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Intro: *There is no guarantee for success. But there are ways to get closer to it when you do the right things. Who you surround yourself with is just as important as what you do. Finding the right people, the right classes, the right activities and taking the right tests are all decisions that shape your future. Find out more today on Destination YOUNiversity with Dr. Cynthia Colon. Dr. Colon and her guests will give you the tips you need whether you're a student, parent, or educator. Now, here is your host, Dr. Cynthia Colon.*

Dr. Colon: Nearly everyone wants to be part of something great. In the world of college admissions, nearly every American High School teenager or parent of one has heard of Harvard, Yale, or Princeton, what I lovingly referred to as HYP. These are all great institutions, but the truth is, they did not start out that way. HYP; they were founded 370, 319 and 274 years ago respectively.

To say it has taken time to go from good to great is an understatement. I believe that is the students who make an institution great, one by one, year after year. In today's episode, you'll learn exactly why I believe this state institution is on its way to greatness. Two years ago, I drove through Vail, Colorado. I headed west toward Zion National Park and finally landed at the Four Seasons in Las Vegas.

What I found tucked away just a few miles from the strip was a gem I would never forget; UNLV. As I sat listening to the information session, all I could picture was my first introduction to USC. As a senior in high school, USC was referred to as the university of second-choice, second to the other school in LA. But as a senior, I was sold on the dream of greatness, the dream of what was to come. More than that, I was sold on the idea that I can somehow be part of shaping that greatness.

On that day in May in Las Vegas, walking through the seemingly small campus with trees and green and not a sound from the strip, I was sold on the dream of UNLV. How do you define greatness? Do you see the vision of greatness before it happens, or do you sit on the sidelines and wait to join? Either one is perfect for you. But I know there are teenagers out there who crave and desire nothing more than to be part of making

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something great.

As a parent, you know if that is your child. Ask yourself, does your child look at toys, problems, challenges and think, how can I improve this? As a teen, I never settled for the status quo. I did not ask what does that do but rather, how can we make it better.

Today's guest Kelsey Kaplan is the Senior Admission Coordinator at UNLV, born and raised in the fabulous city of Las Vegas. Kelsey was the first to attend college in her family and made the best of every minute on campus. Whether or not UNLV is for you, my friends trust me when I tell you that Kelsey's journey to college and the harsh reality of affordability will make your heart melt.

While a parent's belief and hope for their child are limitless, sometimes there are limits to what a family can offer financially. Kelly's courageous decision at the young age of 17 makes her truly great in every sense of the word. This is a tale I won't soon forget. Listen to this episode to the end.

Welcome to Destination YOUiversity, Episode Number 44. Today's lesson: Don't be good, be great. Be a rebel. Okay, listeners so before we dive in, I have to announce this week's double scoop star student of the week; Steven Alexander.

Steven is a student who has been homeschooled all his life really. And through his experience on the robotics team, Steven has chosen to major in mechanical engineering while continuing to mentor kids in robotics. Steven was an online virtual essay camper this past summer. And what I remember most about Steven is when I asked him why this particular robotics event was so meaningful to him.

He went on to explain that as an African American male who is homeschooled, it's not exactly easy finding others who had similar interests. He lit up just talking about his newfound friend. And I'll tell you, Steven is a self-proclaimed nerd who just loves talking about robotics and engineering and tinkering and all the mechanics. So when I say he lit up like, he lit up like a Christmas tree, literally.

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And so once he shared that story, I said yes, right about that, that moment that window of your life, that just conversation with your friend. The reader will see your passion and hear your enthusiasm from that newfound friend. I couldn't think of anyone more fitting for today's episode: Don't be good, be great. Be a rebel. Steven was perfect. So I say to you, congratulations, Steven on being this week's double scoop star student of the week. You've got a gift coming from me to you.

Well, hello, everyone. I'm your host, Dr. Cynthia Colon, author of the book; *Tips, Tales and Truths for Teens*. Welcome to Destination YOUiversity, where we explore extraordinary people who lived ordinary childhoods and found a pathway to college. If you are a parent or a mentor preparing for your teen's college admission journey, you are exactly where you're supposed to be.

Consider me your step by step college admission coach and cheerleader. By being here today you are helping to grow the community of informed families across the nation. Thank you for joining the movement. Well, hello there and welcome Kelsey.

Kelsey: Hello, Cynthia, how are you?

Dr. Colon: I'm doing really well. How are you doing today in Las Vegas?

Kelsey: I'm doing well, enjoying the sunshine.

Dr. Colon: I am super excited because the listeners should know how we met. And I was on campus, I would say I think two years ago, and I was driving through Las Vegas. I stayed at the Four Seasons, I treated myself just after writing the book; *Tips, Tales and Truths* and I met you at UNLV.

Kelsey: I'm excited to be here with you.

Dr. Colon: Oh, definitely stood out to me. So we have listeners across the country. Many of course are in California and then we've got Texas and up and down the East

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Coast. But probably many listeners have never been to Las Vegas or certainly maybe not meant to visit UNLV. So, describe a little bit for our listeners, just sort of what you're looking outside of your window and why you love UNLV.

Kelsey: Yeah, so UNLV we're obviously located in Las Vegas, Nevada. When I look outside, I see a lot of sunshine. It's very warm here. There is always a lot of students outside walking around enjoying the nice weather. This time of year I enjoy especially because as I get phone calls from a lot of families on the East Coast as they're getting snow, we are not. But UNLV -- a lot.

Like I said, I've lived here my whole life, so it's been really exciting to kind of see the growth trajectory that UNLV has been on over the last you know. They've been founded in 1957. We've experienced a lot of growth but since I've graduated here at UNLV in 2015, in those two years, we've seen even more growth with new buildings coming out.

So about two years ago, we opened up our brand-new hospitality hall for our hotel college. So the -- of hospitality is a world-renowned program. And we get a lot of students from all over the world that study here because of our hospitality program. And when we were able to build a brand-new building that really showed how invested the people and you know, companies and businesses here in Las Vegas are invested in UNLV and the future of our brands and our hospitality school. We also have a brand-new medical school we opened up in July of 2015. So I think that was around the time you were here, I believe.

Dr. Colon: Yep, exactly.

Kelsey: Just opening up the medical school, again, being a native of Las Vegas, we are so far behind and when it comes to health care and being a large metropolitan city and the medical school is really going to provide and bridge a very big gap for our community. We're really excited to see the medical school growing and actually, just last week, we found out that there was a very generous donor who's come forward to donate even more money to the building.

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And because we were very much dependent on state funding for it and we've now been donated a lot of money to expand the building, expand the program. And I just think those are a couple of examples of the growth that's happening here. There's just no stopping us right now with the new buildings and the football stadium is being built just a couple of miles down the road. So a lot of growth happening.

Dr. Colon: There is definitely a lot of growth in Las Vegas and when you said the football stadium and the medical center, the hospitality, all these things and then I don't know if you, I know that the Raiders are coming to Las Vegas which will just mean more growth and have a bigger impact in the city and the communities and constituencies that you can serve.

Kelsey: Absolutely being in Las Vegas. I don't think there are enough universities like UNLV in terms of our setting and what is around us. So UNLV is the only university in Las Vegas, you know, for hundreds of miles, there's no other university near us. We have a State College and a community college. But other than that, you know, the big city that is Las Vegas, it really is a backyard for students to get experience and to get internships and to be connected to the community they serve.

Dr. Colon: Right, it just seems like in a place like that where it's the only university, it's limitless what students can do and accomplished so I really love that there's a lot of growth. And that's I think what resonated with me when I was there is that I thought to myself, this is a college, an institution that's on the move. And it was clear to me when I was there, it was infectious, you definitely want to grow and be a leader in many areas. So bravo to you guys.

Kelsey: Thank you and we are very innovative. I think that's something Las Vegas just is known for in general if it's not working, we'll knock it down and start -- there are always new exciting things happening in Las Vegas and at UNLV too. So yeah.

Dr. Colon: Yeah, I love it. If it's not working, we'll knock it down. Okay, well listeners, get ready, get your pen and paper out because there are lots of **golden nuggets** that

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Kelsey is going to share and we're going to get into her personal story as well and she definitely has life lessons.

So, my question my first real question for you personally, Kelsey is really the listeners like to hear about our guests and their own personal journey to college. So what did you love doing in high school and share with us who were your supporters and believers in high school?

Kelsey: Yeah, so my journey to college did start at a very young age, even though I am a first-generation college student. It's something that was always very much at the forefront of my life for my parents and people I was around. Like I said, I'm born and raised here in Las Vegas.

So when I was younger, my dad purchased Nevada Prepaid Tuition for me so that's a program where he locked in the in-state rate for me when I was just a couple of years old. Back then, the cost of tuition was very inexpensive. I think he paid about \$5,000 for 120 credits. Definitely, it's more expensive now but students can still do that prepaid tuition here in Nevada, lock in the rate.

And because he did that for me it was always kind of like in the front of my mind that you're going to college and not just you're going to college but my dad always grew up talking to me about how I was going to UNLV. So we grew up about seven minutes away from campus, you literally just jump right on the, not even on the freeway and you go through a little tunnel and you get to campus.

And my dad literally would talk about how we're just seven minutes away from UNLV and when you go to UNLV when you graduate, you're just going to be seven minutes away. And I never even realized I could use the prepaid tuition like outside of Las Vegas like we only have two state universities in Nevada. So us and Reno and because my dad wanted me to stay local, he never really talked to me about any -- it was like you're going UNLV.

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Naturally growing up as I started to become a teenager, I did not want to go to UNLV, it was not my lifestyle of peer, I didn't want to stay home with my parents. I wanted to explore. And I was really fortunate to have a really good friend named Mace and her mom, Amelia. Mace was my very best friend, she's still one of my best friends to this day.

And her mom talked to us so much about college, when we started high school, we both got involved in student government. And she was one of the reasons, she really kind of influenced me to get involved in the student council and take a leadership position because she told me that would help me when I started applying to colleges one day.

So she was like, you know, if you're involved in student council and you're class president, you could get good scholarships to go places and I kind of held on to that and use my involvement and explore my options as I was in college, I mean in high school. But I was in high school trying to explore my options. And I took a trip to Miami to go on a cruise and I fell in love with the University of Miami, in Florida. And I really wanted to go there.

So I spent my honestly my entire time in high school, I looked up what the scholarships were and thought about what I needed to keep my GPA up. And as I went to take my SAT and ACT, I looked at the, you know, top scores to get top scholarships and I strive for those scores when I went and tested. And then my parents never, they never put limits on me for all of this even though my dad very much wanted me to stay here.

He never talked to me about, you know, going out of state and if that was going to be an option or not. So, and as I went through high school, I was class president for three years and then my senior year, I served on the state board for student council as a vice president. I was almost a straight-A student, I was, you know, very involved and I very much wanted to expand my horizons and leave Las Vegas when I graduated.

So fast forward to my senior year and it comes time to start applying to schools. And I

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applied to UNLV obviously and then apply to the University of Miami. Well, I got my acceptance packet and I remember it, my dad didn't open it for me. He left it for me to open and my dad knew this whole time that I was never going to go out of state, but he let me hold on to this dream.

So I got in, I got accepted. And I had gotten the scholarship that I honestly spent, you know, my entire time in high school working for and I got federal aid. And I looked at it and I looked at my dad and he was like; you know if you can pay the difference and all of that yourself feel free. But you know, we cannot afford to send you out of state, you have tuition paid for here and this is where you're going to go unless you can come up with the plan yourself.

And, you know, I wanted to do that, but I was smart enough to understand that; I had a job, I was a lifeguard and I was making money, you know, here and there. And I understood the concept of \$1 and that I wasn't going to be able to afford java experience and --

Dr. Colon: Kelsey, can we pause here for a second? Because I think this is a point that will resonate with so many listeners, right. First of all, bravo to you for finding a school that you liked sort of early on that was maybe serendipitous that you were on a cruise. But then you had a goal, at least you had a goal. You said okay, this is where I want to go and then you were working towards that goal constantly; the GPA and the test scores that you saw that you needed to get in.

But that was a tough conversation to have with your -- At the end of the day, the tough conversation to have with your dad, with your parents and come to that conclusion. So there's some maturity there. You just said you had a job. So walk us through how you as a teenager still 17 maybe 18, how did you make that choice? Knowing that you, I mean, I guess you could have taken out the loans and had your dream but how did you know or what was in you?

Kelsey: So I think I was raised with a lot of accountability and responsibility, especially

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financially. We didn't have a ton growing up but my dad, you know, would always make sure that I understood what I had and how far that could go. And that sometimes you have to make sacrifices and even though it's not something you necessarily want to do to maybe get to that next level.

So, I was like I said, I was a lifeguard in high school. My parents made me get a job because they told me if I wanted to get a car then I needed to be able to pay for my own gas and my own car insurance. So just with that, I understood the concept of, you know, bills, like, you have to pay these bills and I was realizing how expensive those bills were in comparison to what I was just making.

And then, you know, my senior year of high school, I was also working, realizing that when I was going to college, I maybe didn't want to work that much. So --

Dr. Colon: Ooh, that's good.

Kelsey: Realization of, you know, I can maybe I could really grind it out and maybe I could go out and I could work full time and try to go to school full time. But I think I knew deep down inside that eventually; I would crash and burn. So my parents were very adamant about me understanding loans and how student loans work too. So think back on that, I'm really grateful for my dad.

Because he explained interest rates to me and even as someone who didn't, you know, my dad wasn't college-educated but understood interest. And then when I'm talking to him about these student loans I've been offered, it's not like he shut me out and was like, I'm not gonna even look at this or help you. You know when you look at the student loans you've been offered and interest rates and all of that, my dad explained to me that you might take this out now but in five years when you graduate, you're going to owe even more.

And, you know, he really kind of helped to break down that for me and explained to me, you know, if you go to UNLV, your tuition is going to be paid for. I got a good

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scholarship to UNLV. I had federal aid and I was essentially getting paid to go to school at UNLV. Because of that, I had -- work less, I got involved you know as a college student, I got way more involved than I would have been able to have been working full time. And I really just had to understand that concept.

And it was hard at 18 years old too because I didn't fully understand it then like I do now, I didn't fully get that -- I'm glad I was able to have those conversations and I think it's important that parents do have those really hard financial conversations with students. Because at the end of the day, you're not, you're only helping your child and your student to understand the way the world works.

And, you know, it's not to say that you're doing anything wrong as a parent, sometimes the reality of what you can afford that's what it is. And I wish that students and families would have that conversation more openly and not be so afraid of the money talk.

Dr. Colon: But what I love about what you just said, and parents write this down. You really talked about how your dad taught you, you know, what you have and how far that can go and sometimes you have to make sacrifices. But you also sort of started by saying that he didn't say no.

Again, this sort of notion of, you know, without limits, no limits or being limitless, he didn't say no, he said this is what we can do. This is what you have in terms of a financial aid package and if you can find a way, he would have supported you sounds like. And so, but understanding the responsibility of that, being accountable to that and understanding the affordability, not just in the short term but also in the long term. And I think you made a very mature decision you know.

I think any decision you would have made would have been the right one for you at the time and I'm sure you know. But I think many of us I certainly am one too, I was paying off loans; undergrad and grad for many years into my life which prevented me from having limitless adulthood, right. So I don't know, I'm not sure if I would have made the same choices again.

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Oh, thank you so much for sharing such a personal thing. I really appreciate it and I think the listeners really appreciate it too.

Kelsey: Yeah.

Dr. Colon: Okay, so I always want to ask the guest, you know, because we're in this industry of college admissions and a lot of us are able to sort of think back and reflect on our high school. But if you could give yourself your younger self some advice, what would that be?

Kelsey: I would say that you're not alone and to get involved and to put yourself out there and find your people. I think it's easier said than done. And I don't know one person who has been through this and doesn't say that as well. I will tell you a story about my first day of college, I remember it literally like, visually in my head.

I can close my eyes and remember the day so vividly because it really made a big impact on my college experience. And so on my first day, I'm walking, I had a class. I made a very silly choice of putting all my classes on two days and stacking them all right next to each other. So I had classes starting at 8 am all the way till 3:45 with 15-minute breaks between five different classes.

I was like this be fine just like it was -- I probably added to my overwhelmingness feeling that day. But I'm walking to my car because I didn't live on campus, I commuted. And was four o'clock and I was like, I have nothing to do. I literally, I have nowhere to be, I have no friends to go hang out with, I had no homework because I didn't get assigned any on my first day of school and I felt so alone.

And tears started to swell in my eyes, and I was like, I don't know how I'm going to do this, like, high school was amazing. I was so involved, I had so many friends, I was so used to my routine I've developed every day. And this felt really foreign to me. And I think that first-day feeling is a lot of students feel that way but there's also so much

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excitement going on.

And you're in this transition period where you hate to let anyone think you're not excited because you are but you're also really nervous. And so that day I realize I have two choices. I could sit there and feel very sorry for myself, get involved and meet new people and enjoy this next chapter of my life. And I think obviously, it's very obvious what I did because I had a good experience in college.

But I got very involved and I chose to put myself out there. And there were definitely moments where I was in rooms with people where I didn't feel like I belonged, and I didn't feel like they were my people. And I just kept on just moving along. And my second semester, I was in a sorority. I had gotten my job on campus. And it was really like April of my second semester of college where I had another moment where I felt clarity like I can breathe again.

Like I finally felt like I've got Kelsey back and like I can get back to where I want to be and I felt comfortable again, I felt confident again. But it took time and it takes time to find people. But don't give up and if you don't feel like it right, then keep moving along until you find what feels right. I think that's really important. And to this day, I'm still best friends with my college group. We literally just had a holiday party this last weekend and all got together, and you know meeting those people that's the reason why I enjoyed college so much so.

Dr. Colon: Yeah, oh my word. I think you just dropped like five bombs like **golden nuggets**. Let me see if I caught them all. First of all listeners seriously like that which is heartwarming. You are not alone. You are not alone and actually; Kelsey's story is about her first day at college. But so many of you are living and you have children in high school.

And this is also I mean; I can tell you exactly what I was wearing on my first day of high school and how that felt. So these lessons are for both whether you're in high school, first days of high school. It takes time to not give up, to find your people, all of

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these **golden nuggets**. And what I love about what you said was like, you know, you just said, I have two choices here.

I can, you know, sort of sit and wallow and you know or I can just sort of take the bull by the horns and get involved and sort of be comfortable with being uncomfortable which is what we talked about in the last episode in 2019; being comfortable with being uncomfortable. And you took a risk and did that, again, I think that the little seed that your parents dropped for you about the sort of the limitless like there are no limits here, you can do anything and you sort of kept going.

So and thank you for sharing that it took all the way through almost the end of the second semester to finally feel like you had your groove back, so to speak. So it does take time, don't give up. I love that. I hope you guys all wrote that down. That was great. And well, in terms of being in this business, you know, the book that I have out is called *Tips, Tales, and Truths for Teens*.

And when you're in this business, it is hard to feel like you don't want to say you have a favorite or you have somebody that's most memorable. But there's often a tale of a student that you've experienced in your career that stuck with you for one reason or another. So do you mind sharing with the audience, who that is and for what reason that's student stands out?

Kelsey: Yeah, absolutely. So this one's actually pretty recent in my memories, a student that just started at UNLV this fall. So I met with him last year in Washington, he has cerebral palsy. And from the minute I met him, I knew that he was a very special student. So I was doing high school, Spokane, Washington, and I had just finished with a visit if you're a recruiter know what I'm talking about.

So going into my next visit, just I had set my expectations pretty low, to be honest, and I was so pleasantly surprised when I met Hayden. And he started talking to me about his passion for adaptive technology because he is in a wheelchair and he's been his whole life and never walked. And he's talking about a project he's working on to make

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essentially technology so that when you have, you can take it with you for your car.

Because if you're in a wheelchair, it's really hard to get in a car if you don't have the right specific car for yourself. And the things that are out there are, they're very, we just have an advanced to a place where there's a good technology for that. And he has started on a project in high school, a passion project that had already been featured in the news on this.

And UNLV has a really strong robotics program right now and we're growing a lot in that field. Just like biochemistry, we've been featured with Haley Dawson, she has a biomechanical 3d printed hand. So when I met Hayden, this all really just hit home for me. And I really wanted him to see UNLV as a choice for him. And I got to know him really well.

Over the course of the year, he came down to campus several times, just, you know, to make sure this was the right fit. It was a big deal for him, and he had a very close relationship with his parents. And he's an only child. So I also, I felt that because I'm an only child and I know how much I meant to my parents and if I would have left, how hard that would have been for them.

So, Hayden's parents, came out just as much as him because we've been talking about setting limits for students, they didn't set limits for him. No matter, I think for his whole life, they've expected him to not set limits for himself too. And I think, you know, I meet a lot of parents and sometimes parents unknowingly hold their children back from things. I don't think they mean to.

But I could tell these were not the type of parents who wanted to hold him back from anything, even though I could -- On welcome day when they left I could feel the energy from his dad of like that, you know, he knows he's in a good place and he's so excited to see what he's going to do but he's gonna miss him so much. And I just, that student and that family really stuck out to me.

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Because they very much could have been like, this isn't an option for you, you know, you can't go this far. You're gonna be away from us like what if things go wrong and they didn't say anything like that, never to me, never to him. Only positive things and there are moments sometimes I could tell like, she might be getting a little frustrated about something and his dad would, you know, bring him back down to earth like, you know, there's nothing to be frustrated about.

So that stood out a lot to me when working with a family because they handled the process, very maturely. They let him handle a lot of it too. They didn't really, you know, he asked me the questions. He was the one emailing me, he was the one calling me. They were there to support him through all of it and I knew them very well. They knew me very well, but they let him take the lead and I think that's important.

Dr. Colon: Right. I love that you said that he, you know, the parents didn't put limits on him and you know, you started out by saying he was in a wheelchair and we might go to a place where we think he is limited in what he can do, limited in what he can studies, limited in his physical, emotional, all these things, and the parents planted the seed of, again, limitless, right?

And what I love about what you said is that you right away saw that there was a match academically based on what he was saying, his passion project and that connection to what UNLV has to offer and was already offering and sort of making strides and really good robotics program, etc. And then they came to visit to see if it was a good fit.

So sometimes we see, you know, in the industry, whether you're on the admission side or a counselor, sometimes we can see this is a good fit for a student and then they have to come to that conclusion on their own. So yeah, so he's there now, right?

Kelsey: Yes, he is. And I was actually here like in the library with the counselor about a week ago, we're walking through the library. We have a brand-new center with 3d printers and it's open to all students in the library and it is like glass windows and I was walking by and Hayden was sitting in there doing some stuff on 3d printer.

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And I was just watching him, and I told the counselor about his story and I was just like, I'm not one, I love UNLV and I want students to come here. But I'm not like, I was talking to my director, it's very rare I meet a student where I'm like, I really want to recruit this student here like, I think this is going to be a match made in heaven for everyone. And I really felt it with him, so he's told me he's having a great time. His parents came down here for Thanksgiving to visit him. And it's just a feel-good story for sure.

Dr. Colon: Just that is like, so that's the best story. That's the best story I've heard. Thank you for sharing and like you're right, you feel like a proud mama, you know, like that you recruited that kiddo there, right? Well, he's not kiddo, I shouldn't say that. Feels like kiddo but he's not a kiddo, he's a young man. I love it. Oh my goodness, there's so much you know that we can talk about when it comes to college admissions.

And certainly, the topic has been sort of a hot topic for almost a year not quite a year. But as we, not to, you know, put it under the rug with the Varsity Blues cheating scandals certainly brought it to light and I think more parents just understand that they probably should be paying attention a little bit more. And with that said a lot of people do think that this is a mysterious process. And so what's one truth that about this process that you would want to share with folks across the country?

Kelsey: I think it's really important that people understand the admissions process at every institution isn't the same. I think that we just, we very much are accustomed to thinking things are done one way. And there are so many types of colleges, universities that do admissions very differently. And not all schools have the admissions process like Harvard's. I think that's what everyone thinks.

Like, everyone thinks it's super competitive to get in every institution, you know, you're never going to get a seat in a good engineering school because, you know, they don't exist. I think there are a lot of great institutions out there that are not your Harvard's or UCLAs that are dealing with that really competitive admissions process. And I think it's

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really important for families to understand and do research on that.

And also understand that if students are applying to selective institutions that there's only so much control you have. You -- beat yourself up, the students can't beat themselves up, it's a matching process. And a lot of the times the colleges are looking for certain things and it doesn't necessarily mean you don't have them. And I just think that a lot of people get really distraught about having to meet all these requirements and check all these boxes. Because they think there's, you know, one size fits all approach to college admissions.

And that's not the case, I think students should go to their high school and work hard and, you know, shoot for the stars. But also understanding that there are some colleges that have very straightforward admissions requirements and you meet them, or you don't and there's that so.

Dr. Colon: Thank you for sharing that. It's not the same process at every single institution. And it cannot be said enough that the average acceptance rate across the country is over 60%. The great majority of colleges across the country are accepting a great majority of their applicant pool. So yeah, absolutely.

Now, sort of to stay on that point because when I was at UNLV, one thing that stuck out with me in the presentation was this notion of merit aid and maybe we'll get to a little bit more. But there was sort of, if you have this GPA, you get this amount of money. And so even though we know that when students get to senior year, there'll be a number of colleges they could just get into and, you know, roll out of bed, and say, I'm going to apply here.

But I think it's important because the financial piece as your story is, you know, truth and point. This is a piece to keep in mind. So, where can people find that chart? I feel like there's a chart somewhere where can people find that for UNLV?

Kelsey: Yeah if you go to unlv.edu/findaid, F-I-N-D A-I-D scholarships-freshmen, you

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can find all of our scholarships for first-year students. We have some really great scholarships, specifically our WUE program. So the Western Undergraduate Exchange, we do participate in. Student receives WUE, they pay less than \$12,000 a year for our out of state tuition. It's a pretty good deal.

If students are eligible for other merit scholarships, they can get those on top of our WUE. So our WUE is stackable, it's four-year renewable. Right now, it's not restricted to any majors so you can come in and you can study engineering, or you can study business and you can be on WUE. And we also have some grid scholars --

Dr. Colon: Say what you're saying. Sorry to interrupt, the WUE she's saying is W, the acronym WUE and how I'm going to forget what it stands for; Western --

Kelsey: Western Undergraduate Exchange

Dr. Colon: Western Undergraduate Exchange, great, thank you. You can Google that and find everything that she's talking about.

Kelsey: Yes, absolutely. And our WUE is not competitive. So as long as a student has a 3.25 unweighted or a 24 ACT or one 1160 SAT and they apply in our priority deadline, we will automatically give them WUE. Also, if you're a senior right now you're listening and you're like, oh, it's past December 1, we're still open to looking at students and awarding that. So let me know if you have any questions about it, I can definitely see if WUE still an option for students. We get a lot of students from California on the WUE scholarship. Yeah.

Dr. Colon: Love that. I think more people need to know about WUE and the various options there but yeah, great, okay, good. Thank you for sharing that, that's important for our listeners for sure. Okay, so lots of tips that everybody, every guest has their own best tip for this college admission process. So in the years that you've been in the business and even maybe even as a high school senior, what is your best tip that you can offer to students who will be going through this process in the next couple of years?

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Kelsey: Yeah. So my best piece of advice and is to stop stressing out about trying to fit the mold of one specific type or one type of student that you're supposed to be or a box that you're supposed to fit into, checklist of boxes you're supposed to check off. You should be spending time figuring out who you are. Figure out what your interests are, what do you enjoy doing, what your hobbies are, what do you hate doing?

I realized when I was a lifeguard that I really didn't like being in the water all day and I was getting sick all the time. And just those experiences, having life experiences are going to be what helps you to figure out what you're passionate about. And I think when you figure out who you are and what you are interested in your going to find success naturally.

And I think it's really easy in our society to feel like there is a perfect image of what you're supposed to be, especially when you're 18 years old. And if you allow that to consume you, you're never going to take the time to focus your energy inward on who you really are. And I think I was listening to one of your other podcasts and they literally just said it's about you. It's not what you think you want us to hear, it's about who you are.

So if you know who you are, I think that's going to help you tremendously applying in college, when you get to college and then also when you finish college too. It's a constant journey of determining, you know, like where you are in life and where you want to go.

Dr. Colon: I could not have said that better myself. And that's, you know, gosh, in 2018, I guess I was trying to find the right title for this podcast. And I had come up with something completely different and almost went with that. But the title Destination YOUiversity is, I just kept coming back to. The destination is not really like the college like getting to college is not the destination. The destination is you, finding you, the journey of you which is through high school and through college and really beyond in life, it's a life journey so I appreciate that.

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Oh my gosh. I want to ask you because one of the things that continue to catch my attention at UNLV is the three 'D' words on the website. And I don't know if the order but it's daring, different, diverse. And I don't know if that's a new slogan, a new tagline but this is how I interpret that. I say to students, you know UNLV is still young enough and still growing and still all those things.

If you are a trailblazer, if you want to leave a legacy, if you want to be on the cutting edge, if you want to be the top of your class and you really love, you know, medicine because now they have a medical school and all these sciences, it's a place for you to be daring and to be different amongst a diverse student body; diversity in all categories of diversity. So do I have that right or what would you add to that?

Kelsey: No, I think you really hit it spot on. And I think that's what I say about UNLV is students who are here, you are part of what's making UNLV great. You get to come to this campus and put your mark on it. Because you came here and you, you know, you did this groundbreaking research, or you made these connections and you are going to change UNLV for the better.

There's a lot of great schools out there already and you can go be a part of them, absolutely. They're already great. And I think we're continuing constantly on our journey to greatness. And if that's something that student wants to be a part of, I think it's a unique experience to have.

Dr. Colon: Yes, you can go be part of something that's already great or be part of making something great. Whoa, that is a golden nugget if I've ever heard one. Kelsey!

Kelsey: Thank you.

Dr. Colon: Yeah, you're dropping bombs all day long girl. Wow, I love this. Oh, my goodness. Okay, well, if you have some time, I'm going to say like, thank you for your time and this has been fabulous. And if you have just a couple minutes, I like to do a

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little bit of just fun banter when we have time with guests to talk about sort of the city.

I don't want to, again, you know, it's Las Vegas. And I think there's a lot of maybe preconceptions about what it would mean to live in Vegas or to send my child to go live in Vegas? So share with us, you know, what is great about, what are the positives about the fact that UNLV is literally in Las Vegas? What is does a parent need to know?

Kelsey: One of the things I always tell families is first to visit campus and to visit Las Vegas. Every time I have a family on campus, they tell me they're highly impressed by the help. The campus doesn't feel like it's in Las Vegas almost, you feel separated from it, yet you are four miles down the road from the strip. It is there and it's something that our tourism, that's our bread and butter.

You know, Las Vegas wouldn't be what it is without you know the people who visit here but the people who live here it's a totally different community of people. We don't go to the strip on weekends and that's not something. There's a lot of outdoor activities to enjoy. So it's 60 degrees outside today and this is our favorite time of the year, you can go out to Red Rock or Mount Charleston, Lake Mead, there's a lot of outdoor recreation around Las Vegas. That's something that people have no idea about.

We are not you know; we don't have a ton of traffic. It's just a unique city I think to be a part of. It definitely got a small-town feel to it and everyone here kind of knows everyone in Las Vegas, especially if you've grown up here. And I think that just being a college student and being exposed to a big, you know, world-renowned city, people come from all over the world to visit here, to study here.

And to be a part of that as a college student even if you know if you're from here, you're not from here, I really do think it opens up your eyes to a very different, just a different world. I've enjoyed living in Las Vegas and now that I'm older, it's really hard for me to think about leaving because it really is a very unique city. Our diversity and our growth and just our location I think that it's kind of a hidden little gem.

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Dr. Colon: Well, I imagine to go back to our theme of limitless, I imagine that the opportunities for I don't know, internships and jobs and, you know, you said that you have this School of Hospitality, just if you're the only university in the city, I would if I was a manager or owner of any kind of business in Las Vegas, you better believe I'd be coming there, right?

Kelsey: I mean, and I think that you don't get a lot of big cities where you have one university. So we are very much connected to the community because we know our students at UNLV are not competing with the 30,000 other students that are 50 miles down the road in. You know, here's one city and then here's another university here and another university there and they're all having to commute in.

A student at UNLV can live on campus, go to class all day, go to an internship that same day, go back home to their dorm room. And I think that being able to live, work and have that experience while you're in college, on top of being a student and it helps our students when they graduate to get jobs and just to have that actual experience in a, you know, in in a professional setting.

So I think that we're only growing in that sense too like the university is only becoming more connected with the community. And traditionally, you know, Las Vegas does not have the most educated workforce. So Nevada is just not the most educated state and I think that provides opportunities for the students coming here. Because as new businesses come here and as we grow and we need people to fill these jobs, we don't necessarily have the people in the city to fill the jobs.

And so we really do depend on a lot of our students to do that, people that are moving here for certain industries. I just think that in this place of growth right now, you know, we're going to eventually be there. But right now as we're growing, I just think that's helpful for students.

Dr. Colon: So good. So hopefully we the two of us have convinced people to at least take a look at UNLV, there something special there for sure. And Kelsey, I want to just

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thank you for your time today and just sharing all these golden nuggets for our listeners. And what a story, I thank you mostly for sharing your personal story.

You got into your dream college, that's the goal probably for any teenager across the country. But sometimes it doesn't work out and look, you know, but look what happened and you fell in love with UNLV so much that you work there. And now you are spreading that love and joy to people like Hayden, so amazing. Thank you for being with us today.

Kelsey: Yes, thank you for having me, Cynthia.

Dr. Colon: Absolutely. Okay, listeners, that's all I have for you today. Thank you for joining me. If this episode has in any way fueled your confidence and help build your dreams, please share this episode with three people in the next 30 minutes.

Remember, you can join the conversation on our Facebook group; Destination YOUiversity. It's open to all parents, no matter your grade level. If you found me, you are a parent, mentor, or an advocate for college-bound teens. Come on over and join the conversation. And if you haven't noticed, we've been in our season with new guests and coming later this season in 2020 we've got Princeton University and the founders of the scholarship system, project giving kids at Cornell University and so many more.

If you would like to be a guest on the show, nominate someone as a guest or you would like to sponsor the show, please visit my website; www.drcynthiacolon.com/ podcast and get in touch with me today. That is all I have for you to my dreamers. I'm Cynthia Colon, remember, wherever you are, may you have a happy and sunny day and I'll see you next Wednesday at noon Pacific for yet another episode of Destination YOUiversity until then, bye for now.

Outro: *Thank you so much for listening to this week to Destination YOUiversity. Be sure to join Dr. Cynthia Colon again next Wednesday at 12 noon, Pacific Time 3 pm Eastern time on the Voice America Variety Channel and get one step closer to your*

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success.

[00:55:17] Are you ready to become the applicant every college wants to admit? Would you like to become the adult that model success? Then join the thousands of students, parents, and educators who have found the perfect solution. Dr. Cynthia Colon, the author of; *Tips, Tales, and Truth for Teens* offers motivational and empowering workshops and keynote addresses for your school or organization. She fuels confidence in students on their road to university life. Cynthia coaches, parents, educators, and professionals to model a success mindset for students. Go to drcynthiacolon.com to book her to speak, receive a free consultation or have her as your personal coach. That's drcynthiacolon.com, visit the site today.