

"How I Got Here: Angelica—Educator-focused Video"

Lucy:

Hey there, it's Lucy here to get you ready for an inspiring video about Angelica. Her story about paying for college is simply amazing. It's a lesson in perseverance and resourcefulness that your students will really respond to. If you're like me, you're still paying for college. Those loans you took out back in the day are still hanging around like some kind of debt monkey taking all of your cash. A small part of you probably thinks, "I wish I'd gotten more scholarships." At least that's what goes through my head, and if you're like me, after watching this video, you'll be thinking, "Wow, I wish I was more like Angelica."

Angelica's impressive story teaches us that paying for college without incurring debt is a challenge, but it's absolutely possible. Today more than ever students are concerned about the amount of debt they'll be facing once they graduate from college. According to a U.S. News and World Report study, almost 70% of all college students take out loans to pay for school. Think about that. For every ten students, only three are relying entirely on non-debt options to pay their tuition. Angelica decided from the start that she didn't want to graduate college with student loan debt. So what did she do? She made an aggressive plan and stuck to it. She wanted zero debt upon graduation and was willing to do whatever it took to achieve that goal.

Of course that's easier said than done, but it's important to encourage students to start thinking about their financial future as well as their educational future. Keeping these dual goals top of mind as they fill out the FAFSA, choose a college and apply for scholarships is key in ensuring that they graduate ready to follow their dreams, instead of drowning in debt as soon as they get their diploma. The easiest choice is to get a ton of loans and hope for the best, but as Angelica's story shows, constantly looking for scholarships, leveraging campus resources and getting involved in student organizations can open up a sea of funding for school that otherwise might have gone unnoticed.

As you watch this, take note of how her story is not unlike many kids graduating high school these days. She didn't come from money. She was told that the only way to get ahead in life was to get a college degree, but ultimately it was up to her to figure it all out, and did she ever. Her spirit and drive are incredible. I'll check in with you in a bit to talk about some of the decisions Angelica made in her journey. At the end of the video we'll talk about how to get your students to be more like Angelica.

Angelica:

My name is Angelica and I'm from Houston, Texas. When I skate I feel like I'm free. Most of my friends from my neighborhood are either pregnant, in jail or dead. There was a lot of gangs, a lot of violence. I had a dream to go to college, but didn't think I could afford that. I'm the first person in my family to go to college, and I'm going to graduate without a penny of debt.

My mother was a housekeeper. Since I was young I would go cleaning houses with her, and I hated every moment of it. I wanted a different lifestyle, and she would always tell me that's why you need to get an education. Most of us want to go to college, but how do we pay for it right? That's the problem. Growing up that was always the issue. We

didn't have the money, we can't do it. We don't have no money, we can't do it. That's when I took that initiative and said, "You know what, I'm going to apply for scholarships," and started researching and they would tell me in 500 words tell me your life story. "I'm trying to make it and I had a rough background like many other people, but I'm trying to make it. Invest in me, help me, and I'll show you why I'm worth it." You sell them your dream. You tell them what your dream is, they want to know what makes you different.

I got to Houston-Tillotson University in Austin, and the problem was, it was exactly 2,400 dollars to register as an incoming freshman. I had 500 dollars saved. I was like, "Where am I going to get these 2,000 dollars," and that's when I got a call that I got the Houston-Tillotson Houston Alumni Scholarship, which was 2,000 dollars. I know if it wasn't for those 2,000 dollars I wouldn't be here today. It was a differentiating factor between whether I'm going to be a housekeeper or if I'm going to go to college. I needed to try to raise more money for tuition and fees and I realized most of the successful students are in organization. As soon as I started college I played soccer. I became freshman class president. I tutored.

Speaker 2: When I first met you I thought okay, "This girl is pretty ambitious and stuff."

Speaker 3: I thought you were crazy. Anything she puts her mind to it she can do it. She's dedicated.

Angelica: I got granted with the position of being a resident assistant, which paid my room and board. I met the professors. I got good recommendation letters so when I would write for scholarships. I filled out one scholarship a week. As an incoming sophomore I got the Dubois Scholarship which pays my tuition and fees, and then I got 8,000 dollars, 18,000 dollars, 25,000 dollars, which will help me continue paying for my junior and senior year.

Lucy: Me again. So by now you must be a huge fan of Angelica, I know I am. Getting into college was never going to be an issue for someone as driven as her, but once she was in she went into full gear looking for more funding. So what's the big take away at this point? The hunt for scholarships definitely doesn't end after you get in to college. This is a mindset that your students absolutely need to understand. The fact that we announce scholarships awarded at high school graduation promotes the idea that the only time to get funding for college is before you actually get to college, but that's not the case at all.

Angelica was able to secure scholarships as a college freshman and sophomore to make sure that her entire education was paid for. In fact, her efforts suggest that she put in even more work snagging scholarships once she got to campus. She noticed that most of the successful students were heavily involved with campus activities. So that's exactly what she did. When in Rome, do as the Romans do. She tutored, served as class president, and became a resident assistant.

Others started to notice her hard work, and she used their recommendations to apply for one scholarship a week. Her consistent effort as a college student proved to those who awarded Angelica scholarships that she was well worth investing in. She presented

herself as a diligent student, serious about her future and she was rewarded for it. Scholarships, grants and other funding sources are available for those willing to work to get it. Nobody hands out money simply for the asking. Angelica proves that you must do everything that you can to stand out from the crowd and be willing to tell your story to anyone who will listen.

She played a numbers game. By casting a wide net, she was able to catch all kinds of financial awards and opportunities. This mindset she adopted to pay for college has translated into an approach for her to complete the rest of her goals. Keep watching and I'll be right back.

Angelica: I'm a political science major and my dream is to be a campaign manager for presidential elections or be speaker of the house. Last semester I was an intern for a candidate that's running for governor.

"How's it going?"

Speaker 4: "Good, how are you?"

Angelica: I'm now interning for a candidate that's running for state representative, and I'm also interning for an advertising agency. In order for my future hope for running for office, I need to learn how to communicate with the public.

Speaker 3: Angelica is -

Speaker 5: Smart.

Speaker 3: Ebullient.

Speaker 6: Gelli is busy.

Speaker 2: She's smooth, you know.

Speaker 3: Just cheerful, just joyful.

Speaker 2: Passionate, enthusiastic. That's a passion, that's a passion. But she double passionate.

Speaker 6: That girl knows how to win a scholarship.

Angelica: Hey mom, hi Anthony.

Speaker 7: Hi, what are you doing?

Angelica: You all got to step it up. It is your job to be better than me, and we all know it's an expectation to go to school, and they know there's no way around that. Going to college without any funds was really scary, but you have to figure out a way. You have to figure

out a way how to do it. How I found a way was scholarships. After college I'm either going to Washington or I'm either going to law school, it's one of those.

It's funny as a child how I hated cleaning houses, because when I walk around the capital I think to myself, "Oh I'm going to clean this house." I'm not letting society destroy my dreams. I'm making my dreams bigger and you're not going to stop me.

Lucy: Okay, I'm pretty sure that in the not too distant future, Angelica is going to be running this country or possibly several countries. At a very early age she was able to critically evaluate her entire future and decide that it was extremely vital that she graduate from college debt free. Angelica also knew that without scholarships there was no way that she was going to be able to afford to go. Her story is definitely one that your students will relate to if, like Angelica, and like me for that matter, they happen to be the first in their family to go to college. When there's no blueprint to follow, your students will have to build their own educational future for themselves.

The good news, they're not alone. There are resources available for them right now, and even more available once they get to college. It just takes a bit of hard work and maybe a lot of essay writing.

So now what? Impress upon your students that seeking financial assistance has no end date. Angelica is living proof that researching and working the system can result in a windfall of opportunity, funding and connections. One idea to help them along their way would be to post scholarship information in the classroom and make it a discussion point. Let them know how you found the information and how they can do the same on their own. Even if the scholarship is for left-handed biology majors with an interest in jellyfish. You can also have your students write common essays, like "an obstacle I overcame," or "where I see myself in ten years." Then explain to them how they can tweak or customize their essay, depending on the type of scholarship they're applying for.

Scholarships go to people, not numbers or test scores. Prompt students to seek out opportunities for leadership and community service, as this has become practically more important for college entrance and the granting of scholarship than grades or honors. Let your students know that they can all be like Angelica when it comes to paying for college, but they may not be able to look quite as cool as she did on a skateboard.