

Why College Is Important to Me

by Nicole Kuznetsov

As a child, my life had structure. Coloring books had lines, letters took on very specific shapes, and a system of rules governed everything from board games to the classroom. I found comfort in the fact that my future had an easy-to-follow template: elementary, middle, and high school, college, job, family retirement, “happily ever after” ending. When I graduated from elementary school I was told I completed 25% of my education. During my middle school graduation, I was told I was half way there and I know I’ll be told I’m 75% done when I throw my cap in the air this June. College was always factored into the percentage and the overall formula for life. And I never questioned its importance. I always figured it is important because it is necessary.

Going to college makes sense. From helping my parents land stable jobs after coming to America to giving my brother the chance to gain work experience at some of the top financial firms, college educations have shown their worth in my family. Yet I didn’t think about what actually goes on inside the magical universities until I entered high school. Applying to the Academy for Math, Science, and Engineering was the first time I had actively made a decision in my education. With the encouragement of my parents and favorite science teacher who recognized that I would excel in the challenging environment of like-minded students, I applied. Four years later, I can confidently say they were right.

My class of twenty-six has shown me the benefits of a collaborative rather than a competitive environment, especially the impact that camaraderie with my peers has on our collective learning experience. Each student has an inspiring level of passion and motivation that made me excited to learn, work on projects, and participate in discussions both in and out of the classroom. I used my education to gain skills and open doors for myself such as an internship at my local hospital. I gained confidence in my abilities to communicate with individuals from strangers my age to practicing

professionals. I was thinking longer and harder than I ever had before to solve individual problems and large-scale challenges. In all honesty, I was having fun.

Looking back on my years at the Academy I realize how big of an impact the school made on how I view education. I wasn't coming to school to mark another day off my calendar and inch closer to finishing the next 25%. I came to school to learn and question and push myself. Now, as a senior, I'm excited. I'm thankful for the sample that my high school gave me of what learning is supposed to be like and thankful that it left me wanting more. I'm entering college in August with a new understanding of its importance. It is important because it is what I want for my future.