a field where there is work available to you,
- You do not have the skills to earn at least 85% of Maine's median wage (\$32,492 for a family of three),
- The degree you will be receiving will improve your ability to support your family,
- You have the ability to succeed in the educational program that you have chosen.

### Parents as Scholars Support Services

- Child care
- Transportation
- Car repairs
- Auto liability insurance
- Eye care
- Dental care
- Books and supplies
- Clothing and uniforms
- Tuition and mandatory school fees
- Occupational Expenses

For more information regarding the PaS program contact your ASPIRE case manager. If you have problems accessing PaS, you should contact Maine Equal Justice Partners (207) 626-7058, or Pine Tree Legal Assistance Inc., at 942-8241.