

Why College Is Important to Me

by Alexandria Greenholt

I spend too much time lying on the hardwood floor of my room, wading through pools of stagnant thought and doused in a perfume of eraser shavings. I wait and wait, and then ... BAM. The wall I've been picking at for hours crumbles to the ground, and the essay that had been pent up inside me finally decides to flow freely out, decorating the paper line by line with curvy script.

My hand muscles cramp under the painful impact of lactic acid, but there is no time to stop because my mind is racing. Without fail, my mother will interrupt my fantastic breakthrough, calling from the kitchen: "Dinner!" All is lost. I've lived through this episode a hundred times over, and each time I yearn for the jurisdiction of my own time. But I promise you; however, that I have less trivial reasons for wanting to go to college than being tired of catering to the whims of my mother's steamed vegetables.

In the year and a half that I've known what I wanted to do for the rest of my life, not once have I encountered a person who, when I told them that I planned to major in neuroscience, replied with a hearty, "Me too." It certainly doesn't help that I attend a small school in suburban Pennsylvania, where variety is barely a concept. So I had decided instead to take the keys to my laptop, searching endlessly for others who are interested in learning about the brain just as much as I am. YouTube, though probably more widely known for its music and adorable cat videos, also plays host to a plethora of learning communities. Before I knew it, I was not only learning about neuroscience, but also math, history, biology, chemistry,

astronomy, taxonomy, and literature all thanks to the creators of shows like The Brain Scoop, Mental Floss, TED Talks, Crash Course, SciShow, and many others.

While these learning communities are knowledgeable and large, I still felt like I was missing something. One shouldn't dare underestimate the power of personal communication or of being physically surrounded by people who are enthusiastic about learning – whether it be about neuroscience or otherwise. This is ultimately why college is so important to me. Within a campus, there are thousands of students and professors working together to learn something and share it with the rest of the world, and I desperately want to be a part of something so vital to the future. In addition, more money is being poured into colleges and universities than ever before, making their sprawling libraries, laboratories, classrooms and dormitories excellent resources for education. There's so much knowledge just beyond the tips of my fingers, and college will help me make the final stretch to grasp it.