

## Why College Is Important to Me

By Kaira Oraedu

I believe that our identity is a constantly evolving definition of ourselves. It is a concept molded by every voice we listen to, every word we read, every experience we undergo, and every person we know. It is not something we create, but something that is sculpted by surroundings and moments of reflection. Therefore, college is important to me because it is an environment for transformation. Its abundance of libraries, lecture halls, labs, and diverse minds serve a greater purpose than simply fulfilling the demands of an institution for higher learning but rather the needs of a youth trying to answer the age-old question: Who am I?

As I look back on my four years of high school, I realize how much my view on education has changed. Before, it was a very black-and-white concept to me. Education meant taking notes, doing homework, memorizing information, passing tests, and seeing a nice column of A's on my report card. Learning was not a journey of growth, but an itemized checklist. Education was not the lighting of a fire, but the filling of a pail.

However, as I participated in an international program at my high school this perspective became incongruous with everything around me. Among ambitious and highly intellectual classmates the limits I had set on my knowledge were blurred, broken, and redefined. I realized that the acquisition of knowledge wasn't a task, but an exploration of the world around me and the place I wanted to take in it. Through conducting chemical analyses of our local Silver Springs, I found joy in the process of scientific investigation and the beauty in the unanswerable questions. I appreciated the truths that can be found in literature and the connections to be made between music and history. Education now meant self-discovery because it allowed me to incorporate these passions into my identity.

Consequently, college has taken a special significance for me because it symbolizes the continuation of this journey that began my first day of high school. I value that in this place there will be no limit nor defined path for the extent of my knowledge. I can dive deeply into the biological world in order to achieve my goal of becoming an OB/GYN, while also taking the time to explore 20<sup>th</sup> century

American literature. In this community I can be a part of a beautiful mosaic of cultures, experiences, and personalities that weave, bump, and diverge. I can influence and be influenced. Ultimately, college will be an experience that provides the right combination of pressures to help me develop an identity based on scholarship, community, and independence.

I believe that without knowledge we cannot expect to understand ourselves. An identity is essentially the culmination of what we have learned. College therefore becomes significant to me because it not only focuses on preparing me for a career but discovering the important parts of myself along the way.