Carrie VanDusen is a sophomore at Wichita State and is a participant in the TRIO Disability Support Services Program. While in high school, she was a part of a program called Partners Exploring and Attaining Keys to Success at Independence High School in southeast Kansas. The program took her on campus visits and on one of those visits to Wichita she fell in love with the city and decided to move here.

Carrie is currently working towards a Bachelors of Arts in Psychology and a Bachelors of Arts in Sociology. She intends to pursue a doctorate in psychology at Wichita State after earning her bachelors’ degrees.

When asked about her family and academic experiences, Carrie responded with the following, “Coming from a low income family that has needed support and coming back to school has been a challenge especially keeping food on the table and a roof over our heads. Being back in school has inspired me to study harder to improve my current situation for my family.

“Inspite of my depression, the services that I am receiving here help alleviate my fears of not being capable of graduating. Without the support of TRIO Disability Support Services, it would be more difficult to balance school and home life due to the struggles I face with my two children who have special needs.”

Melissa Wright, a single mom, was working 21-30 hours a week but had a dream that hinged on continuing her education. She was determined to learn skills to find a new job to fulfill her career goals.

She initially came to the EOC Program because she wanted to earn her high school diploma. She was assisted by her assigned program education specialist in creating an education action plan that would serve as a road map. With EOC assistance, she was enrolled in Project Encore, an online high school completion program for busy adults that is sanctioned by the Kansas Board of Regents.

Melissa began her school year needing 22 credits to earn her high school diploma. As a returning student, she started the school year strong, averaging 25 hours a month online doing her school work. Her consistent work allowed her to gain enough credits to graduate in May 2015.

A high school graduate, Melissa proudly began her journey to earn a college degree. EOC staff assisted her to complete all of the forms necessary to enroll into college including an application for a $500 scholarship. Melissa is now attending Wichita Area Technical College as a participant in the Shocker Pathway Program. Today, she is pursuing a STEM career in the dentistry field.

The director and staff of the EOC Program applaud and celebrate Melissa for her hard work in making her dreams come true.