

Why College Is Important to Me

By Kilian Olen

Suppose I told you that all of your dreams were possible. That if you put in enough effort, you could achieve anything. Would you believe me? Or would you disregard me as just another hopeful well-wisher? Would my statement cause an internal reflection or would it just be one more motivational phrase infesting the corners of the internet? Each year millions of people contemplate a life-defining question: Are my goals attainable, or are they some immature fantasy? To them, college is so much more than an education. It's an opportunity to take control of their life and determine their identity. It's a chance to be pushed past their breaking point, all in the hopes that instead of cracking under the pressure, they'll emerge as diamonds.

This year, I've become one of these optimistic students. I'm at the end of the trail and all that greets me are untraveled mountains. To be honest, it's quite frightening. But that's the exciting part of life: the unknown journey. College is meant to be a strange and foreign environment. A hodgepodge of cultures, college will shock you as the students in your school are no longer your next-door neighbors, but instead are travelers from a multitude of backgrounds. This shock will soon wear off, however, as you'll be expected to collaborate with your classmates in order to succeed in your studies. Your classmates will repeatedly challenge your ideas, often leading to solutions that would have never been possible had you worked alone.

Just as college itself is an opportunity, from it stems countless other opportunities for you to take advantage of. Internships will be available to give you real-world experience in your chosen area of study. Not only will you gain experience, but you'll build meaningful relationships that'll open doors unknown to you. If you're not interested in internships, another possibility lies in assisting faculty with research projects where you'll make strides in science while complementing your curriculum. Additionally, student organizations provide a great

chance for like-minded individuals to get together and achieve a common goal. Regardless of whether or not you use these opportunities to your benefit, a college education allows you to specialize in your chosen discipline so you can make an impact on the world.

College is not just a school. It's a rocky trail that leads to the summit of the mountain. Sure, college will open doors for me, but I'll have to walk through them myself. And when I make that leap, I won't be finished. I'll always face more and more doors, some of them heavier than before. My time in college will have prepared me for these challenges as I gain experience with each step. When I finally do make it to the top of the mountain, I'll stand tall and smile. I won't smile because the journey is over, though. I'll be smiling because I just spotted a larger mountain, and I have my hiking shoes on.