

MIT Bound SVCC Governor's Student Feels, Deals with Pressure

The pressure to succeed has always been 'off the charts' for Ahmad Negm as the third in a family of educationally gifted siblings. A senior at Nottoway High School and candidate to graduate from Southside Virginia Community College(SVCC) through the Governor's School of Southside Virginia(GSSV), there were many pre-conceived expectations to reach during his educational journey.

His sister, Maggie, and brother, Mostafa, were both valedictorians for Nottoway, both attended Governor's School and Mostafa is a senior at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Guess what, Ahmad just received his acceptance to MIT recently (sigh of relief) and plans to attend and study Electrical Engineering. He was accepted at California Institute of Technology located in Pasadena, CA, also. Oh, and his sister is a graduate of the University of Virginia.

On the day of the interview, Ahmad was in class with Brent Richey studying advanced math courses such as Abstract Algebra and Discrete Math. Abstract Algebra studies algebraic structures such as rings, vector spaces, fields, lattices, modules and algebra and Discrete Math is the study of mathematical structures that are fundamentally discrete rather than continuous. (Just FYI).

Richey advocates strongly for Dual Enrollment courses at the college.

He said, "GSSV STEM students have the opportunity to attend classes on the campus of Southside Virginia Community College with other top students from multiple area high schools. I have the privilege of teaching these students Calculus and as part of the class for the last five years we have been building and launching big high-powered rockets. Our students graduate from high school with an Associate's Degree and then go on to some great universities. Currently, I have students at Virginia Tech, UVa, NC State, VCU, JMU and MIT. Many of them go into engineering programs but they also pursue other STEM fields like computer science, mathematics, biology and chemistry."

"I like to remind people that though these students are academically gifted, they are not necessarily economically privileged. They come from every kind of home situation imaginable. And like other students, some are economically disadvantaged. It is extremely rewarding for me to see these students succeed here at SVCC then again at their university of choice," he concluded.

Since Negm can independently maintain his studies in a class entitled Computer Programming for Engineers, he is able to spend 2.5 hours a week studying these special advanced math courses. The math whiz took Algebra I in seventh grade and has been ahead of the game ever since. He scored a perfect 800 on the Math SAT, just to mention another accomplishment.

His parents, Hussein Negm and Samira Elshebailly, were born in Egypt and came to America for a better life and opportunities for their children. They settled in New Jersey first and later, came to Virginia. All the children in the family felt the pressure to succeed and exceed academically. Although, Ahmad also exceeds in sports running cross country and playing soccer for his school.

The STEM curricula of the GSSV offers a chance for students to take classes that often cannot be made available at their local high school. These include Physics and of course, the advanced math Negm is taking.

Negm is excited to attend MIT. He has visited Cambridge three times and likes the proximity to Boston. He will travel with the GSSV STEM Seniors to Sumter, South Carolina in April as part of the launching of a rocket the students designed and built.

As the pressure wains for the third sibling, one can assume the heat is turning up for Abdullah, the last of the family who is currently in ninth grade at Nottoway. Stay tuned.