

Freshman year of high school, teachers and counselors suggested I apply to The Office Group, a decision that would open the doors for me to escape an unstable home life and reach the caliber of the person I knew I could be.

My family went through bankruptcy, homelessness, and experienced a myriad of other barriers while my siblings and I were in school. To call Bend an affluent city is an understatement. In school, all my peers had the financial privilege of tutors, college advisors, and other mentors to overcome barriers. Beginning work as soon as I was able, my peers had the ability to focus solely on school, a barrier I had to become disciplined with my free time to overcome. After being accepted into The Office Group, the seemingly insurmountable barriers were beatable. Tutors, mentors, and other services that were financially unavailable for my family were suddenly accessible. Access to these services was not simply placed in my lap, The Office Group required me to work and cultivate the skills I have and learn when to ask for help. When I was stressing that I was about to fail a pre-calc exam, Betsy was there. When I didn't think higher education was a possibility for me and I didn't know where to start, Theresa was there. When questions about funding college and filling gaps in my financial literacy arose, Mellissa was there. When I had the full potential of achieving everything I have today but was only blocked by financial barriers that I could not control, The Office Group was there.

I am currently working to fulfill the requirements of obtaining a dual master's and bachelor's degree at the University of Denver. In June of 2024, I will complete my undergraduate degree with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting, and minor in Psychology with an Ethical Distinction. After completing this degree, I will graduate again in November 2024 with a Master of Science in Accounting, Technology & Analytics. Withholding a pandemic altering yet another one of my senior years, I will be nearing the end of the testing requirements to obtain my CPA license. I will be interning at Deloitte & Touche LLP this summer in the tax sector and anticipate signing for a full-time position to start after graduation. I say all that not to brag, but because if someone told me, the working student on every scholarship possible, that this was the path I would go down, I would have called them crazy.

None of the paths I have taken, nor opportunities I've been granted, would have been possible without one quintessential influence in my life: The Office Group.

Being in The Office Group was truly a life altering experience for me. I thought after high school, all I could do was work the jobs I knew, restaurants. I did not have a reference point in my immediate family for anything other than restaurants or military. After The Office Group ignited my interest and ability to obtain a higher education, I would not give it up. Theresa, Melissa, and Corben worked with me day and night to apply for scholarships, to be an advocate for me as I called the financial aid office, to be the mentors I did not have as a first-generation and low-income student. In an affluent city, the voices of the less fortunate are drowned out. The Office Group not only listens to the echoes of the less fortunate but lets us know that we are not alone.