

“How I Got Here: Lemnique—Educator-focused Video”

Lucy: Hey, guys. My name is Lucy, and today, we're going to take a deeper look into the story of Lemnique, a veterinarian living and working in Houston. Lemnique realized early on that she had a real passion for animals. How could you not?

Group: Aww.

Lucy: That's insanely cute. Helping students identify their interests is a great way to start the conversation about how to set goals for achieving their wildest dreams. My wildest dream actually involves Beethoven and a unicorn at a tea party, but that's neither here nor there.

To get started, help your students identify their passions and interests. Talk to them about what they already love to do and what learning track they can start down now to eventually land a career that incorporates their interests. Help them be as specific as possible.

Maybe you have a student who's way into numbers. That's fabulous. Now, are they more interested in analyzing numbers like a sports statistician? Maybe they want to learn about accounting or perhaps the stock market. Taking AP classes at the high school level is an excellent way to help determine which track is right for students and set them up for success when it comes time to choose a major.

Now, all of these fields could benefit from an AP Math class, but a future statistician might take a ... you guessed it ... AP Statistics course for a head start. A future accountant would get a lot out of an AP Macroeconomics class, and a stock broker could actually benefit from an AP Psychology course to better understand the human behavior in a financial world.

Maybe you have students who still aren't sure. That's okay too. Taking AP courses in any subject is a great way to free up your college schedule to engage in a variety of interests in a deeper way. Instead of taking freshman English, they now have time to take Beginning Sculpture or Figure Drawing or Photography to get a better idea if the art track is for them. You get the gist.

Now, let's meet Lemnique and see how her passion for animals helped her to choose a practical educational trajectory that would ultimately land her on her dream career path, but first, this adorable picture of a baby chick riding a toy motorcycle. Enjoy.

Lemnique: I love animals because they have so many personalities. They're goofy, friendly, some like to just cuddle up with you while others just go for it. They see that ball and you throw it, there's no turning back. It's the same with people. If you have a goal, you have to go get it. My name is Lemnique, I live in Houston and I'm a veterinarian.

Since I was 5 years old, I knew that I wanted to be a veterinarian. There's no other way to get this degree unless you go to college. As a kid, I've always loved animals. I was a only child and my mother was a single mother. She's worked 2 to 3 jobs in order for me to get where I am today. "Oh, look at that face."

Lucy: Lemnique very clearly identified her passion for animals. The cat's out of the bag, so to speak, although I have no idea who put the cat in the bag or why they thought that was a great idea in the first place. Often passion alone is not enough to be prepared to enter the job market. It requires a calculated and strategized trajectory, lots of hard work and taking advantage of learning opportunities along the way.

Encouraging your students to job shadow before they declare a college major is another great way to determine if they're on the right path, but as you'll see in this next section, Lemnique goes a step further by taking a job at a vet clinic the very first chance she gets. You might even say she vetted her passion for animals, not that I would say that, but you might.

Lemnique: When I was 16, my first job was a veterinarian assistant, and that changed my whole world. "You doing okay, buddy?" I got to see in action what a veterinarian does, even surgery and how surgery's done. Wonderful mentors guided me. "So how did you prep for a vet school?" They showed me the way.

I went to North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. It was just an awesome experience with the great professors. I got to learn about different subjects, not just the basics, but every layer of science. In college, I had the opportunity to go to Belize studying abroad, and to get to Belize, I had to raise money. Thankfully I did, so when I was there, I was able to work with pigs, tortoises, even touch and play with a jaguar. It was a great experience. While you're learning, you can still have fun at the same time and meet great people.

Lucy: By taking a job as a vet assistant in high school, Lemnique got to truly experience what takes place day in and day out at an actual vet clinic. Working there allowed her to really see if she was choosing the right field to study. Obviously, it'd be much easier to find out that the sight of blood made her faint in an afterschool job than during vet school.

Working with professionals in her field of interest also allowed her the unique opportunity to ask her mentors tons of questions about their own journey. Which school did they attend? What was the hardest part? What would they do differently? You can't beat first-hand information directly from the horse's mouth, or sometimes nearby a horse's mouth in this case.

By working alongside the vet pros early on, Lemnique was also able to ask her mentors to write letters of recommendation for college entry and potential scholarships. This dedication and demonstrated effort does not go unnoticed during the application process. Of course, colleges are looking for students who jump at every opportunity they have to learn and actively work toward their interests and goals. In this next section, you'll notice that once she was in college, Lemnique definitely didn't stop being

ambitious. She continued to explore opportunities which resulted in her going to study abroad in Belize.

Student should dig into what kind of unique offerings like this are provided by potential colleges. Learning and on-the-job training doesn't have to look like a traditional classroom. These programs can actually be massive amounts of fun, like studying art in Paris or interning with a movie studio in California or studying ancient sea turtles on a majestic beach. Hey, wait. Come back here.

Lemnique: After college, med school, which was [inaudible 00:06:55], that school was crying and praying and no sleep, no eating, but I made it and I feel like as long as you're persistent, anything's possible.

I work at the University of Texas Health Science Center working with laboratory animals, and I also like to volunteer at low-cost spay and neuter clinics. "Hello, who do we have here today?" There's only approximately 2% of veterinarians that are African-American vets, and I'm hoping to change that to make it a known career for people of my ethnicity. If you have a dream job, college can help you go get it. You can become anything that you want to be. Just do it.

Lucy: Well, that's the end of our video on Lemnique, and hopefully the end of any odd or bad animal jokes. Sorry, it was just way too tempting. In all seriousness, it might surprise you to learn how many students have been told they couldn't or shouldn't pursue a particular field of study. Invite students to have a conversation about this if they felt this way, why someone insinuated that a career choice was beyond them and what they can do to make it happen despite the naysayers. Continue to talk to your students about other stories like Lemnique's. Perhaps it's women in stem-focused science careers or successful minority CEOs of Fortune 500 companies.

Achieving big goals isn't easy. It takes hard work, focus and commitment, but working now with your students towards those goals is starting their journey toward the career they've always dreamed of. College makes the seemingly impossible very much possible, and if that's not an excellent reason to actually get yourself into college, I certainly don't know what is, unless of course your students are sea urchins, in which case, there's not so much a promising college future as much as a lifetime of wiggling at the bottom of the sea floor, but it's pretty fun either way, really.