



Do You Really Want Your Children to Attend College?

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My husband, [Jermaine Barnes](#), and I went to the same elementary school, middle school, and high school in Indianapolis, but we first connected online on Black Planet (a social media platform at the time that helped you connect to other Black people). When we connected

online, we both were students at Purdue University. His major was computer technology, and my major was English education.

After chatting for a bit on Black Planet, we switched over to AOL messenger. Then, we finally met in the lobby of my dorm, Windsor Halls. One day, we met up right before class, and we walked to the SAME lecture hall. We were both in the same agricultural economics class, the only class that overlapped in our majors. That professor had us in alphabetical order. He went to his seat in the front, and I went to my seat towards the back since my maiden name started with the letter 's.'

Then, we learned we lived in the same neighborhood, not the same street. His mom's house was 11 houses from my parents' house. My street was a dead end, and we didn't ride the same school bus. It was easier to walk between the houses than to drive. I was always at church, and he was always doing a sport. That is why we think we never crossed paths in our neighborhood.

Talk about meant to be!

He graduated May 2005, and I graduated May 2006. We were married August 2006. February 2011, we had our identical twin sons, who are now 11.5 (yes, the half matters ... to them). They are now in 6th grade. College is only six years away. We didn't want to wait until high school to start talking about college and pursuing a career path. We actually started this conversation back in elementary school.

Earlier this month, my pastor took a moment to address parenting. He told the congregation that parents should create an environment that kids want to return to as adults, and parents should create a home environment that prepares children to be able to leave and support themselves. Children can't return home to visit as adults if they never leave home.

Although we talked about college while they were in elementary school, we knew we had to keep talking about it. When they were in elementary school, our focus was on getting them to understand that they would one day need to have a job and be able to take care of themselves and that college was one way to reach that goal.

Now, we are focusing on the logistics of how to get into college and what college life is like. We took them to Purdue last weekend and gave them a campus tour. One of my sons wants to be a scientist and has said this since he was four. My other son draws daily and is interested

in graphic design. We explained what it would take to be able to apply to Purdue, and we shared struggles and triumphs from our time at Purdue in hopes that our transparency would make them believe college is within reach.

When parents say they want their children to attend college, but they put no effort into discussing or explaining college, it is hard to believe that parents really want their kids to attend college. Even if a parent did not attend college, they could connect their children to college graduates so they will know the importance of thinking about what they want to do in the future.

It would be a joy if they attended Purdue together. Of course, we would accept any path they chose. However, it does not hurt to make the pitch for them to consider Purdue as an option.