



## HOW TUTORING TRANSFORMS THE STUDENT AND THE VOLUNTEER: MEET ANNIE AND GLEN

Annie O'Connell has always been a motivated student and avid learner. While she was incarcerated, she found respite in the prison library, reading any books she could get her hands on. Committed to continuing to advance towards her academic goals... her academic goals, she applied for and earned a scholarship at Columbia University through the Justice-in-Education Initiative after her release. Even as an English major, she wanted to challenge herself and signed up for an elective calculus course.

*"I wanted to try everything that everyone told me I couldn't do. Math had always been one of my biggest insecurities but I wanted the option to decide for myself if I wanted to pursue something in math. I wanted to make the decision for myself of what I wanted to do, not based on what others thought I could do."*

Even with this enthusiasm, Annie found the calculus class to be difficult and overwhelming, especially in the context of needing to keep a certain grade point average to maintain her scholarship. "I felt really lost and embarrassed. And I think formerly incarcerated people have certain traumas that make asking for help a lot harder - I certainly did."

Through Columbia, she was connected with Glen Konstantin, a volunteer tutor with the Petey Greene Program, who was immediately struck with Annie's zeal for not only reaching the correct answer, but also deeply understanding the reasoning behind it. "She wanted to pass this class, yes, but what she really wanted was to know why this stuff works the way it works. That was admirable and left an impression."

Glen remained inspired by Annie during each session, especially as he came to know what she was dealing with beyond the classroom: “She had an external job while she was carrying a full course load. She was facing real financial difficulty, domestic insecurity. She didn’t even have a comfortable place to study - she would sit on the stoop outside of her house. And I was just so impressed that through it all, she was still working through her calculus class.”

With belief in herself and with support from Glen, Annie passed her calculus class and ultimately graduated in May 2023. She is now attending Brooklyn Law School. “Having someone there, as simple as it may sound, to tell you, ‘No, you got this’ gave me a lot of confidence that I didn’t really have. Taking calculus was one of the hardest things I did at Columbia. And it was totally freaking worth it.”

And while Annie’s participation with the Petey Greene Program allowed her to aspire to new academic dreams, Glen left the experience feeling inspired and grateful that his own skills had greatly impacted someone else.

*“I’m grateful to the Petey Greene Program for giving me a meaningful place to do meaningful work. I needed support like this when I was younger that I didn’t get, so to be able to do some of that with the Petey Greene Program is deeply healing for me, too. I’m grateful to the Petey Greene Program for being there - for tutors like me and students like Annie.”*

**Your donation allows us to unlock the power of education for students and tutors like Annie and Glen. Please consider giving today.**

