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## Interview with Maria Furtado

**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 YOUiversity with Dr. Cynthia Colon. Dr. Colon and her guest 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:** When was the first time you ate something that was quote 'good for you?' Mom or dad tried to get you to eat your veggies with a smile and a promise that this odd-looking item on your plate is good for you. Nope, we cannot be tricked that easily, broccoli, spinach, kale are all vegetables we say no to decades before we know they are good for us, a simple shake of the head or a wave off with a flick of the hand and just like that, we pass judgment on something we likely have never tasted.

Many adults are not good models, kids eat what we eat, they do what we do, say what we say, they are perfect examples of playing follow the leader. Just like types of vegetables there are literally thousands of colleges to choose from. There are over 4,000 colleges and universities in the United States, let that sink in. There are more colleges than there are, shopping malls, Apple stores, amusement parks and national parks combined.

My question today is this, what is the harm in learning about a college you've never heard of? Today there are two lessons, follow the leader and know before no, I'm Cynthia Colon, author of the book Tips Tales & 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 student, parent educator, this show is for you. I am broadcasting live from Los Angeles and Maria, Maria, you are in Salt Lake City, is that correct?

**Maria:** I am, thank you. We are here for our national conference.

**Dr. Colon:** Oh, that's fantastic. So, you're there for NACA which our colleagues and peeps will know what that means but explain to our listeners what does that mean?

**Maria:** NACA or the National Association of College Admission Counselling is our governing body for the world of college admission. It gives us our guidelines, it gives us our best ethical paths, it makes sure that it monitors the schools and the counsellors and the admission reps and the colleges and making sure that we're doing the best that we can for students. And to make sure we're behaving in ethically and morally appropriate ways. It's rarely a problem, but it's good to have a governing body out there.

**Dr. Colon:** Absolutely, you're right. And what's the weather like there right now?

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**Maria:** It's lovely, it is a lovely fall day, the sun is out, the air is nice. The evening last night was just a little bit cool, very lovely just the right time of year to be here.

**Dr. Colon:** Oh great. I was in Salt Lake City when NACA was there last time and it's just a really nice clean city as you said so great. Listeners, I am so excited for you today. If you haven't listened to the last episodes, please do I encourage you because we've talked about prestigious and brand name schools, we've talked about how to choose a college list of schools and then last week we were with Dr. Angel Perez from Trinity College. But today you have Maria Furtado, national spokeswoman and the executive director of Colleges That Change Lives. Maria has a job that I'm extremely jealous of because she gets to promote and sell not one college but 40, actually like 44 and if I haven't said it already, Maria, thank you so much it's quite an honour to have you here, so, is it 40 or 44, technically?

**Maria:** Well first thank you for asking, I always appreciate being asked, its 44. So, there are 44 schools in our non-profit membership. And the way it came and grew was through a book called Colleges That Change Lives. And when the first book was published years ago by Lauren Pope, who was the New York Times Education editor and an independent counsellor for years and years, he wrote about residential small liberal arts colleges in a way that people hadn't really written about them before. And he profiled 40 schools and the profile chapters were always incredibly helpful for families, but in some ways what's even more helpful is the opening chapters to the books that are more philosophical and more about how you can step away from relying solely on rankings or relying too much on rankings, to relying too much on reputation and really giving the students and parents in some ways the permission to step back and think about this in a bigger, I usually say bigger, bolder, braver way.

And when he first published the book, a very smart person working at Beloit College in Wisconsin said, "Gee, maybe we could work together as a group." So we started working together, unofficially as a group and we did that for many years; we've been working together for over 20 years now.

**Dr. Colon:** Oh wow. I didn't know that.

**Maria:** Yeah, it's been over 20 years. It's been all of my professional career really, and college admission has been somehow related to CTCL which has been a glorious thing for me. And then as Lauren aged, he still wrote two more revisions of the book. And by aged, I mean he was pretty amazing, his first books he wrote in his mid-eighties, not the mid-eighties but his mid-eighties and the last revision that he did he was in his early nineties he was, I mean 94 years old. And so, as he aged, we were not sure if there would ever be another version of the book. So, we went to him and asked could we have his blessing to start a non-profit organization? And that's what we did and that's been about 12 years.

And the 40 schools that were profiled in the last book Lauren worked on himself, which was the 2006 book. But that book, those 40 schools where our charter

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members or founding members, and then a new book was published in 2012, an author was hired by Lauren's family because they have all the control over the book itself. So, they hired an author to do a revision in 2012. When she did that, she profiled four different schools, so she in essence took four out and put four in, which in some ways I think makes perfect sense if you're publishing the same book for the fourth time. So, she put four schools in that had not been profiled before, and we invited them to join our non-profit and they chose to do so, so we have 44 colleges and universities in our non-profit.

**Dr. Colon:** I love it. First of all mid-eighties wow. The first lesson, listeners if you don't have a pen and paper already, I always say you got to write these **golden nuggets** down. First of all, it's never too late to write a book and what a visionary Lauren Pope was to make a statement and say, let's look at these colleges more than just their numbers or their rankings, but really what they offer, what it feels like, what the culture is like and how you come out as a person after the end of those four years so that's wonderful.

**Maria:** I agree. I always thought and I still think it's really fascinating that he was able to find a thread that he could weave between these 40 schools because, they have some really distinct personalities. There are schools all across the social political spectrum in this organization and that he profiled in these books. And when I look at that and I say, what an amazing mind to be able to see a great connection in a way that you could have a book that includes ultra-liberal places like Hampshire, Antioch, Marlboro, Gilford, Clark, Goucher, Eckerd. So many of the very liberal schools and then at the other end schools that are certainly have a more conservative social political community, like a Wheaton college in Illinois or Hillsdale College in Michigan. So, it's really interesting to see that he could find that thread and that's one of the things, he was a fascinating guy. He travelled with us when we first started traveling, so he was in his mid-eighties doing five cities in five days in five States, and he was great, he was really a wonderful thinker. I mean, he was a man of his time in many ways, you know, I've had people say, well, he always writes he in his books; a lot of times he did, but again he was a man of his times

**[inaudible 08:34]**

**Dr. Colon:** Right, I got you, I love that. Well, you know what we want to do is we want to really also talk about you and your journey. This show is about extraordinary people like yourself who lived ordinary childhoods, and so I want to hear, and I want the listeners to hear about your journey as well. And then we'll talk more about CTCL at the end as well. But Maria, for our listeners, describe where you grew up, your family, what did that look like and what were you like as a kid?

**Maria:** Well, I grew up in New Bedford Massachusetts, which is just before you get to the Cape, so not quite as glamorous as the Cape, and I grew up in a very Portuguese area in a Portuguese family. So in some ways, it was very comforting and very comfortable. My parents did not go to college, but they were always really interesting thinkers and they were always willing to learn. One of the things I loved

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about my mother every day she read the newspaper, old fashioned newspaper up until the day she passed; she was 89 years old when she passed. But every day she read the newspaper and she read a little bit of everything in the newspaper.

She had no interest, for example, in ever touching computers. She somehow felt that she could take down the whole internet just by using one computer. She didn't want to use them, but she wanted to read a little bit about how computers worked, how the web was changing, what the internet was doing, all of those things so that if she was out somewhere and someone was talking about it, she felt that she could contribute to the conversation and then she could be knowledgeable. And I always respected that about her, she was just always really willing to continue learning and my dad was the same way. They weren't necessarily educated in the traditional way. My mom did finish high school and my dad did not because I had much older parents, and so in his time frame when you got to eighth grade if your family needed you to work, you went to work, and that's what he did, but it was **[inaudible 10:36]**

**Dr. Colon:** They were curious.

**Maria:** They were, absolutely, and that's one of the things I really liked and respected about them. So, I went to the high school. Where I grew up, you didn't really do a lot of contemplative high school searching. You went to the high school or you went to the Volk, those were your choices really. A handful of people went to the Catholic high school in the next town over and that was about it then. So it wasn't the same kind of searching and soul searching that some of our 14-year olds do now as they look at high schools. And we have a four-year-old and as we look forward and we say, Oh my goodness, we'll be looking at all of these things for high school. And we both looked at each other and go but we just went to the high school, kind of an interesting way to look at the world; it changes.

And I didn't really know what to do about the college search. My parents had always sort of made an assumption that I would go, and I always made an assumption that I would go, but we didn't really know exactly what to do. But I'm very good at watching and learning, and so I would watch and I would say, oh well, my friends whose parents went to college, they're doing this, they're going to what's that? They are going to a college fair, Okay mom, we're going to go to this college fair, let's go. So, we would go to the college fair and we would watch and we would see, what are they doing?

Oh, that's what they're asking? Well mom let's ask some questions, alright, that's a good idea.

I went to a big public high school; my senior class was 775. So even though I was a good kid, I didn't get in trouble, I was probably in the top 3% of my class, my counsellor didn't know me and that makes perfect sense given the caseload that he would've had at that time,

**Dr. Colon:** Did you say 775 in your high school or in your senior class?

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**Marie:** In my senior class, yes.

**Dr. Colon:** Holy Smokes, Okay, wow!

**Marie:** Well that's what happens when there's only one high school, the high school.

**Dr. Colon:** The high school.

**María:** And so, we just followed along and I was lucky. I followed along in a way that I found a really nice small group of schools to apply to and I somehow decided somewhere along the line when I was a young teenager that I wanted to be a lawyer and I didn't necessarily just want to be a lawyer, I wanted to be Clarence Darrell specifically including the suspenders, I wanted the suspenders, so the whole deal I want to be Clarence Darrell.

**Dr. Colon:** I love it.

**María:** And so that was sort of my goal and I realized that I had to go to college, to go to law school and so that was what we did is we looked. And I ended up ultimately at the school that I went to in a way that so many kids end up where they go because it felt right. We went to visit, we made the extraordinary exotic journey to go from New Bedford to Boston to visit a school, which when I was a kid that was an incredibly exotic idea, let's go to Boston for the day.

**Dr. Colon:** How many miles away was that?

**María:** 50 maybe.

**Dr. Colon:** That's a haul; that's from here to San Diego for me. Yeah, it's a big deal.

**María:** It's a big deal. And on the way home from visiting one school that I didn't particularly like, we were driving down the highway and we got to an exit and I asked my dad, I said, "Is that the exit for the other school I was looking at?" He said, "Yeah." And my dad was very much a point A, point B kind of guy, he didn't do detours very much, he was a truck driver he had to be somewhere. But he detoured and when we stopped at the campus and when I started walking around and I was kinda like, this fits the picture in my head. Because when you're a first gen kid and you've only been to two other campuses that don't really fit the picture in your head, and then you walk on a campus and it does fit the picture in your head, it feels good. And to make sure that your listeners don't think I'm totally shallow, they also had the major I was looking at, so I have that intellectual curiosity on that side as well.

**Dr. Colon:** Key points.

**María:** Yes, exactly. But it felt like the right place and so I thinking back, way back, I must've applied early decision or early action because I found out really early in the process that I was admitted and we were lucky the financial aid worked for our family and so that was it, my search was done. So, in many ways I was very lucky even though I sort of feel like I've stumbled into the luck in some ways.

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**Dr. Colon:** Well you might've stumbled, right? Like luck is, when preparation meets opportunity and so I heard you say a couple of things that I want to just point out for our **golden nuggets** for our listeners. And that is first, you said that your parents were very curious, they read, they were readers so that was a good role model for you at home. Then you also said that at school you were doing what other people that you knew, that their families had gone to college, you are sort of what we call following the leader, which was what we talked about at the very beginning here. You were following the leader and I remember in our discussion a few weeks ago, you said, well her parents had gone to college and they had all gone to Ivy League schools and so you just kept saying, well if she's doing that I'm going to do that.

So you weren't really in tuned to following the leader and doing what other people that you knew had been going to college was doing and then you didn't share this story, so I'm going to share a little bit of it. But your Latin teacher also encourage you to apply to one of the Ivy League schools, so you were thinking about that as well, right? So, you had some supporters at school, correct?

**Maria:** Oh, absolutely. Yes. Mrs. Baker was very clear that I should apply to her Alma mater And I did and I would be a hugely different person had that been where I ended up. I don't think I would dislike the person I would be, but I would definitely be a different person because I think that school would not have required, and I'm being ever so subtle and not using names, I don't know if I should be or not, I don't know that I would be as bold as a human being and I'm not the boldest person ever. But I don't think I would be as bold if I had gone to a school that wasn't quite as mainstream as where I did go. It felt mainstream to me and I felt like I found a bunch of folks that were just a little bit off the mainstream and that made me stronger and bolder. And I think that had I gone to a school that where I didn't feel the need to be bolder, I wouldn't be as bold.

Now, I will tell you the truth. My mother was never excited about that part where I got to be a little bit bolder or a little bit mouthier, but overall, I think she was really pleased with what happened in my college experience.

**Dr. Colon:** Oh my God, that's pretty funny. Well, mom you did good no matter what mom, you know, Maria she turned out okay. We're going to have to take a break in a minute, but listeners we are with Maria Furtado, executive director of Colleges That Change Lives. The lesson today, the first lesson, 'follow the leader.' So I hope you have a pen and paper and today you're going to hear the names of colleges, many of which that you haven't heard of before. So, if you don't have a pen and paper please do get one, Maria has already dropped about 10 bombs already, of things that you should be writing down. So, stay with us we need to take a commercial break, but grab your beverage of choice and get cosy and we will be right.

**[17:55] Commercial Break**

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**(20:45) Dr. Colon:** Welcome back everyone, I'm Dr. Cynthia Colon here with Maria Furtado, former director of college admissions and currently the executive director of colleges That Change Lives. You know, Maria, I'm going to have to confess right now that even though I've had this book in my office for years, it was only recently that I finally picked it up and started to read it and, oh my goodness, I just fell in love and this is why this book has been around for so long. And you're right, Lauren Pope had a great vision of figuring out how to weave and thread these colleges together and all the stories are sort of told in a really wonderful way. And I found a couple of schools that I was like I want to go there; I want to visit. Anyway it's great to have you here.

So if you're just joining us listeners, we left off where Maria was telling us about how she had her dad take a detour off the freeway and off the highway and went to see and fell in love with what would become her own college. So, share with us from there, Maria, tell us the name of the college and what you saw when you were on that campus. Because as a first generation to college student, you said something very clear, which is in your head, when you arrived there this was what you pictured. So, can you explain what you mean by that?

**Maria:** Absolutely. So, I went to Stone Hill College, which is an Easton -E A S T O N - Massachusetts, which happens to be an Eastern - E A S T E R N - Massachusetts about 20 minutes South of Boston. And when you drove onto campus when I was there, and it's similar now, but they've done some work on the campus that makes it a little bit different, when I drove on the campus, there was a big green expensive lawn on the right and the left and then you drove up and there was a brick building with big white columns on your right and another brick building on the left, but directly in front of you was the big hill and it was a surprisingly big hill. And at the top of the big hill was this beautiful brick building, with beautiful white columns in front.

And it felt so majestic to me and I can see it now in my head, and when I was there, the path was a straight line up to the big hill. And when you got to the bottom of the big hill, you're kind of looking up at this big mansion and if I remember my Stone Hill history correctly, it was actually the family home of the Ames family and they were a very big family in that piece of Massachusetts. Their claim to fame was they were a shovel manufacturing company, and they ultimately left all this land and that particular building to the college. And so, when I got there it was just, for me the way I can articulate it now, I'm not sure I would have articulated this way almost 40 years ago, but what I would say is when I stood on the campus and I kind of turned in a circle, everything I could see I realized would be part of my community, part of my campus life.

And when I had visited the school earlier in the day I visited **[inaudible 23:45]** which is an absolutely fine institution, but when I visited there and I stood on the

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campus, I didn't find a place at the time or I could turn in a circle and say all of this is part of my campus life because it's very urban, which is great for the right student. Absolutely wonderful for the right student. And I always thought that I wanted to go far from home to a big school and I ended up 45 minutes from my house at a school that was less than half the size of my high school.

So things evolve as you go through your search, but I knew that when I was in Boston, as much as I liked the idea of the urban campus when I looked around, I did not see that this would all be part of my world. And when I stand on the Stone Hill campus and I turned around in a circle, I could say this is all going to be part of my world and that also kind of fit the vision I had in my head.

**Dr. Colon:** Oh, my goodness, I love this. So, what I just took away from you, listeners write this down, even when you think you know what kind of college, what type of college you're looking for, right? You thought you wanted to go far away and be in a big city and you got there and saw that Boston University, which is a fantastic school and you're right, it's right for a lot of people, maybe others that are looking like at NYU. But then I always used to tell students, try adding a few other schools that are completely different and just go take a look. So it's really great that you were open to that and what you're saying is as you looked in a circle, 360 degree around all of that was part of your campus, so fantastic. So Stone Hill College, is there a skill or a lesson or a value that you took away from those four years from Stone Hill that you still keep in your life today?

**Maria:** I think probably the willingness to be a little bit bolder thinker, Again, I'm not the boldest thinker out there, but a little bit bolder thinker than I think I would have been at some other institutions, and I feel like I can see connections. Well, a good liberal arts education should always teach you to see connections and to understand how, for example, the economics and the art and the politics of a time come together in a certain way. And I feel like that's something I took from there. I will say, I think one of the best things that I took away from my education high school and college together was the ability to write. I remember getting to college because I went to a big public high school. I remember getting to college and really being worried about those first few papers.

And then like a lot of places people would say, can you read my papers, aee how it sounds? Can you read my paper? And these were folks who had gone to small independent schools and I expected that they were somehow had written the great American novel for their 10-page paper. And I would read through and I'm thinking, you need verbs and there's no descriptor here, this is not that good. And so, it would build my confidence when I then went back and looked at my own writing and then I would get something back from professors and they'd say, you know, nicely written or really good ideas here and there. And so that built my confidence a lot and I think some of that came from, even though I was at a big public high school, you know, pushing myself to take some of the challenging classes and having teachers who were willing to push back and say, use language better, be a better



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thinker, think of a more creative way to word that. And so, I think that between high school and college I left a better writer and that has served me very well.

**Dr. Colon:** I believe there's no better skill than to be a really good writer and to find better verbs and just do better use of language.

**Maria:** I will say, I know kids worry so much about their essays and I don't mean to add any kind of pressure to that because I think that we as college people also have to remember that these are 17 year old writers and they're coming with 17 years of experience, not 37 or 47 or 57 years of experience in the world. They have 17 years and so I think we have to be respectful of that, and that writing it's not a natural skill for everybody. If we could all write, we'd all have books on Amazon and I would go up and look myself up every single day, but we aren't and we don't.

**Dr. Colon:** Right, and you know also often in the classes I teach the essay boot camps is that I say, you know this is not an English paper. It's so different to write a college essay than sort of a topic sentence than a thesis. So, it's very different and you're right, it does take practice so thank you for saying that and no pressure listeners. So, this show is called Destination YOUiversity and I want to sort of when did you know that college admissions was your calling? And I love this story, so tell us your journey on getting to what you do now, which is helped thousands of kids every year.

**Maria:** When I got out of college and I finished early, I finished after, in essence, three years and a summer. So, I was looking for a job as you do and I had moved home. And for about six months, I was living at home and substituting in a high school. And a woman that used to be a scheduler at a Woolworth store that I worked at contacted me and said, "What are you doing?"

I said, "Well, I'm trying to find a job."

She said, "Come in on Tuesday and interview."

I said, "Okay, for what?"

And so, I went in and I interviewed and I ended up in the Woolworths management program. So, I managed stores for Woolworths for six and a half years. bBut when you work for a small store or a small college, you do some of everything and so my back started to give out a little bit from emptying freight trucks, and so I left.

A woman that I had worked with worked at a company and she said, "You know, we need somebody for a few months, do you want to do this for a few months?"

I said, "I'll do this for a few months."

And I ended up being there for five and a half years. Somewhere in there, I had taken two classes at Clark University toward my Masters, and I really liked the people that I met and I liked the teachers that I met. I liked the professors that I met and I thought that it was really fascinating that in our very first class, for my

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very first Masters' class, we all sat like you do when you're a student, you all sit in the student desks. And a woman came in and she walked to the front and she said, "Well, so nobody else sat at the teacher desk? I guess, I'll sit at the teacher desk and I'll teach."

And I just thought it was for me, it was sort of this unexpected way for her to start the class and I really liked the people. I was laid off at that second job and a friend had a birthday party so I went to the birthday party and a woman at the birthday party said to somebody else, "I work at Clark University."

And I said, "Oh."

And I gave myself a pep talk in the corner I said, "You need to go and network, you need to go over and introduce yourself and tell her you like Clark and see if she knows anything."

So I went over and I introduced myself to an incredibly good friend, Carol Proco Easton and I said, "Hi, I've taken a couple of classes at Clark I've really liked it, I heard you work there; any chance you're hiring?" And coincidentally, her assistant had given her notice the day before and so I was hired at Clark to work a 10-month operations position. And I started working at a second job that very first day that I started working at Clark on the operation side and I worked on operations for a couple of years and then applied for a counselling job. I didn't get it the first time, got it the second time and ended up staying at Clark for 13 years and I left after seven years as director.

So, I was the oldest rookie on the road. So usually you go out in the fall as a rookie and you're 22, 23 you're just out of college, maybe you did some traveling and maybe you did a grad program and you go onto the road and you're 22, 23. I was 34 and so I was the old rookie on the road, but somehow it's a good business for me. I like that it's cyclical I like that you know when you're an admission rep, you travel in the fall and just when you don't want to travel anymore, it's time to go home and read. And when you don't want to read anymore, it's time to go home and travel a little bit. And then it's time to evaluate what happened and then plan for the following fall. So I really always liked that cyclical piece of the work that we do, and I liked the idea of being able to get people to think differently. Families and students and counsellors often think differently about what a college education can be, because whether we like to admit it or not, we are a very brand conscious culture.

So, we're very quick and it's easy to say, Oh, I've heard of it, therefore I know it. But sometimes people don't dig deeply enough into the places they believe they know to find out if it really is a good place for them. And when we talk about fit so much in this industry, we really have to be good I think to talk about an academic fit, a personal fit, and a financial fit, and making sure that all those things come together for each student whenever possible.

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**Dr. Colon:** Oh my gosh, So many **golden nuggets**. I'm like taking notes furiously here. Okay, so listeners, first of all, Maria touched on the second lesson of the day, which is know before no. Know, K. N. O.W, before no. And so, we are in this culture of name brand. And when I became the director of college counselling after leaving Vassar College, I was at Marymount High School and you know the culture there was which best school can I get my kid into and all of that and so we really tried to do a lot of educating our community about a number of different schools. So I was always really happy that there were colleges out there that did tours for counsellors and which is where we met Maria. We met on the Beans tour, which was in Boston and Clark University, which is when you were at Clark. So explain to our listeners what that means, what is a counsellor tour because it really helps when counsellors understand a variety of colleges around the country.

**Marie:** College reps recognize that one of their best and most amazing allies is the group of college counsellors out there and CBL counsellors, independent counsellors, the people who work with students day to day and helping them build lists, and helping them think about their strengths, and their challenges and what kind of communities they want to be in and what they love to do and what they hope they never have to do again. So, colleges will often fly counsellors in from around the country and around the world and they will have them on campus for as little as a morning or as long as two days, and they'll do a combination of things. And counsellors make sure they take a tour so they get to actually see the physical space, but also make sure they meet with if possible, some faculty, meet some students hear their stories, maybe if they have alumni that are local and volunteer, maybe they'll do a mock class or they'll be able to sit in on a class.

They really have a chance as we hope as much as possible on the college side to get a really good sense of what a day would be like for students there, what an education would be like, so that when they go back to their campuses and a student walks in and says, "You know, I'm really curious about the ocean and Marine science in this and this." A counsellor who's been on a counsellor tour at Eckerd College is going to turn around and say, "Oh, well, think about Eckerd College." Or if they're really interested in zoology and animals that they might turn around and say, "Oh, well, make sure you take a peek at Ohio Wesleyan, they do the real program."

And so, it helps the counsellors expand their abilities beyond what they can find on the web and what they learned from the reps when the reps come to visit them at the schools. And it's an incredibly important tool I think for colleges, it's an expensive tool and it's a real commitment to make sure that you bring people in. When you say, I'm going to fly in 35 people, 25 from the U S and another 10 internationals, you've made a real commitment.

But we also recognize that knowledge is power for the counsellors and that when they can say to parents, "I've been on this campus, I've met the people," you can feel good about your student going 10 miles, a hundred miles or thousand miles, 10,000 miles, you can feel good because they're going to go to a good community.

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**Dr. Colon:** Yeah. I always loved being able to say to a family I've been there, exactly what you're just saying, well there are some families that can afford to fly before choosing where to apply and they can fly to 10 different schools in multiple different States. Most high school senior families can't do that, so it's nice to have someone in the office that's able to say, "Yeah, I've been there, I've met this person, I've met these people, I saw the city," that kind of thing.

So, I always really appreciated that and I never visited more colleges than I did, than when I was a college counsellor so I was really appreciative that. One more thing before we go to break is, listeners you want to write down, something else, I wrote this down as you were talking Maria, is not just about a personal fit, it's about an academic fit, a personal fit and a financial fit. And it's just worth noting that parents if you have seniors in high school, it's worth having a very open and candid conversation about what the finances are, what's going to be available to them so that they know and are very clear about that because that's a big piece as well.

Okay. Well, grab your pen and paper if you haven't already, we are taking lots of notes and we are certainly feeling confidence today, lots of good information. We need to take a commercial break, but stick right here, when we come back, Maria will share her favourite tale about a student and offers her best tips for the college admission process. Stay tuned we'll be right back.

### **(37:53): Commercial Break**

**(40:29) Dr. Colon:** Welcome back everyone you are listening to Destination YOUiversity, I'm your host, Dr. Cynthia Colon and I'm here with Maria Furtado executive director of Colleges That Change Lives. Oh, my goodness, there's so much to get to and so many **golden nuggets**. So we've been writing furiously since Maria has been on so thank you, you've been such a wonderful guest today. And I want to ask so, you know, my book is called *Tips, Tales & Truths for Teens*, and so I always like to ask, what is your favourite tale? What's one tale, one applicant maybe in the last several years that you can remember and what makes him or her stand out?

**Maria:** Well first, thank you for giving me the invitation. Again, I really appreciate it, I've had fun. One of my favourite stories because I think it says a lot about the actual person himself, but I think it also says a lot about how students can potentially look at this search a little bit differently. So, I was working at Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida and I had a student apply from Mentor California and he's very strong, he was at the top of our poll, he was admitted easily. He had a nice financial aid package from us especially in merit-based aid and he was down to two schools in April and he was going between UCLA and Eckerd College, which is not something that happened a whole lot in my experience.

We have a lot of crossover schools that we would see students apply to regularly, but not so much down to a UCLA and Clark. And I remember talking with him and the comment that always stands out in my head is, he said, "My ego wants to choose UCLA, but if I'm really thoughtful and honest then I need to choose Eckerd

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College because I know I'm going to thrive in that kind of community with small classes, with faculty mentoring, with the opportunity to really do a lot more hands on work more quickly."

He said, "I know I'm going to thrive; I just have to beat back my ego and make sure that it understands that I'm making the right choice for both of us."

And I just thought that was a very self-aware 17, 18-year-old boy and I waited to see what would happen because all I could do was give him information. He came and visited, he was fortunate as you said earlier, he was from a family that was fortunate enough to be able to bring him to campus to visit and he did all the right things in his search and I waited. And he ultimately chose the Eckerd and I was really excited because I really felt like he had been so thoughtful in the way that he went through the search and he really took advantage of everything that he could.

I know that he made faculty connections because in the glorious world of Facebook in 2018, I am friends with a professor who has mentioned him in work they've done together and travelled that they did together. He left Eckerd, has gone off to do a Masters, took a leave from his master's to do some work in Africa and is going back to finish his Masters in Europe. You know, he just has really embraced everything that is right about a small liberal arts college education. He dug into the research, he made the faculty connections, he got involved on campus, he became a stronger thinker, I'm assuming a better writer, and it really was a great experience.

And so, I did the Facebook stalking, appropriately of course and I found him and I sent him a message and I say, "I think you must be done by now. And I saw a note from one of the faculty about some of the things you're doing, and I hope you had a good experience."

And a couple of months went by and I never heard and I said, "Well, he's forgotten me. That's okay, I'm only his admission counsellor."

And then he messaged back one day out of the blue and it was kind of like, "Oh my goodness, it's so nice to hear from you, and I had the best experience."

And that always feels good. There's a part of you as an admission rep that recognizes that you are a little bit torn, because you need to serve your institution, you need to fill your class, but the best way that you fill your class is to fill it with students who are going to stay, who are going to thrive, who are going to go out and be connected alumni, that's how you serve your institution best.

But at the same time, you meet kids and your kind of like, "Oh, I want that one, Oh, I don't think that one's a good match." And then they look in your **[inaudible 45:05]** "Oh no, this is not good for you honey. You do what you think is right maybe I missed something."

So there's a counselling side that sometimes feels a little bit contradictory to your let's fill the class size, but if you do it right I think you can really, not necessarily

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serve two masters, but really find that if you work hard at it, I think you can find the students who are going to come and enrol and fill your classes and are going to really thrive and be that 'be the place to be' students that really take everything they can out of their education.

**Dr. Colon:** Well I have so much respect for this kid that you just talked about because it takes a brave 17-year-old, right? What I call a courageous leader to say, you know what this just feels like the right thing to do for me. This is one of the tales in my book and you're making me remember, my best girlfriend from high school, Jessica Davis, she was choosing between UCLA and Azusa Pacific University. And when she went to visit, she just had a gut feeling, a calling to be at APU. And as the salutatorian of our school, it was a big deal that we were finally going to have someone to go off to UCLA, and we had our valedictorian going to Harvard, which was a big deal for our school, but she was brave and went with what her gut. So good for kids out there who follow their gut intuition.

**Maria:** Just a quick connection to that, I have been friends with my friend Martha since we were in seventh grade. And when we were in 12th grade and she was ready to go off to college and she said, "Oh yeah, I'm going to go to Earlham college in Indiana." And I desperately hope that I managed to keep this in my head, I don't think I did, but what I thought was, "Oh my goodness, who goes to Indiana?" But that's a very New Meridian, New England mind set. And I will tell you the truth, Martha had probably one of the best colleges experiences of everybody I know, she had an extraordinary experience. And the irony of it all is that I have dozen friends who went to Earlham and I've travelled with folks from Earlham over these years with Colleges That Change Lives, and some of my very best friends are people who went to Earlham College. So, I think she made a great choice, so there's a lot of brave souls out there.

**Dr. Colon:** See, I'm telling you listeners, lots of colleges you've not heard of. I hope you're writing them down. Marie, okay, so that's a tale. So we need two more things from you. What is the one truth you want everyone to know and what is a one tip that you have for everyone?

**Marie:** The truth would be that the average rate of admission, percentage of admission for four-year colleges and universities in this country is in the mid-sixties, so 65, 66% year after year after year. The whole idea that every school is exclusive and every school is too hard to get into is just a total fallacy, and I think that would be my tip is to make sure you understand that the possibilities are huge.

**Dr. Colon:** Wow, that's great. Yeah. Thank you for saying that out loud, I don't think that people are going to believe you, even hearing it right now.

**Maria:** Oh no, of course not.

**Dr. Colon:** But it is true. Again, we started by saying there are thousands of colleges and universities to choose from. And then what is your one tip? I like this tip that you have.

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**Marie:** Oh, which tip did I give you? I have lots of tips. Which tip did I give you Cynthia?

**Dr. Colon:** What your mom and dad would do every day, read?

**Marie Furtado:** Yes. Oh, absolutely, yes. So, lots of times people will say, how can I improve my test scores? Read How can I improve my understanding? Read. How can I understand more about politics? Read. Reading, it's so much a piece of who I am, and I think just an extraordinary thing for kids, and we forget to give ourselves time to do it. We get busy as adults; we get busy as students and we forget to give ourselves time to read for pleasure because reading for pleasure teaches you so much. It teaches you how others use language, it teaches you empathy, it teaches you history and so many ways. So, yes, absolutely read.

**Dr. Colon:** Yes. I was saying at commercial, listeners I was telling Maria that my father was also a big reader, and the very beginning of the show she talked about how her mom read the newspaper every single day, she was curious. So, you're right and interested students become interesting applicants. So read, that is a great one.

Well I want to give you a chance to share a little bit more about Colleges That Change Lives, and why everyone should have this book and know what it's all about, and I have some of my favourites that are in there, and Agnes Scott is one of my favourite campuses in the country, and then Kalamazoo and Wabash is interesting, but share with the listeners about this book and why they need it.

**Marie :** I think the most useful piece in many ways is the opening chapters before you get to the profiles of the schools which are helpful, but as with any printed item as soon as you print it can become outdated. If they add a major tomorrow, then something is different right off the bat. So, I think that the websites are going to give people the most accurate information about the schools themselves today. But those opening chapters really help you reframe the way that you think about the search, to get people away from the idea that it's all about rankings, it's all about name, it's all about big, it's all about whatever it might be. I think that it just asks us to think about the search differently and that's an incredibly important tool for each of us; student, parent, counsellor, CBO leader, independent counsellor, anybody.

I think it's just really important for us to go into this in a creative mind set and not be the family at the college fair where the mom says, "Oh no, I don't know that school, you can't talk to them." And I've seen that happen so many times. So I think that that can be very discouraging for students. We do three basic things with Colleges That Change Lives as an organization. Our goal is to, again, to get people to think about this search differently, to get them to step outside what they believe they know and to really take the time to do a little research on schools and find out if there might be a place where their student or they would thrive because they're challenged and supported.

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Number two, we talk a lot about the liberal arts. The liberal arts education is so valuable, it's so valid and it's going to go with these students into jobs that do not exist today. When I read, let's train them for the jobs that are available, well they're not looking for them yet, they will be looking for them as juniors and seniors for four or five years, five or six years, So we need to train them to be able to step into jobs that are not existent today. And I usually do that with parents, by simple asking parents to please raise their hands if they want it to be web designers when they were not in school. So, we are in a rapidly changing world and we need to give students an education that helps them tie together disparate pieces of information that helps them learn well, that helps them become lifelong learners and that helps them be creative problem solvers. Those are the skills that employers look for all the time.

And then the last thing I would say is, we do as many of your listeners are thinking, we do try to help these schools get additional visibility and schools like them, we're never trying to say these are the only 44 schools that change lives. The title came from what Lauren heard as he visited colleges and universities and people would say, students, faculty, parents, alumni, staff, they would say this place changed my life, I became a stronger better thinker, I became a much better writer, I became more empathetic, I became better able to argue about what I believe, and understand why others believe what they believe. And so that transformational educational experience came through on what he heard all the time, and when faculty have small classes, they can look at you and say, you know something you're really good at this research thing. Have you thought about being a part of my research team? And that's not going to happen sometimes at the really big schools.

**Dr. Colon:** Alright, go ahead.

**Marie:** Just to say if people are curious to learn more because I know we're coming to the close, you can always follow us on our Facebook page which is just, Colleges That Change Lives. And I try to post three to five things a day that help people understand what the students, alumni, faculty, and schools are up to, as well as pieces about the liberal arts and about how this education is so valid. And then they can follow us on Twitter, we are CTCL colleges on Twitter, we also do roadshow programs if you want to call them that. We do programs for students and parents and counsellors around the country, we do about 25 to 27 programs a year now on four different tours.

And if they go to a website today, they'll see the 2018 schedule, we will have the 2019 schedule up fairly soon I would guess probably within, if I'm lucky within the next month or two. If it gets delayed for some reason which I do not expect, it will definitely be up at the after the first of the year. But please come and see us on the road if you can.

**Dr. Colon:** Yes, I'm glad that you gave how to contact you. So, we've given you tips and tales, but here is the real truth, there are plenty of seats at the table for anyone and everyone who wants to attend a four-year institution. I dare say there



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are several colleges out there that would trip over themselves to have you as one of their students. So, if you're open to finding those colleges, you must learn to know before saying no.