



*Zane State College student Sirius Underwood addressed scholarship donors at the College's 26th annual Scholar-Donor Breakfast on October 11 at The Campus Center.*



My name is Sirius Underwood and I am a sophomore majoring in the Electrical Engineering Technology (EET) program at Zane State College. Today I'm going to tell you how and why I chose Zane State College.

Two years ago I was sitting at home trying to figure out how I was going to pay my rent and have a little bit of money left over afterwards. My daughter saw the despair on my face and said, "Dad, what's wrong?" I said, "I just can't get ahead, every time it's pay day I'm just barely getting by." I told her, "When you finish high school, I want you to go to college and make something out of your life. Don't be a nobody like me."

She said, "Daddy, you're not a nobody, you are somebody. Why didn't you go to college?" I began to tell her that when she and her brother were born, I couldn't afford to go to college. I had to work and take care of family. She said, "Well, why can't you go to college now?" I said, "Now I'm too old and I don't remember all the stuff from high school. I will look stupid around a whole lot of smart folks." She said, "Why don't you stop making excuses and go see what college is about." She told me to show her how to go to college.

That night I thought about what she said and the next day I went to the public library and had the librarian help me find information about some of the colleges in the area. The college that caught my eye was Zane State College. I thought to myself, "If I can get into this school, it will be close to home and not far from work. This will be perfect." On the front page of their website, it said if you want a career to provide a better life, to come on down. That afternoon I made my way to the college wanting to get enrolled, but not really knowing what to expect. At first sight, the school looked huge and my first thought was, "I'm going to get lost." When I walked through the sliding doors with a puzzled look on my face, a student said, "Can I help you find something?" I said, "I'm trying to get into college. Where should I go?" He sent me to Admissions. In Admissions, I (learned about) the college programs and what Zane State College has to offer. I decided that I should try the Electrical Engineering Technology program. This is something that I have had an interest in since I was a kid—taking apart TVs and radios, driving my parents crazy, leaving parts everywhere.

...I tell my kids all the time that with hard work and determination, they can achieve any goal that they set their minds to and work toward. I want to be a role model to them and to others by not only "talking-the-talk" but by "walking-the-walk" to success.

So, not knowing what to expect or how I was going to work a full-time job, go to school full-time and take care of family, I just did it. From that day on, my life changed forever. Now, two years later, this December I will be the first person in my family to graduate from college—and on top of that I'm setting the bar high with my grades, showing my kids and others that if I can do it, they can, too.

(more)

I'm so happy that there is a college that will help you when you don't understand something; a college that makes you feel welcome no matter what age you are; a college that has programs such as "TRiO" and "Quick Start to College" to guide you in the right direction when you feel that you don't know what to do next; a college that will help you find jobs around the school when you thought you couldn't buy that school book.

Enrolling at Zane State College has led me to one of my greatest accomplishments. At Zane State College, I have been able to acquire the needed skills to reach my goals; however, obtaining those educational skills comes with a financial cost.

The students at Zane State College are so fortunate that the College has support from donors to help students when we need extra help. I am so fortunate that there are foundations like AEP that have assisted me in achieving my goal. Personally, I'd like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your generosity and support and for giving me a chance to graduate and ensure a better life for me and my family.

All my life, I have wanted to make a difference. And now my ideas and thoughts will become a reality-- as an engineer I plan to design, build, install, troubleshoot, and maintain equipment in order to change the world as we see it today. I also plan to further my education by enrolling into the Miami University Program after graduation; this is a Bachelor's program based on Zane State College's campus. Upon graduation, I plan to live out my dream as an electrical/mechanical engineer doing what I love to do best.

Once again, thank you for investing in me and my future. I am sure I'm speaking for all of the scholarship students when I say your investments will be well worth it and appreciated.

Thank you.