

Good evening, my name is antonia oglesby and I am a political science major from housatonic community college

Housatonic, to me personally, means a second chance. I am a recent high school honor roll student, drop out. At the age of 17, in 2014, in my senior year, I stopped going to school due to intense bullying and I never thought I'd be able to go back into any educational setting. However, in July of 2018, with my then-3 ½ year old- I celebrated the completion of my GED and enrolled in Housatonic for the fall semester.

I was, initially, overwhelmed to have come back from a 4 year break. I wandered the halls lost and confused, and in my first week I was ready to quit school again, for good. However, I met a student at the time who advised me to switch my courses, and I did. I began taking American Government with Professor Dunne and Intro to Political Science with Professor Mannion, I didn't know at the time how intrical these two professors would be to my college career.

Profesor Dunne was able to teach me about Student Senate, where I am now the Vice President, the Political Science and History club- where I am the president, and the Student Advisory Committee where I go to the CSCU system office to discuss public safety task forces, the consolidation process, I network with fellow students and I am a voice for Housatonic.

Professor Mannion, pushed me and pushed me. In my first class with her I learned of a legislative internship opportunity, and as someone who yearns to work in politics- this was an idea for my foot in the door. I did everything I could in my first year to create the perfect resume for this interview. When the time came to submit my documents, I nearly backed out. I became so scared of failure, and I felt comfortable enough to speak with her about this. She told me, "no. you're doing this." I attempted to argue, explain that perhaps a simple internship with an attorney's office would suffice- she told me I was stupid and to never think like that again. She assured me I could do this, and they would be ridiculous to not accept me. When my interview came, I mentioned this encounter and was told "I would have to have had some words with professor mannion if she had not sent you to us" and I walked out of my interview on cloud nine, it was such an amazing accomplishment to see the confidence my professor had in me, mirrored back. I am now a legislative intern for two representatives, representative stallworth of bridgeport and representative arnone of enfield.

Although it may be touching, my story of second chances is not unique at housatonic, it's the norm. I've met many students who have similar stories to mine who, in their first

semester, struggled in their personal life to the point they nearly gave up. Similar to mine, they had faculty and staff who believed so fiercely in them that they had to believe in themselves. From a 54 year old woman who is starting over in her career, and is now a part of the largest international honor society for two year colleges, to a dear friend of mine who is now the student senate president, and frequently called upon by our school as an important voice. We are full of ambitious characters all yearning to make a better life for themselves. We are full of faculty and staff members who know us by name, family, religion, situation and we are more than our banner ID numbers. Frequently I see students return just to sit in with our Director of Student Activities and catch up. There's a reason we have the highest retention rate out of all of our sister community colleges.

When I think of my own personal story I'm reminded of a tattoo from one of my favorite professors, it reads, "from GED to PhD", and thanks to housatonic- that'll be me too.