

Eric Ramsay



*Eric Ramsay participated in TRiO through Upward Bound (UB) at the University of Maine at Presque Isle in 2007 – 2010. The UB director then was Darylen Cote, who also nominated Eric for this award.*

It has long been a goal of mine to achieve some measure of success and help blaze the trail for those following in my footsteps. Having come from a lower-socioeconomic home in Aroostook County, ME, and been the first in my family to graduate from college, I can proudly say I've overcome significant barriers. That said, none of my successes would have been possible without the help of socially-minded Maine institutions and educational initiatives that have supported me along the way.

Arguably the first Maine institution to drive me towards success was TRiO Upward Bound in Presque Isle, ME. The faculty members at Presque Isle's Upward Bound program are some of the most caring and passionate individuals I've ever met, capable of gently pushing students with backgrounds like mine to value education and break through barriers of cyclical poverty. It was while attending Upward Bound's summer program following my sophomore year in high school that I grew close to UMPI instructor Dr. Zhu-qi Lu. I soon discovered he taught Chinese classes at the Maine School of Science and Math in Limestone throughout the school year. It didn't take long for me to receive a financial support through Upward Bound to attend these classes for free. It took even less time after attending the first class to realize how unique an atmosphere MSSM was, and how eagerly I wished to become part of it. Within a week of my first Chinese class, I met with key instructors at the school and transferred having all my tuition generously paid for by the state of Maine.

While my transition to MSSM's rigorous academic standards was a hard one, the help of dedicated faculty and mentors pushed me to exceed the standards set in place. Being surrounded by like-minded individuals, I grew to love learning. Applying to Bowdoin the fall of my senior year with the help of Upward Bound, I knew the odds for admission were not in my favor. Bowdoin was and remains what counselors refer to as a 'reach' school, especially for lower-socioeconomic students like myself who lack many of the key developmental resources available to the typical Bowdoin student. Luckily for me, like Upward Bound and MSSM, Bowdoin was able to see my full potential in spite of my disadvantages, and offered me a chance to prove myself nearly for free.

Having recently graduated from Bowdoin in May, I joined Unum in Portland as a Professional Development Program Associate with a concentration in Finance. While I pursued many enticing career opportunities in Boston, New York and even Beijing, Unum's offer resonated with me like no other. Its combined community engagement and employee development focus offered me a chance to pursue my interests in finance while giving back to Maine, and I plan to make the most of it.

Having been molded by Maine institutions every step of the way, I maintain an indefinable sense of loyalty to this great state and the institutions I've benefited from. As such, I'm currently driving an initiative through Unum to organize yearly STEM career fairs at MSSM to better bridge the disconnect between MSSM students and employers. In addition, I've recently started my own personal finance consultancy called SECURE, which utilizes my passion for finance to offer free financial planning and investment advice to average American's and young professionals in my networks and communities.

I find each of these outreach experiences incredibly rewarding, and expect them to be the first of many opportunities to help better this great state. And to those individuals and institutions that have empowered me to become my best self over the years, know that I will do all I can to pay it forward.