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When I consider what higher standards mean to me, one element that comes to mind is setting both short-term and long-term goals. Many of my long and short-term goals center on education and service, which have been the cornerstones of who I am as a person. Coming from a low socioeconomic background, I realize that higher education is my key to provide a better life for myself. After college, my aspiration is to attend law school because I believe it will give me the credentials to attain a position of influence in the public sector. I would like to address educational issues as they relate to helping people break out of a never-ending cycle of poverty so that other children from disadvantaged backgrounds can have the same benefits that I have received from my schooling. When I entered high school, I set a goal to become active in our Student Government and have used my positions to influence the emotional and socially stratified climate of our school to be more inclusive of all students, especially those who feel marginalized. Similarly, in a future career, I plan to use my abilities and whatever positions I might hold to advocate for quality education for all citizens so that others can empower themselves to succeed.

Higher standards also mean facing challenges that appear too daunting to overcome. An example of an academic goal I have set is in math. Just as anyone who looks at my transcript can easily see where I excel, he/she can also see where I have found difficulty. Any subject closely related to Mathematics is a subject in which I have not performed well. Whether it is Algebra II or Chemistry, I did not understand the material. I believe a lot of this is the result of my lack of a strong foundation. I began to realize that I had a “math problem” in seventh grade. Since being in high school, however, I have attempted to remedy this problem. Beginning freshmen year, I took advantage of my school’s afterschool tutoring opportunities in an attempt to aid in my understanding. Although this was a step in the right direction, it was not enough to help turn my understanding around. So, using some of my own funds earned from serving as a United States Senate Page and a part-time job at our local mall, I have engaged in individual tutoring every week of my senior year. We have been able to slow down and go back to basics in order to figure out my root problems in my understanding of math. With this individual tutoring, I have made tremendous strides in the right direction. I firmly believe that if I had been able to afford individual tutoring since seventh grade, I would not have this math deficit.

Higher standards in the form of goal setting enable people to eventually go beyond what they thought they could achieve and empower them to do more in life.