

Why College is Important to Me

by Josie Mayhew

A set of circumstances providing a chance or possibility. That is the way that the dictionary defines "opportunity." But the way I was raised has given "opportunity" a much richer connotation. Opportunity is the chance to achieve something truly unique and incredible. To be given the chance to pursue your passions and work as hard as possible to produce the best that you can offer to the world which we are constantly changing. Since I was young, "opportunity" has been the word in my mind that correlates to "college."

I was ten years old when my father started my college fund. He made it clear that one day, one of my top priorities would be getting into and paying for college. He taught me economic ambition, helping me set goals for the money that I earned and encouraging my participation by matching whatever amount I chose to put into my college fund. The reality, of course, is that he also contributed monthly funds; however this lesson of planning financially for the future stuck with me even into high school. College signifies so many things to me, one of them being hard work. Because of this, I was looking for ways to earn money for college even in middle school. While this is not necessarily academic, it has instilled within me an endurance to work that I can utilize in college.

I also view college as the beginning of a learning environment centered on critical thinking and problem solving rather than just rote memorization for sometimes unclear reasons. It will be a chance for me to really develop my passions and ambitions. I was lucky enough to be a teenager who found joy in school, even when I was little. College will allow me to narrow my focus while broadening my perspective. I can immerse myself completely in my interests and build both my schedule, extracurriculars, job, and research around my major. More than anything, I can pursue the challenges that I came to love in high school.

College creates an environment in which students can begin forming their own opinions. I will be away from all of my close family and friends that may have influenced me as a child. This

separation, while scary, can be freeing. You have the opportunity to use your experiences to mold your views of the world into something that is truly your own. Combat ignorance. Study abroad. Fling yourself out of your comfort zone. Become fascinated with something new. College provides the opportunity for all of these things.

When we're young, we are told that we can be anything we want to be. It is the age at which we are able to dream without restriction of our potential. Reality cannot weigh us down. Our path seems clear and without obstacles. But as we grow older, we do in fact encounter difficulties that may wear us down, especially in the admissions process. But I anticipate that the experience that college provides will be one that nothing could match. It is, in my opinion, even better than when you're a kid. It is tangible. Palpable. You can see your life-your actual life-beginning, and it is as terrifying as it is thrilling.