

Brandon Teel
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Community Leadership Essay

“When the mind is allowed to relax, inspiration often follows.” This quote has played an integral role in my journey as I started to play basketball at 12 years old. I signed up to participate in a youth mentoring and sports program named HotShotsGlobal-Incorporated. When signing up, my only desire for the program was to improve my skills to make the middle school basketball team. However, after getting immersed in the program, it became a passion of mine, in which I excelled. The program has helped build my character, which has led to success in various areas of my life, such as my confidence, integrity, passion, dedication, willingness to learn, willingness to listen, and the ability to process information and apply it. While in the program, I quickly became a youth mentor and was assigned complex and responsible tasks that would not usually be entrusted to my peers. As I started to outgrow the program, I wanted to assist in finding ways to improve the program by researching, recommending, and planning educational and sports outings. When I arrived on the East Stroudsburg University’s campus, I knew that I wanted to leave my mark and impact through my involvement in student organizations and as a mentor to the incoming classes after me.

On the ESU campus, I was active with many organizations. I was also involved with the Student Government, Black Student Union, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc, Cultural Greek Council, Men of Cultural Alliance, and the NAACP. Being involved with the organizations motivated me to be more involved in my campus community. Being involved with the organizations allowed me to improve my strategic outlook on policies. While at school, I was fascinated with how budgets were allocated for different line items. When I was the Finance Chair, I could distribute the funds appropriately to student organizations. I also had the opportunity to teach people how to know the system to get more money. So I decided to get involved. I was able to connect with different people and help them reach their goals. Being able to assist the people on their journey me understand the importance of uplifting the youth. It also allowed me to understand different viewpoints. Being involved also allowed me to speak up for those who do not have the platform to speak. I have been able to speak on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at my university and the state school system level.

Due to the low retention of students of color in many schools in the PASSHE state school system, ESU has increased its recruiting efforts from the inner city. A good percentage of the students believe that they have the necessary skills to make the sports team. Throughout my recruiting process, the coach and the player made verbal agreements. However, once they arrive at the school, the verbal agreement will be wiped away or vanished. The oral deal would eventually lead to the player getting cut from the team or delaying participation in the sport. Those outcomes usually negatively impact the students because playing the sport was the only

reason why the student came to the school. While being enrolled at school, I had begun to see the more extensive scope of higher education at Predominantly white institutions, taking advantage of black students. My goal was to help educate the students. I have seen many students whose athletic plans derailed grades decline sanctioned by the student conduct and other harmful situations.

To help address retention, in the fall of 2020, I partnered with Pennsylvania Senator Art Haywood. We mounted an effective advocacy campaign to bring the same energy, urgency, and practical suggestion to bear it too was mobilizing as a collection of 14 universities, enrolling some 93,000 students, at last, to aggressively address itself to the same issues that are present at ESU. We outlined the ENOUGH initiative and demanded that the administration take the following six actions: End Racial Harassment and Speech, Nurture and Retain Students of Color, Organize an Incident Reporting System, Unveil Mandatory Diversity Training, Generate More Mental Health Resources, and Hire More Faculty and Staff of Color. Senator Haywood and I met with members of the PASSHE leadership team, including several universities presidents, to tell powerful personal stories, to make practical suggestions, to urge energy, and effective action. We developed an agenda (“fix the six”), an innovative and practical playbook for effective immediate actions, learning, listening, participating. We built a statewide advocacy campaign, enlisted key partners, lifted diverse voices, used social and other media channels, organized and participated in virtual town halls (this being the time of pandemic), and extended the reach into Pennsylvania’s political arena. On April 14/15, 2021, Denise Pearson, Vice Chancellor for Diversity Equity and Inclusion, and I will present a systemwide strategy to the PA State System’s Board of Governors for their approval. PASSHE Board of Governors unanimously adopted a historic effort to include traditionally excluded Black and Brown students.

In May 2021, I completed my undergraduate degree in Sport Management with minors in Business Management & Economics, and Management. In the fall, I will be attending graduate school to obtain a Masters’s Degree in Public Administration with a Graduate Certificate in Sport Management and Athletics from the West Chester University of Pennsylvania. After completing a master’s degree in public administration, I first plan to continue my education. My end goal is to attain my doctoral degree. In my field, I plan to pursue a career working alongside high school and college athletic directors to mentor the upcoming generation through sports. In addition, another goal is to open up my recreation center, and partner with nonprofit programs similar to my childhood program, HotShotGlobal, Inc. Programs like HSG are crucial because programs teach young athletes life-long skills through the lenses of sports. It also introduces the importance of having multiple plans if your athletic career does not executive how they plan. During my time at East Stroudsburg University, I had the opportunity to mentor some student-athletes through my involvement on campus; we would have countless conversations about their plans if sports did not work out. In the beginning, they did not have one, but after reaching out to former athletes within my network circle, the players could come

up with alternative plans if sports do not pan out as they anticipated. I believe that I was a leader before going to college. However, the college has enhanced my skills by giving me self-confidence, developing a deeper appreciation of networking, enhancing my goals strategically, and showcasing my transferable skills.