

Why College Is Important to Me

by Louise Hicks

I quietly stood in front of her desk as she jotted something down on a small sticky note. She looked up and handed it to me. I carefully read the words written in purple ink. It said, "Today I will believe in myself as much as I believe in others."

The author of this note was my eighth-grade science teacher, Ms. Malam. She wrote it for me after I confronted her about my doubts about an upcoming quiz bowl competition. I was convinced that I didn't know enough to be a valuable member on the team. What followed wasn't just a motivational talk meant to ease my worries but was an honest conversation about the potential she saw in me. With Ms. Malam's help, I've realized that the impact of learning, for me, is that it gifts me with the kind of bravery and ambition I need to reach my goals. College has the ability to offer me an experience which acts the same way in that it will empower me to achieve all that I have set out to accomplish.

I took that note home and stored it somewhere safe. Sitting nicely on the top shelf of my closet along with my other keepsakes, it was a reminder of what Ms. Malam told me. The note motivated me to discover my potential. In high school, I found that active discussion is one of the most effective ways for me to learn and to demonstrate my knowledge. Attending college means that I will have the ability to continue sharing my ideas with others and to grow through the kinds of academic discussions which I find so intriguing.

My search for the potential that Ms. Malam challenged me to find continues with the goals I set each new school year. Earlier this year I set out to improve my ability to apply my learned knowledge. One way I've done this is by expanding my laboratory skills through my senior research. I've been investigating the presence of yeast in North Virginian lichen species using genetic analyses. In college, I look forward to engaging in undergraduate research as a way to further my development as a student.

Looking forward, the next big step is continuing to discover how I can transform facts into methods and then into real world impacts. I've further come to realize that by assuming a position in the field of Global or Public Health policy, I could combine my technical scientific knowledge with my passion for humanities and leadership. As I prepare to continue on this career path, my undergraduate years will be essential to preparing me for Public Health Graduate Programs.

What Ms. Malam showed me is something I'll never forget. And it is that learning becomes truly impactful the moment you step out of your comfort zone. I plan to do just that when I attend college next year and this is why it is so important to me.