

## From the College of Eastern Idaho to Stanford: Recent graduate blazes path to opportunity

By David Pace | Post Register | 06.06.23



*Stanford-bound Gabe Clark smiles after receiving his diploma at the College of Eastern Idaho's commencement at the Mountain America Center on May 9. Courtesy photo College of Eastern Idaho*

Gabe Clark credits the College of Eastern Idaho with changing his life. The recent community college graduate is headed to Stanford University this fall after being awarded the Cooke Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship.

As a Cooke Scholar, Clark can receive up to \$55,000 per year to apply toward “tuition, living expenses, books and required fees at a four-year accredited undergraduate school,” according to the foundation’s website.

But his future and direction were not always so bright. As a student at Idaho Falls High School, he struggled with education.

“The College of Eastern Idaho was definitely a catalyst for my success in general,” Clark said. “When I graduated high school, I had a 2.4 GPA. I had no purpose and no expectations or idea for the future. So I went to the College of Eastern Idaho, and I luckily was able to find myself in a class with an instructor whose name is Jill Kirkham. ... I decided I wanted to try, so I did, and I graduated at the end of that semester with straight A’s.”

While serving on the Diversity Committee, he organized an event for women in the community and workforce serving in high leadership roles.

He also petitioned the College of Eastern Idaho to create opportunities for himself and other students when no formal process existed for internships and interned with the Bonneville County Prosecuting Attorney's office.

"Opportunity is everywhere, and you're going to find yourself in places where you feel like it is full of opportunity," Clark said. "You have to make sure that you seize that opportunity, that you utilize and get involved in everything that you can because that it is where you see drive. But there's also going to be situations where you don't feel like there's a lot of opportunity. What is important is that you realize is that there is, you just have to make it. So don't just sit down and feel defeated. Make that opportunity for yourself because that shows drive, conviction and strength."

Clark encourages others to enroll at the College of Eastern Idaho and actively engage with all it offers to students.

"Community college is a very smart option," he said. "It's affordable. It has instructors and people who believe in you and take the time to invest in you. It's something that a lot of people need. ... It's just as valuable as any other form of post-secondary education."

In awarding the scholarships, the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation considered "students' academic ability and achievement, financial need, persistence, and leadership," the release stated. "This year, more than 1,700 students from 448 community colleges applied for the award."

The College of Eastern Idaho's administration recognized Clark's impact on the campus.

"Gabe has been an extraordinary student at CEI, significantly contributed to the College and our student body, and I applaud the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation for recognizing his achievements to-date and future potential," said College of Eastern Idaho President Rick Aman in the release. "I have every confidence that Gabe will continue to shine as he completes his educational goals at Stanford and beyond."

Clark has a message of hope for anyone who feels like they've failed in the past or feels trapped in life's difficulties.

"The world is full of second chances," he said. "What matters is not that you failed, what you didn't achieve or what you've been through. What matters is how you try again. So when given the opportunity to, make sure that you give it your all."

###

[https://www.postregister.com/news/local/from-the-college-of-eastern-idaho-to-stanford-recent-graduate-blazes-path-to-opportunity/article\\_13b7e476-04b3-11ee-9ef3-9bc6ac510c76.html](https://www.postregister.com/news/local/from-the-college-of-eastern-idaho-to-stanford-recent-graduate-blazes-path-to-opportunity/article_13b7e476-04b3-11ee-9ef3-9bc6ac510c76.html)