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high school diploma. To qualify, you have to have seven or less credits left. I'm right on the cusp, with seven credits.

It's almost a full-ride scholarship. All I pay are the student fees — I think around \$150 per term. They pay for tuition and books. They do not pay for bus passes though. Transportation is tricky, but because I am a student, I will still be eligible for the youth pass. I'm determined to get my diploma, no matter what it takes.

S.Z.: *Do you think about what you want beyond your diploma?*

K.B.: I've been thinking about it a lot. My original plan was to keep going to PCC and get an associate's degree in psychology, sociology or philosophy. Those are three subjects that really interest me. But those things involve sitting all day in a stuffy room.

(I revisited with Kyler six weeks after our conversation. He is out of the shelter and living with friends. He just turned 20. When he starts his new job, he will be paying his housemates \$150 a month, living with five other people, sleeping on a love seat. But it's much better than the shelter, he says. He knows the people he's staying with, and he's comfortable.)

S.Z.: *Does your housing situation feel pretty stable to you right now?*

K.B.: Yes. There are expectations. My friend says I have to be in school and finish. She had another roommate and he didn't follow through on that, so he had to move on — which worked out great for me. I am willing to help in any way I can.

S.Z.: *How do you pay your rent?*

K.B.: The internship that I had ended in the beginning of September. But my skills coach at Sunrise EAST has connected me with IRCO (the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization). I'm hoping that I can get another internship through those connections. Right now, I'm just waiting for orientation and then I will find out when I start my new internship.

S.Z.: *What do think about the services you have taken advantage of?*

K.B.: They are all really great. If you want to do something for yourself, you have to take advantage of the resources around you. I'm really hoping for a kitchen job at NAYA, because honestly, it's much better for my commute.

S.Z.: *You're also going to school. When did classes start?*

K.B.: I started Sept. 23. The classes that the Gateway College program put me in are really easy for me. They aren't actually college-level classes. But I'm really enjoying the freedom I get on campus.

S.Z.: *What do you mean? Explain freedom.*

K.B.: In high school, you have all of these rules. On the PCC campus, it's all up to you. It helps build discipline and responsibility. There are consequences ... if you skip class or you don't follow through on your homework, they will drop you from the class. Then you have to pay the full fees for the class, which I really don't need because I don't have much money.

The students are much more responsible



PHOTO BY SUE ZALOKAR

and mature because they want to be there. In high school, kids go because they have to, but college students signed up for the classes and are paying for them. They want to be there.

S.Z.: *What does your future look like to you?*

K.B.: For right now, I'm just going to focus on my diploma and college. I know that when my friend who I am living with gets a stable job and I do too, we are going to move out and get a place of our own.

"I'm uncomfortable with large groups of people and there are usually about 30 people at the shelter every night. Everyone comes from their own background, I don't hold anything against anyone. ... As long as no one does anything against me, I'm fine with them. I'm just not comfortable."



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