

At Simeon Career Academy on Chicago's Side, students can choose a major as early as their freshman year, to help them gain as much experience as possible before college. Not knowing what else to choose - but knowing that she was good with money - Jamaya Survis chose accounting as a freshman in 2014.

"I narrowed it down based on the things I didn't want to do," Survis said. "I knew I didn't want to do computer science or cosmetology. So, I chose accounting, because I know how to hold on to a dollar."

It was the right choice.

Today, Survis is a full-time auditor at RSM, a multi-national network of accounting firms - having accepted the job just a few months after graduating with an accounting degree from Illinois State University. She minored in Spanish, and twice has gone abroad - experiencing new cultures, meeting new people and expanding her horizons.



*Jamaya Survis is a full-time auditor at RSM, a multi-national network of accounting firms.*

Survis, whose family received support from CHA through the Housing Choice Voucher program, said she never really knew it until she was older. She said she was always surrounded by family and friends who supported and cared for her. When she wasn't at home studying, Survis was in church, which also contributed to helping her stay positive about life.

"It was pretty much going to church and keeping a strict routine - building a moral compass, and having faith in a higher purpose for yourself," she said.

Once she figured accounting was her route, Survis was mentored by an accounting teacher who had her best interests at heart.

"I could tell she cared about me," she said. "I followed her lead and that's how I was able to get the opportunities I got, and also understand accounting."

The same experience happened with her Spanish teacher, who encouraged her to study abroad. So, she did. She took a trip to Puerto Rico, and it blew her mind. RSM has programs in Mexico, and she is hoping to one day do a rotation there or in another Spanish-speaking country.

In the end, Survis says she is proud of herself. But she says she would never have been able to do it without a strong support system - both at home and at school.

"It's important to surround yourself with people that care about you," she said.

As for her future, Survis hopes to ascend through the ranks at RSM.

"All I know is I'm trying to do the best I can do, every day," she said.