Joy Cox

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**Personal Statement**

As I arrived to campus, I parked my car and took a deep breath. The summer heat was beating through my windshield, and my heart was pounding with anticipation and nervousness. I was finally going back to school! Now at the age of 25, I tried to fit in the best I could. I knew attending West Virginia University was an opportunity I had been privileged with, and was determined to receive the best education they had to offer. I never thought I would be here. I grew up in a poverty stricken family with little resources. My mother spent hours striving to make a better life for me and my sisters by working long hours and providing us with the basic necessities. Though we remained close as a family, the love we shared did not compensate for the lack of finances, and by the end of my senior year in high school, I found myself at a crossroads. I needed to decide to do something with my life, and that decision needed to be made quickly.

 Initially, without sincere passion or drive, I decided to attend PA Culinary in Pittsburgh, Pa, to achieve my associate’s degree in culinary arts. After a series of missed holidays with my family and long work hours due to restaurant demands, I quickly realized that cooking was not something I wanted to continue as a career. Stuck in a dead end job with lack of direction, I found myself once again contemplating my future. The opportunity to attend West Virginia University could not have come at a better time. Leaving my family and moving to a state I had never seen was a challenge. My decision rested between taking a chance and exploring something I was grossly passionate about, or remaining at a dead in end job prepping and preparing food. My choice, though scary, was to attend WVU. June 1st of 2008, I packed up all I could fit in my 2 door Chrysler Sebring, along with the help of friends, and set out to start afresh.

 While taking classes at WVU, I found myself inspired to teach. As my professors stood at the front of the class going over material, I thought to myself, “I could do this, and I would be good at it.” As I began to get more involved in my major, I started to see and ponder what a difference communication research could make in various communities. It was then that I watched what was supposed to be a college career of 4 years turn into so much more for me. My initial hope was to attend WVU for four years, and go on to start a career, but while here I realized I needed to give myself to more in depth study if I wanted to accomplish what was in my heart. I found my passion to be interpersonal and family communication. I was assured that this is what I wanted to build my career on.

 By obtaining a Master’s degree and Ph.D. in communication studies, I see myself being able to impact communities, relationships and the world around me. I look forward to utilizing research to help military families and one day provide relationship and pre-marital counseling. Admitting me into a graduate school program would be an investment worth taking. I am a firm believer that with the right resources, I can achieve and exceed expectations. I have been resilient in both my studies and life, and have no intentions on relenting thus far. I am a prime example that seizing the moment in life is well worth the risk. Through perseverance and dedication I have achieved what I thought once to be impossible. I now find myself digging deeper and reaching higher to become a better student, colleague and researcher. I am one who practices diligence, and understands that it is an honor to be apart of an awesome research intensive institution such as WVU. By making the decision to return back to school at the age of twenty five, I represent a voice for those who still have goals and ambitions yet to be accomplished. I am inspired to never stop dreaming or reaching. For I have learned, all things are possible to those who believe.

 I enter into the running of becoming a possible team member as a Ronald E. McNair Scholar and a mentee of one of the top fifty researchers in the field, Dr. Melanie Booth-Butterfield. I am currently conducting a research project of my own under her tutelage, and am confident with the research training I have received as a McNair Scholar, the undergraduate courses I have taken and employment history, I am capable and qualified to continue my education and obtain my Master’s degree and Ph.D.