

I stumbled upon an article in the *New York Times*, “For Poor, Leap to College Often Ends in a Hard Fall” by Jason DeParle, and after reading it, I was astounded. I reflected on the points that resonated with me; maybe other I-Promise scholars feel the same. The articles brought up the fact that “low-income Americans have lower chances of upward mobility” due to family and financial strains.

I am a middle child, with two older brothers and one younger brother. After the death of my father, my mom and my two oldest brothers set their ambitions to the side and worked endless hours to help with our financial situation. It hurts to think that my youngest brother, who was five at the time, would probably not remember our dad, so I wanted to be a father figure for him. I wanted to be different; I wanted to earn my college degree in hopes of helping our financial situation.

My first semester was stressful not only because of classes, but because of a promise I had made before my dad passed. I told him not to worry and that I will take care of the family, especially my youngest brother. But being so far away from my little brother during college was hard – it was hard because I wanted to be that father figure.

The article pointed out how “many low-income students, feeling the need to help out at home, are deterred by the thought of years of lost wages and piles of debt”. How true. Time after time, I would check on how the family was doing and would find mom stressed over our finances. I asked her a bold question, if I should just drop college and go home to help out. She wanted me to finish and to not worry about it. Instead, I did what I could. I found a job on campus in order to try and help pay for bills while still being at school. I thought that no one understood where I was coming from, but my other I-Promise friends understood exactly what I was feeling, and I was glad to have support.

I-Promise is definitely a group of people that understand. Not only is I-Promise a financial scholarship, but also a support system. The impact the I-Promise program has had on me is monumental. I grew as a person, and I’ve achieved things I didn’t know I could have achieved. Next year I’ll be graduating with a degree in Chemical Engineering. Fortunately, I will not have the same outcome as the students featured in the article, but I clearly understand the challenges low-income college students face. I-Promise mitigates these challenges, and I greatly advise everyone to take advantage of the I-Promise program.