



## VISIONS OF SUCCESS - KENDRA HOPKINS

*Kendra Hopkins is a senior Nursing major and was recently inducted into Sigma Theta Tau international honor society of nursing. Kendra is also a co-founder and current president of the 1stG (first generation) student organization.*



**Kendra's Success Story:** Up until recently, people introduced me like this, "This is Kendra and she's our athlete." I am not here trying to tell you that to be successful, you have to go through life thinking everything is a competition. What I am telling you is that championships are not won in the arena; they are won in the thousands and thousands of hours in the training rooms and practice gyms.

So, I know what you are thinking: "What in the world does being a great athlete have to do with being successful in college?" My answer is: Everything. What are common characteristics of athletes? Discipline, competitiveness, self-confidence, aggressiveness, focus, determination, adaptability, and emotional maturity, to name just a few. Athletes are notorious for getting up early, pushing themselves, and self-inflicting pain on themselves every day, multiple times a day, to go further, to lift more, to improve their ability to perform.

When I started college, I felt like a high school freshman who just got pulled to play on a college team. This meant I was good enough to ride the bench, or get into college, but I wasn't good enough to play or be successful.

Traditionally what do successful athletes have with them? Coaches, dietitians, strength and conditioning coaches, speed and agility coaches, a PR rep, and so forth. I found my equivalent in SSS. I have coaches, tutors, someone who trains me in time management and academic skills and helps save some horrendous essays. Someone who helps me understand financial aid, build a resume, and provides opportunities for me to grow and reach further. This is my team. But just like all coaches, they can only teach and provide these resources; they can't make me use them. Dr. Rita Pierson said in her TED talk, "Every child deserves a champion, an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be." This is what I have in SSS.

Walking onto a college campus where the majority of people saw someone who was barely qualified to even be here, much less someone who was going to be successful, SSS saw that same person and believed she had the potential to be the best player on the team, someone who deserved a fighting chance to perform, and they fought for me. The people who make up my team have fought hard to train me to bring me up to that of my peers, and they believed in me. Yet even with all these incredible resources surrounding me, I still had to put in the effort. I still had to train hard. I was the one who had to keep moving. I was the one who had to decide that it was worth all the early mornings and late nights, it was worth missing the parties, it was worth the pain and the sacrifice to earn my spot on the starting line up. It was absolutely all worth it.