Darrin had heard of community colleges, but he always thought that college was for the privileged. He couldn’t imagine how with two kids, a wife, and two jobs he could possibly complete college, until one of his coworkers in a similar situation started taking classes at a local college. One night after work, Darrin went to the college with his friend, sat in on an auto class, and talked to the instructor during break. He found out that after finishing a one-year certificate program he could get a job making twice as much as his current salary. That would mean he wouldn’t have to work his second job on weekends and could spend more time with his family.

The following week, Darrin went back to the college after work to register. But by the time he got there, the office was closed. The instructor told him that he could fill out the application online and gave Darrin the link. That night after the kids were in bed Darrin completed the application online. Then he waited and after a week he finally received a letter from the college with instructions on enrollment. Unfortunately, he had missed the registration deadline by about a week.

The following week, Darrin went back to the college after work. The instructor told him that he would add Darrin to the class late and help him catch up. The instructor gave Darrin an add card and told him that this late in the game, Darrin would have to get the dean’s signature. The instructor allowed Darrin to stay in class and participate in the activities. Darrin really enjoyed learning and participating in the lab activities.

A couple of days later, Darrin took off work early and went to the college to get the dean’s signature. The dean wasn’t there, so Darrin talked to his assistant. She was not as supportive and told him that he shouldn’t have missed the deadline to register. Darrin tried to explain his situation, but she didn’t seem to believe his story. Finally, she
agreed to take the add card and ask the dean for her signature. She told Darrin to come back the next day. Darrin explained that he couldn’t leave work early that often. She didn’t have a solution for that.

The following week, Darrin left work early again to get to the college before class. The dean’s assistant had been able to get the dean’s signature and gave the signed add card to Darrin. He was very thankful and asked what the next step would be. The assistant told Darrin that at this point, he would also need the VP’s signature. Darrin rushed over to the VP’s office and luckily, the VP was there and was very helpful. She signed the add card, but told Darrin that she would only sign a late add card for him one time. By this time the registration office was closed, so Darrin had to wait until the following week to actually register for the class. In the meantime, Darrin’s wife kept telling him that he was wasting his time and that he should keep his focus on his jobs and family.

**DESIRED EXPERIENCE**

After hearing about the auto program at the local community college, Darrin went to the class with his friend the following week. The instructor was very helpful. Before the class started, he walked Darrin and a number of other new students to the college’s One Stop Center. There was only one person working there, but she was very helpful and showed Darrin and the other students how to complete the college application. The students received their Student ID after completing the application. She was then able to help them log into their student portal and register for the class. She informed them that if they didn’t meet the residency requirements they would be dropped from the class. She gave them an information sheet on the residency requirements. She also told them about the Financial Aid process and gave them a one-page instruction sheet to help them complete the Financial Aid application later. She didn’t want to give them too much information, but she did also give them a page on all the other services that were available on campus for students. The only problem was that the offices were all closed at nights. Luckily, they all had a link for online support. She was the only person at the One Stop Center at night, so she was pretty busy.

That weekend, Darrin logged in to his student portal to complete the Financial Aid application. The application was pre-populated based on the application information he had entered before. The system also pulled some of the tax-related information after it validated his social security information. Since Darrin had completed the financial aid process and submitted the required forms, he was allowed to stay in class and delay paying tuition fees and material fees (close to $750) until the financial aid decision was finalized in his file.