

# Onondaga Pathways to Careers

## Zach - Computer Information Systems

*"I do information technology work, such as fixing laptops or installing software. I have been editing websites by making PDF[s] accessible. I've even built a computer. Yeah that was easy..."*

### ***Support from OPC Scholar program Bridges high school to college***

In 2015, while still a senior in high school, Zach became an Onondaga Pathways to Careers (OPC) Scholar. OPC Scholars is a program that allows high school students to learn more about careers and engage in activities on the Onondaga Community College (OCC) campus. Zach was inspired by the OPC program and its personnel. He notes, *"I was going to the once-a-month Scholar meetings and they (OPC staff) really kind of convinced me that by just by being there that I should go to college."*

Zach decided to apply and attend OCC where in addition to classes he took part in many career development workshops through OPC. Workshops on resume writing helped him focus on his career goals. Practice with mock interviews helped him overcome shyness and communicating with employers.

### ***A Paid Summer Internship***

Onondaga Pathways to Careers has been instrumental to Zach's academic success and in helping him secure and maintain a paid internship. With encouragement and assistance from the OPC staff, Zach applied for the competitive, paid summer youth mentoring/employment internship program available through Central New York Works, the local American Job Center in Syracuse. After being interviewed by a talent acquisition manager at Syracuse University (SU), he was placed in the IT unit of the Burton Blatt Institute (BBI). Zach has been a valued addition to BBI, as stated by his supervisor: *"Zach has been a welcome[d] newcomer to the BBI team. He is dependable, punctual, catches on quickly, and shows a lot of enthusiasm for the field of technology.."* Zach did so well during this internship that his initial five-hour a week position was increased to a 15-hour a week position.

### ***Launch of an IT career***

Because of Zach's further success, he was invited to continue his employment to be paid directly by SU/BBI after the summer internship position ended. He has been working as a paid IT intern for a year. Staff at BBI have noted that he has made many notable contributions in this position and has a great work ethic, something Zach attributes to the supports he receives from OPC staff who check in with him regularly. Zach brought a strong set of knowledge, skills, and abilities to BBI, expertise which he has competently applied to enhance systems within SU. Zach has since completed an additional job shadowing experience with the Syracuse University Information Technology Services Department. Zach aspires to work in the technology sector and is pursuing his bachelor's degree at SUNY Polytechnic University in Utica, where he transferred from OCC.

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[Career Preparation and Work-based Learning Experiences](#)

## George - Hospitality Management

*"Partnering with OPC allowed us to obtain hard-working interns who provided new and innovative approaches to the work. Hosting job shadows and interns from OPC exposed our staff and guests to diverse individuals with whom they may not normally have the opportunity to interact."*

- *Manager, Embassy Suites*

### ***From Academics to Interviewing: Finding Confidence and Support***

Initially, George worked with Onondaga Pathways to Careers (OPC) after enrolling as a college student in order to get accommodations. OPC provided assistance in filling out the application. George has utilized accommodations for extended time for tests and exams and found that staff have been supportive. Through OPC, he then received career counseling, which he noted provided needed assistance in making career choices. He states, "Sometimes it can get confusing about which careers you want to do based on other programs that help you find jobs, but I usually go with OPC since I feel connected with them." Reflecting on his experience participating in a workshop on video interviewing strategies, George commented, *"I really think they [OPC STAFF] have helped me figure out what work I love to do... It was really good. I was really confident."*

### ***An Internship in the Hospitality Field***

After attending OPC workshops, George was able to identify an ideal location for his internship, at the Embassy Suites hotel. George wanted to work for a place that had a combination of restaurant and catering, plus other aspects of the hospitality industry. George completed a six-month, 400-hour internship with Embassy Suites in East Syracuse. His manager at Embassy Suites talked with great enthusiasm about George's work ethic and his initiative. Through that internship, George was able to hone in on aspects of the hospitality industry in which he particularly wanted to focus. He notes "My weakness was that I had a little bit of a struggle with the training on doing the front desk with the computer and checking people in and out," said George. However, George discovered that he loves the entertainment and catering part of hospitality.

### ***Building a Base of Knowledge in Business***

After the internship George did seasonal work because he wanted to gain additional retail experience. After graduation, he transferred to SUNY Oswego to study business. George's is following his passion and towards one day having his own hospitality business. In addition to his studies, George notes that his interpersonal skills are a good match for his career choice stating, "I do [well] with communication and with my positive attitude, and I'm also really good at helping, [I] like being part of the community a lot."

In the future, George hopes to open a business in Central New York, much like the ones he loved from his childhood, preferably a restaurant that features family entertainment and catering.

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[Employers Accommodations](#)

## **Bianca - Physical Therapy**

*"[As a] physical therapy assistant (PTA), you build a relationship with that person. You are there to help them. You set them up with their exercises, you talk about their life. That is part of what is going to be maybe the best thing about that job."*

### ***A Decision on a Health Career***

Prior to a brain injury, Bianca's aspiration was to become a doctor. She has always enjoyed medical subjects such as anatomy, physiology, and forensic biology (which were her electives in high school). As a result of testing, counseling, and discussions, offered by Onondaga Pathways to Careers (OPC) and after considering her concussion recovery, she decided that the Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA) program would be the best fit to use as a stepping stone towards a career path in the medical field. Bianca chose to major in Math and Biology as she worked towards acceptance into the PTA Program.

### ***Summer Supports for Academics/Career Success***

Bianca participated in the OPC Summer Transition Program to adapt to college life and took a non-credit math course at OCC in preparation for her math credit course. The Summer Transition Program helped Bianca cope with the natural anxieties of adapting to a large school, meeting new people, and participating in a far less structured academic environment than high school. It gave her comfort to see some of her high school classmates around campus and helped her to make new friends before the fall semester even began. The summer program was an extended support of the OPC Scholar a program for high school students to learn more about careers and engage in activities on the Onondaga Community College (OCC) campus.

### ***The Physical Therapy Assistant Program***

She met with the OPC career readiness coach on a monthly basis to ensure she was on track with her goals, one of which was applying for the PTA program at Onondaga Community College (OCC). She attended several informational workshops and one-to-one sessions with her OPC counselor to help with her academic work and to secure an internship. As a pre-requisite to becoming accepted into the PTA program she completed 20 hours of clinical observations. OPC staff supported Bianca to work through the necessary application materials, and Bianca completed her clinical hours with a Syracuse orthopedic specialist at a clinic where she had personally received services for several years. Also, Bianca worked with Regal Cinemas developing her 'people skills' which will help her in her goal to be a PTA. Bianca planned to complete her Associates Degree in PTA and work in the field for a few years. She eventually wants to go back to school and study medicine more intensely, noting "*I can get my bachelors and ...doctorate.*" Having academic strength in English, majoring in Math and Biology, having a passion to help people, and obtaining the supports through OPC, Bianca was equipped to succeed.

She indicated that OPC has increased her motivation and confidence to continue her studies since she has learned to use her time more wisely in college and she is determined to do what self-care is necessary, (e.g., getting the rest she needs) to heal from her injury so she can assure her academic and career success.

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## Scott – Nursing

*"I started with Computer information systems because I wanted to do stuff with computers, but, then, last semester ... my lung collapsed, and I was in the hospital for two week[s] and decided that I wanted to go into school for nursing to help people."*

### ***A Change in the Career Pathway***

Scott has an innate aptitude for computer technology, having built his own computer. His major was computer information systems; however, following a hospital stay, he changed career path. Scott found out about the Onondaga Pathways to Careers (OPC) program from an advisor when he was trying to set up a job shadowing experience. Scott always enjoyed taking care of people and preferred to be in an occupation that would keep him engaged. Upon entering the OPC program, Scott had begun taking prerequisites for the registered nursing (RN) major and was determined, as he put it, "to hang in there the best I can."

### ***Finding the Right Accommodations***

Scott found that despite high school "teachers showing us what it'd be like and telling us ... what to expect," the academic expectations in college were overwhelming. He found the workload especially heavy in his credit classes that were prerequisites for the RN program, and academic testing was difficult as well. Throughout his educational career, Scott has had difficulties with math, however, his studies turned around for him in this regard. When asked about his progress, Scott said, "I'm actually doing a lot better in math this semester—pretty much better than I ever did before—so I am starting to enjoy math a little bit more." Some of this improvement can be attributed to the OPC and the Office of Accessibility Resources (OAR), which provided supports such as a separate location for testing, access to a computer, extended time, and a calculator. Also, Scott found the OPC staff to be particularly helpful and very thorough, and he says he has had excellent experiences with Onondaga Community College faculty.

### ***Entering the Nursing Field***

Onondaga Pathways to Careers has helped Scott with job counseling/career planning, job readiness, job shadowing arrangements, and applying for summer jobs. "I wanted to shadow with nursing so he (OPC personnel) was helping me with that and he was showing me how to activate resume and career search software and how to apply for jobs during the summer," explained Scott. Scott is a person of resilience and fortitude, so it was no surprise that he was able to set up a job shadow for two hours per week in nursing, his chosen career pathway. His ideal career goal is to work in an intensive care unit, a fast-paced environment with plenty of engagement and the possibility to further his education and become a doctor.

### **ODEP Policies in Practice:**

[Career Development and Work-Based Learning Experiences](#)