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JANET WEBER: This is journeys of learning. Where we talk to students that have taken unconventional pathways to reach their educational goals. I'm Janet Webber and I'm your host and a counselor at De Anza College. And I created this podcast so that students will feel less alone on their own journeys of learning.

We are here today with Rebeca Maturino. And I first met Rebeca in February, 2020, when I had just started at De Anza College. I picked her up in the lobby as she was dropping in for a counseling appointment. And we met in my office. And I got to know her, and what her goals were and what her struggles were at the time. And on that note, I'm going to pass it over to you, Rebecca and have you tell us a little bit about your background.

REBECA MATURINO: Hi my name is Rebeca. A little bit at what Janet just said. Yes, I walked in early bird into the counselor's office expecting just to talk to another counselor who would just tell me what

to do and then by on our way. But Janet made me feel so much more comfortable. You know we got to talking about our personal life a little bit. She gave me a great notebook which I love to carry around with me. And she really made me feel like you know your journey is not a race it's a marathon. You complete it when you complete it and that's it. Don't worry about those around you.

So it's given me a list of classes that I still need to take and then she was like you take this whenever you are ready but these are just the classes that you need to be focusing on. So you want to take this one first, this one last that is completely up to you. And that's what I really like because I didn't feel like someone was forcing me to take a certain class when I'm not ready because I don't know about any of you guys but hearing the word calculus, statistics, anything with math I'm like no thank you. So you know being able to leave that until the very end and take my other classes and pass them I loved it.

JANET WEBER: That was helpful.

REBECA MATURINO: Um-hmm.

JANET WEBER: And give us a little bit about your background.

REBECA MATURINO: I graduated high school in 2013, and immediately started De Anza in fall. So September -- the end of September and I went in thinking I'll be out of here in two years average. You know I had a part time job full time student I'm like I'm going to be out of here like class of 2015, 2016. And no, I ended up graduating 9 years later, December 2021. And it feels like a short time but at the same time it's been 9 years.

And you know what? At first I fell into a really bad depression. College in general was a new environment. And it was hard because you would hear one person being able to complete all of their assignments and classes and then you see the other one achieving in their own way. At the beginning you feel like it is a race and you see all of your friends and family like so far ahead of you and you are being left behind. So I started feeling like I'm never going to finish. I'm never going to complete

this class. No one is caring about me.

JANET WEBER: And you felt like you were the only one that was feeling that way?

REBECA MATURINO: Yeah, I felt I was alone in this big world. And I didn't have no one to turn to because I felt if I turned to somebody they're going to criticize me. They're going to say oh you -- I know you got this you're just being lazy. It is not that I'm being lazy it is just that I don't know my path. It's like if my path just went away like it just disappeared and I was just left here like wondering where it is. And that's how I felt so every class I took, some people would tell me oh you didn't have to take that class. But I already took it so I'm like wait there goes 3 months of class that I didn't have to take where I could have taken this class. So it was just a lot of not understanding how to read the list of classes provided.

JANET WEBER: So it was a case of you being on the college campus, wanting to move forward in your life but not really understanding how to navigate college?

REBECA MATURINO: Yeah. I was so insecure and I

was not sure who to turn to. I had spoken with counselors before but they never really gave me the guidance that I really needed. You know they just told me well you still need to take these classes so just pick one. Or you just need to take this one so take two of these. But they wouldn't simplify it more. And I didn't have a voice to tell them can you tell me this in a different way? We don't all understand the same way so we all need to be able to tell that person the counselor, the advisor, the parent, a friend, whoever you feel comfortable around saying I don't understand it, please help me.

JANET WEBER: You know, this is one of the reasons I'm doing this podcast is because the thing that you didn't know at the time is there was probably 5 or 10 other students in your classes sitting there feeling the same way; right?

REBECA MATURINO: Yeah.

JANET WEBER: And that is one of my passions its students need more than just telling them what classes to take. It's a very difficult system, very complicated. And it is hard to know how to navigate

it.

REBECA MATURINO: And being a young adult there is this stigma that you need to know what the heck you are doing in life. You need to already know what your plan is. But when you're 18, you're still very young and you don't know much about life and how to be independent really. That's why I took a lot of breaks during my time at De Anza. I know out of those 9 years I must have took at least 4 maybe 5 quarters off equally in about a year, a year and a quarter. Or sometimes I would take a class and I would withdraw because I don't want to continue and I can't so there's more time. I looked on my transcript I had a lots of W's at the beginning and it was just because I was so scared. I was like I don't want to fail so I'm just going to withdrawal, boom.

And then I would lie to my parents. I would go to De Anza but I'll just often sit in my car. Maybe if I did still have one class I would just focus on that class. Or I'll just go sit by the pool, go get breakfast, anything to pass the time. If they knew I

wasn't in class, or if I didn't pretend that I was in class, I felt like I would have gotten in a lot of trouble. And it's not much of them scolding me or anything, it was more like I felt like I was going to be a disappointment. And that's a horrible feeling.

JANET WEBER: That makes me feel sad imagining you sitting by the pool feeling confused and lonely.

REBECA MATURINO: I would open up random Word docs and make it look like I was working.

JANET WEBER: Wow.

REBECA MATURINO: I would open up my laptop and I would just open it and I would just like watch it and then I'll just act like I'm typing and then just look away. Just and then look at my watch or look at my phone and see what time it is just to, hopefully pass the time.

JANET WEBER: And so the main obstacles at that time was just not knowing what you wanted to do with your life, not knowing how to figure out the time management, how to be successful in classes?

REBECA MATURINO: Yeah, I felt like a lot of students once they were in De Anza or in my classes

would already have their life set. They already knew what they wanted to achieve, what university they wanted to go to. What job they wanted to apply for or intern for. I felt like I was just I don't even know what is going on tomorrow. But I felt like I was -- I'm like why do I have this feeling? Why don't I know where I want to go? Why don't I know where I want to work and what I want to do with my life? I had must have changed my career about six times. I wanted to work in an office, I then wanted to become a nurse. I wanted to become someone that works in the pharmacy department. I wanted to do so many things. I considered being a teacher. You know it was just a lot. You hear all of these great careers and you just start looking around but you don't know. Nothing really caught me.

JANET WEBER: What would have helped you at that time?

REBECA MATURINO: I think having someone telling me are you sure? Or someone having a conversation with me and saying are you okay? Or do you need help? I never had that connection with a professor

for them to be like if you need help let me know. You know I didn't ever really heard that. It was more like hi start doing the lecture. Alright time to go. You know I never had anybody to really ask me how is school going but not in a manner of what is your GPA? It's more of a how are you doing? Like are you feeling stressed? Are you feeling some type of way about classes? Like something personal. It was never that it was what are your classes? What are you doing? What is your GPA? It was never like how are you feeling? And I felt like someone were to have asked me that I would have said like I don't feel like I'm excited about school anymore. I feel like I'm falling behind. If I were to have been the person to ask me that a few years ago, I would have really been like talk to a counselor and keep talking to a counselor until you find the person --

JANET WEBER: And what did change for you?

REBECA MATURINO: What changed for me was having this amazing person come into my life. My partner. I never had a boyfriend before so this was amazing. And I think it must have been about a year or two ago

when I started thinking I'm like you know maybe I want to be a mom one day. Maybe I want to have a nice job. I want to buy a house. I need to stop worrying about myself right now and go out and get things done.

So the first-person I went to before I met you was my younger sister. She's only a year younger than me but she had already graduated De Anza. And I was like I need your help. She was the only one that I really trusted that didn't really care about my GPA. So I was like I really need your help. This transcript looks like a different language. So she's like oh well let me see. Then she was like starting do doing it she said oh you only need these classes so why don't you do this. And I'm like huh that actually looks cool, I can do that. And then I was like okay well she helped me out with that but I really want to talk to a counselor. So that's when I decided to go and visit you.

JANET WEBER: And you met me. I think it's interesting that you just said that. That the transcript looked like a different language.

REBECA MATURINO: It does. It is obviously in English but you just see all of these numbers, all of these classes, all of these classes all bunched up together. You just don't know really how to read it. You know you start worrying like is this class better than this class? It's a lot of trial and error if you take a class and you don't like it either drop out or withdraw. And give another class a try. Go on the Rate My Professor and see which one fits you. There is no shame in going with the class that has really great reviews and is considered easy. Because it is all about the professor and your assignments.

JANET WEBER: And I love that your partner inspired you to better yourself.

REBECA MATURINO: He was. You know a lot --

JANET WEBER: That's when you know you have a good one.

REBECA MATURINO: He would always tell me like don't you have homework to do and I'm like --

JANET WEBER: [Laughter]

REBECA MATURINO: You know he was really like in my time when I had to do homework. He understood

that you know not to text me that often if I'm doing homework. You know I would also let him know hi I'm going to gone reading this chapter. He knew I had problems reading so he knew it was going to take a while. So he would leave me alone. He would play video games, hang out with his friends but he know I always make time for him but he also understood that school was my priority because I really wanted to finish. And I really wanted to stay on track. You know I told myself, when this all happened I was like I am not going to take a quarter off. I cannot do another. If I know my classes and I do my research and I put my all into it, I can pass.

JANET WEBER: And that's something that I often talk to students about is where the motivation comes from. It doesn't come from the outside necessarily. I mean he did help you with that motivation but it really was about you wanting it to do it for yourself.

REBECA MATURINO: Yeah. I had enlisted the help of everybody. This journey happened out of blue one morning. I was like you know what? I'm tired of not

knowing what to do having a job and just doing that. I need to further my career. So I said I need to start with my sister. I was like let me ask. She's a brilliant person. She is currently working at Stanford as a research coordinator. She graduated with a bachelor degree in public health, is currently looking up information to get her masters. So she is a bright young person. I often tell her it's like can I have half your brain? 1/4 I just need a little bit.

JANET WEBER: That's interesting that at one point in your life you were too lost and shy to ask for help. But then when you got that internal we call it intrinsic motivation, then you were ready to ask anyone for help; right? You start with your sister which you felt safe with. And then you went on from there and I even just heard you say you asked everyone and anyone for help. That was a big difference.

REBECA MATURINO: It is you know you start to realize standing in one spot will not make the finish line get closer.

JANET WEBER: I like that.

REBECA MATURINO: You need to put that foot forward. And I guarantee you if you put one foot forward at a time at your own pace, you will then start to see that finish line go closer and closer. But if you stay in one spot you ain't going to do nothing. If you stand in the shadow where no one can see you, you will never be noticed. You need to put yourself in the spotlight. Whether it is putting yourself on the spotlight or taking one step at a time every other quarter or every quarter, you will eventually get to your finish line. And that's what I realized that one day because I'm like I am 27 years old still in De Anza. It's like I know I don't want this for myself. I know I don't want this. So I said, I need to bite my tongue and I need to ask for help. And I started thinking, who should I start with? And I have an older brother who graduated San Francisco State. I have an older sister that graduated San Jose State. But they're your older brother and sister so their going to act as a parent and often your brother and sister at the same time.

So they will help, but they will scold you, and you know make fun of you. So I'm like -- so I went with my younger sister. She and I always had a strong connection with each other. She never saw me as beneath her. We've always tried to keep each other equal. So I felt she went to De Anza, she graduated. Let me ask her. You know she obviously did something that worked for her. Let me ask what to do.

So I showed her my transcript. I showed her the paperwork to view all of the classes [Indiscernible] I think. I printed that out I showed her my transcript on the computer and she was like well okay look it up. So this class is on this category put your grade right there. So I slowly started seeing the paper fill out. And she is like you know you took a lot of communication class that were public speaking classes and you got really good grades have you ever considered being communication studies? And I first thought to myself, what the hell is communication studies? Never heard of that before.

JANET WEBER: She was doing our job for us.

REBECA MATURINO: She was. I never even heard of

communications so I looked it up and I'm like, I like it. I really like it. So I did my research on it. I done salary wage on someone who has a communications, really nice. And asked her well what classes do I still need to take? She's like you need to take these classes I don't know if you need to re-take this one and this one. And like she just started kind of telling me a few classes that I still needed and she said go talk to a counselor but bring this paperwork with them. So that way you know what they're talking about. And that's how my journey began.

JANET WEBER: And then in my office we went through the transcripts and figured out what classes worked for which sections, which classes to re-take. And we made an educational plan.

REBECA MATURINO: Yeah she gave me the ingredients and you and I baked the cake.

JANET WEBER: I like it.

REBECA MATURINO: She is like this is what you need but you know go figure out someone to bake it with. So that's when I came and talked to you and

you let me know well we need this and this and this.
So it's up to you now.

JANET WEBER: And then you did that you followed
your educational plan.

REBECA MATURINO: Yeah.

JANET WEBER: And then --

REBECA MATURINO: I got accepted to CSU East Bay.

JANET WEBER: Your number one choice.

REBECA MATURINO: Yeah, and then became my new
journey.

JANET WEBER: And along with other colleges you
got into maybe 5 different colleges; is that true?

REBECA MATURINO: I got into San Francisco and I
was pending I don't know I was on the wait list for
San Jose State. I got into those two because I
wanted to kind of stick with what my sister -- so I
wanted to go to those two. But East Bay was my
number one because I also wanted to stray away from
that. Because everybody was into state and San
Francisco but I'm like I want to go to East Bay, I
like red. That's what I started with. I was like I
like red. So I want to go there. So um -- I'm the

first one in my family to go to East Bay. And I can tell you how amazing it is. And that's how my journey started and I do not feel that shyness anymore. It's completely gone.

JANET WEBER: And so I have two questions to end with. One is what advice would you give to students that are struggling right now that are in the place that you were when you were struggling?

REBECA MATURINO: It gets easier. Just have to be open to ask for help. And you don't always have to take multiple people's opinion on it. You can listen but you don't have to take it. So if someone is breathing down your shoulder and telling you to do this, you got another person doing this. Block them and listen to what you want. And don't feel like you have to stick with an advisor who you feel is not meant for you. Feel free to ask for other people's opinions on that.

And just know that college will never be a race. There will be others younger than you moving forward and graduating before you, but that doesn't mean your chances of graduating has expired. You can still at

any age get your degree at any age finish college. If you want to take a semester off, a quarter off, that's okay. But take that time to reflect on who you want to be in life and what you want to do. Research jobs, there is multiple quizzes on-line that will allow you to kind of figure out what you're career could be depending on your answers. And you know just ask around like oh what do you do? Or what do you do? And you will find that connection.

JANET WEBER: And talk to your counselor.

REBECA MATURINO: One hundred percent.

JANET WEBER: And we also have a career exploration class. Lots of workshops and career center and transfer center.

REBECA MATURINO: People who go to workshops or go to counselors their not people who don't know what to do with her lives. They are just people who want to better. A lot of them just want to have a second opinion of someone who has a career in helping and that's the best part of it. You're not alone in any of this journey. If I can gather everybody who felt the same way I did, I can probably throw a big party.

JANET WEBER: I think you can throw a very big party.

REBECA MATURINO: I was lost at De Anza. And then once I was finishing De Anza I had about a few people come up to me and like do you know where to find this class? I'm like yeah it is over there you know.

JANET WEBER: They ask the right person.

REBECA MATURINO: They asked me because I had been there multiple times I'm like oh where is the library? That big old building right in front of you. You know and it is good to help people because you have to also never forget where you came from. Understand that you may think it is funny seeing that person look around for a class but look back a few years ago you were that student. You know.

JANET WEBER: Yes.

REBECA MATURINO: Let's break that cycle you know lets help one another. I've encouraged people to go to college so often. I actually have a co-worker of mine who is considering going back to school because he just had a newborn. And I told him dude all you have to do is at least get your associates degree and

that can already open so many more doors for you. You know the last thing you want is to work a double maybe triple shift and not have time for your personal life. Your education is very important. But it shouldn't be your only life. You need to put your family and friends first once in a while.

Because I've had a moment where I almost lost my dad at the end of 2020. And being that it was a pandemic I wasn't able to see him at the hospital. So we were all just -- glued to the phone waiting for a phone call, calling them and just trying to get an update on him. So there's a couple times where we almost lost him and at the very end when he finally recovered and he was able to speak and hear him say hi very low, I would pay a million dollars to hear that again. You know I'm very blessed that I still have him.

JANET WEBER: That puts life in perspective doesn't it?

REBECA MATURINO: It definitely does. Going out with friends you can always do that but sometimes you just need to stay home. My dad loves Footloose, the

movie. Anything in the 80s or 90s he loves. So we have a smart TV and when he was recovering I was like dad let me put some 80s music on. I put ZZ Top, Whitney Houston, Michael Jackson, all of the music videos and he had the best time. I love that type of music too. So it was a bonding moment for him and I you know.

JANET WEBER: Nice.

REBECA MATURINO: Life moves too quickly we need to try and slow it down.

JANET WEBER: I'm glad you had that.

REBECA MATURINO: Thank you.

JANET WEBER: Okay and my last question is I think students would love to know about your experience now at CSU East Bay and what it's like to be at a university. And you've been there since January. So you were there for one semester. And how has that transition been for you?

REBECA MATURINO: It was really easy because I spoke to my advisor and I attended the workshop for freshman.

JANET WEBER: The orientation.

REBECA MATURINO: Yeah because without that I would have been more lost. I was nervous but I knew where I was going. So it was just a matter of focusing on myself, and just getting the work done. You know you have to learn not to procrastinate so much you need to learn to be organized. Because if you're like me who struggles with reading you are going to have to find extra time to get that reading done. I downloaded an app called Speechify where you take a photo of the page and it reads it out to you. So I'm an audio learner. Listening makes it a lot easy. So whenever I got a slide show and it had video and audio, I loved it. Easy class. But there were times where I would read a 30, 35, 40 page chapter and it was hard. So Speechify really allowed me to help get that assignment done on time every single time.

JANET WEBER: I love that. What a great way to accommodate yourself. Knowing that you're an auditory learner and then using technology to help you with that.

REBECA MATURINO: Yeah and there is nothing wrong

with that. We are all born differently. You know my sister she could read a whole book in one day. But you can't pay me enough to read a whole book you know. I love listening to it though. If I had a book on audio or a book report I'd download it on audible and I finished in 2 days. Never in my life would I probably read 10 chapters in one day. But listening to it I wanted to keep going. I liked it. So you have to learn what you're learning abilities are. There's probably an app for it, there's a counselor for it, there is a workshop, there is everything. So don't ever feel you are the only one. You are not alone. There are hundreds of others exactly like you. So you know we just got to work together.

JANET WEBER: I love that I think that's the perfect way to end. [Laughter] We're not alone.

REBECA MATURINO: You're not.

JANET WEBER: Thank you Rebeca for sharing your story with us today.

REBECA MATURINO: Happy to be here. Thank you so much for inviting me back.