

# HIGHER EDUCATION



**F&M College Prep**  
**Hosted by Steven Roy Goodman, UDC-TV**

***Higher Education Today***

F&M College Prep E-Booklet

Transcript of 29-minute conversation with Dr. Daniel Porterfield, President, Franklin & Marshall College, and Shawn Jenkins, Program Director, F&M College Prep

Hosted by Steven Roy Goodman, Educational Consultant and Co-Author, *College Admissions Together: It Takes a Family*

Taped at the University of the District of Columbia: March 14, 2013

Aired in April 2013 and May 2013 (mornings and evenings) on UDC-TV, Channels 19 and 98, Washington, D.C.



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## F&M College Prep

**Steven Roy Goodman:** Hello. I'm Steven Roy Goodman, host of HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY, a production of the University of the District of Columbia. Welcome back to the education program that connects you to contemporary issues, people, and institutions involved in the world of higher education.

Today, we'll be talking about the College Prep program at Franklin & Marshall College.

Dr. Daniel Porterfield is F&M's president. Dr. Porterfield is a former Rhodes Scholar, who has long been supportive of educational opportunities for first-generation college goers.

Shawn Jenkins is a 2010 environmental studies graduate of F&M. Shawn is the program director of F&M College Prep.

Welcome.

**Dr. Daniel Porterfield and Shawn Jenkins:** Thank you.

**Goodman:** Well maybe if you gentlemen could say a word or two about what College Prep is and why F&M set it up and maybe even explain a little bit about F&M in the first place.



**Dr. Porterfield:** Sure. Thank you, Steve, thank you for hosting us. Franklin & Marshall College is one of America's top liberal arts colleges. Located in Lancaster, PA, we have had for more than a century, tremendous academic programs that have sent our graduates into lives of leadership into every sector of society – from medicine, to law, to politics, to the arts.

The school was founded with a gift from Ben Franklin 225 years ago. And we're so proud also that the school was named for John

Marshall, who was the defining chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Now, F&M College Prep is a new program that we created two years ago that allows strong students, from lower income communities, who have achieved at very high levels in high school, to come before their senior year to our campus for a free, three week pre-college program in which they live on campus, are mentored by our students, and take courses taught by our faculty.

The goal of the program is to say to great kids from under-represented communities, "You've achieved a lot in your first three years of high school. Now let's really go for it. Let's show you what a great college education can be. And let's send you back for your senior year of high school ready and driven to make it count when you apply to college."

**Goodman:** But why wouldn't I go to Cornell or Harvard summer school then?

**Dr. Porterfield:** Well they might offer great programs too, but F&M College Prep is perhaps the premier program in the country for kids from lower income communities that may be underrepresented on some college campuses, and giving those kids a full, holistic experience of college. This includes showing them the academic seriousness of a great college education.



**Goodman:** And Shawn, in your mind, since you're the director of the program, how do you envision College Prep to be different than other programs, and how *is* it different from other college programs?

**Jenkins:** We are focused on giving our students an opportunity to experience liberal arts first hand. So our students, they come to our campus, they take courses taught by F&M faculty members. All of our courses are specifically designed for our students. It's very similar to what a first year seminar would be

for a freshman at F&M. And we are really just trying to give them that experience that they would not otherwise receive at a bigger school.

**Goodman:** Are they paying for that at all?

**Jenkins:** So the program is completely covered by F&M. We cover all the program costs.

**Goodman:** Well, then maybe I would throw this to you, Dan, why would F&M spend that... that's a lot of money?

**Dr. Porterfield:** We really believe that the American country, our whole country, needs us to cultivate leadership from the full mosaic of all populations. We think it's so important that every institution find its way of promoting long-term national strength, by ensuring that great kids have a chance to go to college and to maximize college.

One other thing I would add to what Shawn said is that we have our faculty teaching these classes – the Nature of Hope, the Physics of Eyesight, Screenwriting. We try to make sure that the students really get that sense of what it would be like to study with an actual college professor in a rigorous, seminar-based approach to learning.

**Goodman:** And let's assume that everything's perfect and the students have a great experience and the professors have a great experience... What do you hope the students are going to do when they get to college? Do you hope they go to F&M?

**Dr. Porterfield:** So I think we want them to apply to several excellent colleges. We want them going into senior year to realize there's a lot of opportunity out there, to know the difference between, say, "need based" financial aid and so called "merit scholarships" some schools offer. We want them to be comfortable they can go away from home and be just fine and mom and dad will be just fine when they're away. And we would like them to apply to F&M *if* it's the right fit for them. But the most important thing is they set their sights very high.

Now one of the things that Shawn has done is, he's built an education program that allows them, when they go to college, to jump right in and maximize the opportunities, not to be passive, and [to Jenkins] you might want to say a little bit about that.

**Jenkins:** I would mirror exactly what Dr. Porterfield said. I think it's important for us to show students the diversity of college options. A lot of students that come from the South and the West of this country don't really know what liberal arts colleges are when they come to F&M. So we give them that opportunity and then they start thinking, "You know, maybe a liberal arts college is right for me. Or maybe I need a much bigger school."

Giving them that opportunity on campus where they can sort of live and breathe the experience of a college student helps them to start to understand what it is that they want when they are applying to college. And so we are not necessarily looking for them to apply to F&M but we want them to start thinking about a best-fit college for them.

**Goodman:** Well let's assume all of this works. Wouldn't often this come down to money? Because if you're dealing with students who are first-generation college goers the issue is often, basically, "What's the financial aid package?"

**Dr. Porterfield:** Well, certainly one of the things that kids need to learn about is that there are a lot of schools that offer financial aid. And they need to understand how to apply, and how to have their parents help fill out the FAFSA form, and not be intimidated by the sticker price, because most strong schools will provide what the students need.

There's a tremendously important study that came out a couple of weeks ago from the scholar Caroline Hoxby where she looked at students from modest and lower-income communities who tested really well on the SAT. She found that those students from low-income communities who tested well under-matched their college choices. They only applied to one school, and it might have been a school that just happened to be close to them. They weren't aware of the plethora of college opportunities.

And our program, F&M College Prep, is about addressing those Hoxby kids, and getting them onto a campus so they can see what it really will be like, and to see that college is real and available and worth it.

**Goodman:** But let's assume all that really happens, then do you basically, de facto, say, "Well if you come to F&M you're going to get a merit-based package to come here?"

**Dr. Porterfield:** Franklin & Marshall College meets the full, demonstrated financial need of every student who we accept. And so what that means is every student receives a grant, a loan, and a work study opportunity. Additionally, they are asked to make some kind of a family contribution. The calculation of all of that is done by the students filling out the FAFSA form which establishes the family's eligibility for financial aid.

Most strong schools do not accept students and then fail to give them the financial aid they need to be able to come. Certainly our commitment to every single student we accept is we'll make it affordable for them.

**Goodman:** Shawn, do you have something to add to that? I was going to ask a couple questions about that but since you probably deal with the students directly every single day...

**Jenkins:** I think from all of our programs we have students that come from about eight different organizations around the country, and they hailed from about ten different states this past year. One of the common themes that we found is that they're just afraid to go to a school that's so

expensive. So getting them to understand that there are a lot of opportunities out there and also if they are willing to be proactive there's an opportunity to go to college on financial aid.

I was a student that went to college on financial aid. My family couldn't have afforded to send me to another school. So we just want them to understand that there are opportunities out there, there are people out there who have experienced what they can experience if they're willing to put the work in.

**Goodman:** I don't think anyone disputes the fact that it's better for more students to think about more opportunities, but, if you don't mind me pressing a little bit on this issue of financial aid because before you became president, you may know that Franklin & Marshall had some difficulties in terms of its reputation about not addressing financial aid perhaps as generously as they ought to have.

**Dr. Porterfield:** I was recruited to Franklin & Marshall two years ago as president. The year before I was recruited, the board of trustees assessed the aid packages and the available money in the budget for financial aid and voted to increase financial aid by about 35%. So with the two classes that I've recruited in my role as president thus far, I had a much bigger budget to work with.

I think Franklin & Marshall has always been fair to the students that it accepted. But it was not devoting enough money to financial aid relative to all the talent that's out there in the country. And you know that's not just lower-income kids... middle income kids and even upper middle income kids—depending on family size—are eligible for financial aid and can benefit from it.

I think our job in higher education is to grow the amount of resources we have for aid. Across the board almost every school has to grow those resources.

**Goodman:** Fair enough. In terms of college-going, there have been a number of people around the country who've argued, "There are a lot of colleges, and it's great that we talk about having more students go to college, but should everybody go to college? Shouldn't we have fewer people go to college and then encourage people to not do the liberal arts?"

**Dr. Porterfield:** [To Shawn] I don't know if you want to answer that based on your experience as somebody who might have expectations set for you by others but instead you set your own expectations?

**Jenkins:** You can start and I'll jump in.

**Dr. Porterfield:** So I think there's a lot of different ways students can go to college and prepare themselves for the world of work. I'm not going to tell people what is right for them. I do know that a college education is an empowerment for a life of independent thought, for a life of leadership of developing one's abilities. And if somebody thinks they don't need a college education to develop their abilities, I'm not going to tell them they're wrong. But I know this country way too often sets the opposite expectation and tells kids, "You're not college material," or "You should go get a good vocational job," when in fact, that young person could be a playwright or could be a scholar, could be a lawyer or could be a judge.

**Jenkins:** I would agree with that. I think it comes down to options. I think it comes down to how you understand what options are available to you and if you choose that college isn't the

right fit then maybe that's the truth. But students not going because they don't know that that's an option for them? I think that that's... that's not fair, that's not right. So I think it's our responsibility to really expose these students to as many opportunities as possible and to let them choose.

**Goodman:** Well, that's a fair point. You mentioned before, Shawn, about the programs that you deal with before kids come to the College Prep program. What are those programs and how do you outreach to those programs?

**Jenkins:** So we work with some of the access networks around the country. So KIPP is one of the charter school networks we work with. We work with the National College Advising Corps; they're a group that works with students in rural Pennsylvania and other rural areas throughout the country.

**Goodman:** And so what do you do with these programs? You say to them, "Send us your best students?" Do you go and speak to the students wherever they are?

**Jenkins:** So for the summer program we work with them to identify students who fit the criteria of the program – students who are working really hard and can be really strong community members. They send us a series of applications and from that pool we select the students to come to our summer program.

We do our best to support them even ongoing. So our admissions team, for example, supports some of their students in the KIPP office just by calling and talking to them and explaining what financial aid means and how to understand that financial aid package. And we're doing what we can at different levels just to try and build the connection between a higher education institution and a K–12 education.

**Dr. Porterfield:** You know if you look back over the last 15 years or so, in K–12 education, there's been a tremendous amount of innovation. New schools, new access programs to supplement schools' work, new efforts by cities and states to promote high student achievement, even homeschooling. There are lots of different ways that education reform has been effectuated. What we did in creating the program was we looked at some of the most successful models. And so we reached out to the KIPP Education Network, Achievement First, Uncommon Schools, Mastery [Charter Schools], Noble Public Charter Networks, and also to a group of rural schools in Pennsylvania public schools.

We brought kids from all those different, highly successful educational innovations. What's fun to see, and Shawn's the mastermind of it all, is that we have kids who identify as White, as African American, as Latino, as Asian, as US-born and who were immigrants, kids who are rural, kids who are suburban, kids who are urban – from all across the country, all walks of life. You see these kids come together. What they have in common is they're high strivers with modest economic backgrounds. And to see those kids not only thrive with our faculty but fall in love with each other, across all the supposed divides of race, of gender, of nationality and region... that's what American higher education can achieve for the whole country, if we all work hard enough.

**Goodman:** But why wouldn't we just want to encourage more students... Let's take Philadelphia, and let's say there are students from modest backgrounds in Philadelphia. And let's assume that those students who fit that particular criteria would normally go to Penn State



or Temple University. How do those students now benefit, and how does society benefit, from basically taking a small group of those students and having them go to F&M instead of Penn State?

**Dr. Porterfield:** Well one way they benefit is you look at what the F&M education does for those that pursue it with intensity. Mary Schapiro, an alum of ours, who just finished as Chair of the SEC; Patti Harris, the First Deputy Mayor of New York City; Ken Duberstein, the Chief of Staff for President Reagan; Ken Mehlman, the Chief Political Director for George Bush. These high intensity liberal arts colleges that have small student faculty ratios, that have outstanding academic rigor and very supportive communities; they launch people in the lives of leadership and meaning.

And so we want to make sure that at F&M we're not missing the chance to find very talented kids who will thrive under this tradition of education. And I would say to students anywhere you have to fit the model that's right for you... but what we want to do at F&M is assemble students from all over the country—indeed, all over the world—so that together, together in all of their beautiful diversity they can learn together.

**Jenkins:** I also think it's tremendously valuable to have students from lots of different places talking to each other, living with each other, because a lot of the conversations really happen when they're not in class. When they're sitting in their dorm room and they're talking about some slang word that they use in L.A. that they don't use in Kutztown, PA. And they get this chance to sort of scratch their heads and really go back and forth and that's sort of magical to watch their worlds expand in a matter of three weeks just because they're sitting with someone from across the country.

**Dr. Porterfield:** [To Jenkins] Say something about Coleman, and Sheldon and Savannah who are from central and rural Pennsylvania, and maybe Marquise and Mowata and Angelica, who are from other parts of the country or from urban parts.

**Jenkins:** So a lot of the students that Dr. Porterfield just mentioned came from rural areas in Pennsylvania. And then we have these students coming from New York and L.A. and Chicago sitting together. They came to Lancaster and you know the rural kids are like, "Lancaster is so big and it's so loud and there's so many things happening," and then all of our urban kids are like, "This is the quietest, smallest place I've ever been to in my life." But they came together and sort of found common ground. It was an opportunity to engage with one another. And it was one of the best parts of the program in my opinion.

**Dr. Porterfield:** The first year we had eight students or so from Houston. And then I went down, during their senior year of high school, and visited them all at KIPP Houston where they were students. And I said, "What do you remember about F&M College Prep?" They said, "Aw, it was green up there." [Porterfield and Jenkins laugh].

**Jenkins:** Then on the ride in from the airport the Houston kids were taking out all of their phones recording the Amish as they rode down on horse and buggies on the street. They were just so amazed!

**Goodman:** Well speaking of horse and buggies [all laugh], in terms of the other Pennsylvania colleges... There are a number of small, Pennsylvania colleges out there that are private, that

are, in my view, in some ways a little bit like F&M, I know not exactly like F&M, but what are they doing to reach out to some of the students we're talking about?

**Dr. Porterfield:** Well I think there are terrific kids of all backgrounds at Lafayette, at Bucknell, at Gettysburg, at Dickinson, Haverford, Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr... we really have a ton of great liberal arts colleges in our state. It's almost like that is sort of one of the greatest natural assets of the state. You know some states have a lot of lakes and some have beautiful coastline, and we have great liberal arts colleges!

Pennsylvania's in fact the number one importer of freshmen in the country. We add 15,000 freshmen to the population of Pennsylvania every single year. A scary thought. But it's how we attract great talent to the state. And so all of our schools are very complementary with each other and they all have wonderful traditions of service not just to students but to society.

**Goodman:** Well in terms of service to society, if you don't mind, I want to get back to this issue of Penn State, which is a very nice school, versus a small liberal arts school like F&M. So if you take great students from Houston or wherever else and they now come to F&M instead of Penn State, or instead of a university in Texas, what happens to the university in Texas and what happens to Penn State?

**Dr. Porterfield:** Well I think that the students we're recruiting to F&M would indeed enhance any school, any place. So I think our gain might be some other school's loss because we're finding top talent. But, bottom line, there are a lot of different traditions of education here and it's not "either/or" but "both, and."

I think that one of the things you see at the smaller schools is that students have an individualized experience, they have a chance to work directly with faculty, and they feel they don't have to wait in line to be in a play or to get a good job on campus that's fun to do, or to grow in civic engagement. And that I think fits a certain kind of learner. That learner tends to be one that uses the prefix "co" a lot. They're co-responsible for their education. And that's how we think of our students; we want the ones that are going to be active.

Some students might say, "Hey, I don't need to go to a small school. I want to go to a big place and I want to go to a big stadium and cheer for the football team," and that's great. There are lots of schools for them too.

**Goodman:** Well what about career services? So if a student comes to F&M, what sort of career services—Shawn, maybe since you were a recent graduate—I mean what sort of career services did you receive or take part in when you were a student?

**Jenkins:** I will just answer a little bit and then I'll push it to Dr. Porterfield because of his new initiative. But when I was a student we had an Office of Career Services and they had a lot of people who were dedicated to career coaching and we could go in there with our resume and get some advice. They had a number of internship opportunities, other opportunities, someone to talk to about our path and where we wanted to go.

And then in the past two years since Dr. Porterfield's been here we've launched the Office of Student & Post-Graduate Development, which has sort of shifted the model in terms of how we're thinking about launching students after college.

**Dr. Porterfield:** To add to what Shawn just said, a liberal arts education prepares you to be a lifelong learner. It teaches you to research, to write well, to communicate clearly, to be able to learn a new field, to relate different fields to one another, to be a thinker who can challenge assumptions and who can create questions that lead to answers no one's ever thought to look for. That's our tradition, and we educate for life.

At the same time, we're innovating to help our students have early opportunity, before they graduate and after they graduate, that establishes a trajectory to help them truly take off and pursue whatever they want to pursue. And that's what Shawn just alluded to.

We basically collapsed our traditional Career Center into a big, new entity called the Office of Student & Post-Graduate Development. And then we work with students, early in their careers, to expose them to great opportunity in the summers and to challenge them to get to know their faculty and really, really invest themselves in their major. We also then help them compete for the things they want to go for whether graduate school or jobs or tremendous opportunities like Teach for America. Then we stay with our kids now for five years, at least, after graduation.

We have a whole coach assigned to our alums to help them transition from job one to job two, or from grad school to job one, or from job two to grad school. And that is basically an approach that says we're going to stick with our students for a period of eight or nine years, in a developmental relationship, that happens to be good for every student but it may be especially beneficial in a challenging economy to kids who were the first in their family to go to college and whose parents thus didn't have that experience themselves of coming out of school and having to start, sort of, adult life.

**Goodman:** Well, that's a fair point, but if you think about the issue of the economy and you think about first jobs, I mean there has been a ton of stuff written about the fact that students come out of liberal arts colleges with a lot of debt. In fact there is more student debt in the United States than there is credit card debt.

**Dr. Porterfield:** Students have debt, that's true. But the kind of gargantuan numbers you see, \$100,000 dollars of debt, that doesn't happen in schools that meet the full, demonstrated financial need of students. What we do is ask students to take out a debt of approximately \$4,500 a year over four years. So you end up with about \$18,000 - \$19,000 dollars of debt. Which, for a four-year education, which includes residing and eating for four years, that seems like a fair bargain.

**Goodman:** So in your view, más o menos, \$20,000 debt is appropriate?

**Dr. Porterfield:** Each case is different, but I think the \$5,000 dollars a year of debt to develop a degree that then will launch you into graduate school and a life of developing yourself and participating in the economy in an empowered way, I think that's perfectly appropriate.

**Goodman:** But, Shawn, let's say that number is exactly right and then you are giving a speech in Houston or somewhere else and you said to a student, "You know if you were to come to Franklin & Marshall College you would end up with approximately \$5,000 dollars worth of debt a year," what sort of response would you get from some of the students?

**Jenkins:** I can imagine it being a hard thing for someone to understand and to swallow but I think when you talk about what that's in exchange for, it's in exchange for an opportunity to grow

your mind, in a way that is going to be unique to our institution. There's such a tremendous value on that.

**Dr. Porterfield:** By the way, we do say that... because that is the case. And we have a tremendous yield [on] our students who are financial aid eligible when we offer admission to students. We have a higher yield for students who are aid eligible, which means they'll have some debt, than we have for the students who are not aid eligible and will have no debt. Most kids understand that. Most families understand that. It has to be fair.

Now I went to college on financial aid and I borrowed money, the maximum amount we could borrow at that time. And you know it does take a commitment, we want kids to understand what's involved. But we're also committed to offering a grant that's so significant that their debt will be capped.

**Goodman:** Fair enough. In terms of the residential experience, could you describe a little bit about the residential experience that the kids in the College Prep program are having?

**Jenkins:** Sure. The experience that our students have in the summer program mirrors the experience of a traditional F&M College student. So they will live in the dorms, they'll live in the halls with some F&M students who act as sort of counselors and similar to what we do we have house advisors and those are upperclassmen who are there to support our students, to answer questions, to be there as a resource. So we live on campus for the entire program.

**Dr. Porterfield:** Okay. He's being modest. He has designed a summer program that ensures that students will take four hours of class a day, with a college professor. And the other 20 hours, with a little bit of sleep, they are learning around the clock, with activities structured to facilitate communication with one another, enhanced writing skills, the ability to be confident and exploring a new region of the country, field trips to other colleges, the opportunity to learn from great writers or psychologists or social workers... it's a 24-7 learning experience and he does a beautiful job.

**Goodman:** That's great and you have it on air that your boss is saying it right now. [All laugh]. You should ask for a raise right now while all the cameras are rolling.

**Dr. Porterfield:** You know what's beautiful to see, too, is some of the writing, the facilitating of writing that the program does or the discussions about "Who am I? Where am I from? How do I learn to listen to one another and learn from others' experiences?" These conversations draw the kids out and establishes a level of conversation that's very deep.

When you gather sixty high striving kids like we did last summer, and they trust each other, next thing you know you realize that even though they're the top of their class, even though everybody looks at them in their community and says, "Wow, those kids, too, have dealt with difficulty, and even have subordinated or suppressed some of the things that scare them about life, in order to be a high achiever, to get the chance to go to college, to then maybe deal with those things." And I just love the ability that Shawn has, as an educator, to create a community of trust.

**Goodman:** Fair enough, we have only one minute left. Would either of you like to give last minute advice to any viewers who might be seeing this right now?

**Dr. Porterfield:** [To Shawn] Why don't you give advice to students and I'll give advice to educators?



**Jenkins:** I guess I'll talk to the students who are thinking about college. You know I think our program is a really great example and a great opportunity for people to think about the framework that they're thinking out of. I think it's really important that we are exposing students to more opportunity. I love the fact that we're able to do that at F&M and I love the fact that it's my alma mater, I'm very proud of F&M and the work that we're doing.

**Dr. Porterfield:** My advice to educators is that, if you're a high school or a pre-high school educator, believe in your kids and challenge them to go create a great education for themselves. And if you work at the higher ed. level it's to get to know all aspects of educational reform and educational innovation happening in America today, because there are some amazing change-makers working at the high school level and the pre-high school level creating even stronger education for our kids today than this country has seen in many years.

**Goodman:** Well, thank you Dan. Thank you Shawn.

If you would like additional information about Dr. Dan Porterfield or Shawn Jenkins, please visit:

[www.fandm.edu](http://www.fandm.edu)

If you have comments or suggestions about HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY, please send an email to our viewer mailbox at:

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Thank you for watching. We will continue to bring you quality discussions about important matters in today's college and university world. Please join me again for another edition of HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY. I'm Steven Roy Goodman and you've been watching HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY.

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