

Life After Graduation – Perspectives of Current and Past Ritenour Students

As the school year continues into the fourth quarter, high school seniors across the country are looking forward to the future, reminiscing about the past and struggling with the biggest life decision they may ever make – whether or not to continue their education after graduating. At the age of 18, that decision is daunting enough, but the life-altering decisions don't stop there.

Next comes choosing a college, choosing a major/career path (how many adults really knew what they wanted to do with the rest of their lives in high school?), and finally figuring out a way to pay for it all. Senior year can be the perfect storm of excitement and anxiety. Are Ritenour students ready for the challenge?

“Yes!” suggests Amy Dinh, a 2012 Ritenour graduate and first-year student at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. “High school definitely prepared me for college. Not only were the teachers amazing, but all the staff of Ritenour provided me with the motivation I needed.”

Amy Dinh is the first in her family to go to college. “My mother always encouraged me to go to college so I would not have to face the many hardships she did. What she did not have, she wanted me to have,” she said. Dinh believes her decision to go to college will be beneficial to her in the future, as she is currently pursuing a career in nursing.

Dinh's former classmate, 2012 graduate Eric Tucker, also chose the college path after high school. Tucker attends Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) this year. “I always knew I wanted to go to college, because I knew with the economy like it is now, I will need a degree to do what I want in life,” said Tucker.

Tucker looked into a number of factors when deciding on a college. Among the reasons he chose SIUE was the importance of getting the full “college experience” by moving away from home. He also factored SIUE's renowned engineering program and reasonable cost of tuition into his decision. He is interested in pursuing a career in civil engineering.

As Dinh and Tucker now look back on their high school days, a new group of high school seniors looks ahead toward high school graduation and beyond. Seniors Alexis Haynes and Christina Elem are preparing for life after high school graduation.

Haynes and Elem are on the fast track to success already. Both played varsity volleyball this year and achieved academic all-state status for their academic and athletic success. For Haynes, college is an important decision because she says she will need a college education to be successful and to be able to provide for herself and her family one day. She plans to become a neonatal nurse, and although she is undecided as to where she would like to attend college, she is currently looking into the University of Central Missouri and University of Missouri.

Elem plans to attend Southern Illinois University Carbondale to study to be an accountant. Her parents have helped guide her to the decision to continue her education. Elem says she has always enjoyed mathematics, and she is excited to continue her education in a field she loves.

With bright futures ahead of them, the Ritenour graduates and current seniors all have very similar advice to their peers who may be struggling with the decision to graduate from high school and continue their education after graduation. Their peers are advised to



“Stick it out,” “Keep going” and “Take the initiative.”

“If you have the chance to go to college, go,” advised Dinh. “If you have concerns, there will always be help. Do not be afraid to speak up, or you will never be heard. You have to take initiative if you want to be successful.”

The Ritenour High School guidance office is a helpful source of information regarding financial aid, scholarship opportunities, college choices and trade school/apprenticeship options.

“We're proud to play an important role in guiding students to meet their full potential and preparing them for life after graduation,” said Ritenour High School Principal Dr. Anthony Robinson. “We share our best wishes and congratulations to graduating seniors and recent graduates as they continue to find their voices and make their own paths in the world.”

Representatives from Junior Achievement speak with Ritenour High School students during the school's first-annual 21st Century Career Expo on Feb. 27 in the lobby of the Ritenour Auditorium. More than 500 students from RHS and Ritenour's two middle schools were engaged in interactive booths that showcased different career pathways. The goal of the expo was to show students how they can apply the 21st century skills they are learning in high school to their future in college and different careers.