

Student achievement

The aspiring senator from New York

Like a lot of high school seniors, Ocasio Willson isn't sure what path to take after graduation. He does have a pretty good idea where he wants it to lead.

The United States Senate.

Inspired partly by Sen. Barack Obama's run for president but mostly by his own love of politics and a desire to make a difference, Ocasio took advantage of an opportunity to study at Harvard during the summer and now is trying to decide where to go to college and what to study when he gets there.



All with that one goal in mind.

"I'm thinking about something in the social sciences area," he said. "I'm a big politics person, so I'm considering political science, economics, maybe going to law school and becoming a corporate attorney and then hopefully becoming a U.S. senator. That's my tentative plan."

Enrolled in Albany High's International Baccalaureate diploma program, a recipient of the YMCA's Black and Latino Achievers award, current Key Club president and a member of Natural Helpers, Ocasio has a list of achievements to match his high aspirations.

He added to it over the summer in the four-week Harvard program, in which he studied the Harlem Renaissance. He earned four college credits, receiving an "A" and a glowing letter of recommendation from the faculty member who taught the course.

"We studied how the Harlem Renaissance came about, how it was the ideal time for a surge of African-American culture, pride and identity, and how the Negritude movement was a global extension of that," Ocasio said.

In addition to the history lessons and writing skills he picked up at Harvard, Ocasio says the thing that surprised him the most was the importance of time management. He credits his education at Albany High for preparing him to succeed at such a high level on an Ivy League campus.

“I learned a lot of great techniques and ways to write from my teachers here,” he said. “I received ‘As’ on both of my term papers this summer and I think that says a lot about how what I’ve learned here impacted my writing.”

As for the future, Ocasio calls Harvard his “dream school” but says he has been looking at a wide range of schools, including Boston University, American University, George Washington University and Vassar.