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Personal Narrative Essay

Looking back at certain life moments is sometimes among the hardest things one can do in times of reflection. This especially holds true for when one often questions their acceptance or happiness in a given situation resulting from a life changing moment. For me, that life changing moment regards the college transition process back in my senior year of high school. Normally, a time where feelings of anxiety and excitement run high, it also marked a period where decision making had to be crucial (with regards to selecting a major and a college based on that major). Although mindful of the process, some of the decisions I made have had consequences that still affect me to this day. However, if there is one thing that had changed me, thought-wise, was my life purposes and willingness to do what I needed to do instead of what I wanted to do. These key words were all I needed to hear so I could re-evaluate my goals and restructure myself for a better future. My college transition process was difficult because I didn't think to choose my major wisely which led to choosing schools and adopting a mindset that I would later regret having about my path toward a career. Ultimately, what I have gained through the experience was knowing myself more concerning strengths and weaknesses as well as gaining perspective and depth about life.

It all began with choosing my major. I then was attending a charter school and was wrapping up my senior year before heading off to college. My senior year was as expected for the most part: sentiment-wise, it was in one sense slow-paced as my friends and I consistently had the urge to think about finishing the year so we could be done with school "for good". Saying "for good" was really a tongue-in-cheek expression; we knew some of us

still had college up our sleeves but to us, that was a whole new chapter to even think about at the time. I, of course, was serious about it and appropriately acted upon my obvious interests to begin and finish the college admission/selection process. In another sense, the year was fasted-pasted; and so was the time for me to decide on a major.

Deciding on a proper major was the focal point of the college transition process. With that being said, my decision in choosing the wrong major (the “right” one at the time) made this process frustrating and difficult. Complicating this, my father, who did not go to college, helped me the whole way. Not taking away from the effort and patience that my father had with me throughout the process, his lack of experience of going to college himself (and his biased view of what successful majors are, in financial terms) were really detrimental to my thought process of choosing what I need to choose based on interests. Looking back in my youth, I had a lot going for in terms of interests— ranging from sports to videogames, from drawing to building. Inside or outside, I liked various activities. Of course, there were some that I shined in and some that I needed work on and likewise, there were some activities I liked more than others. However, when thinking about a possible career, one activity that seemed to resonate with me the most was drawing, crafting, and building. Combining these elements together makes architecture, at least in my view. Ultimately, I came to the conclusion that I need to be an architect and this was decided on from very early in my life. It is what I envisioned of choosing upon entry to college but alas, there were recurring thoughts that occurred along the way that made me think otherwise.

One such recurring thought was being given different opinions from various people (including family members, friends and colleagues) about how to approach choosing my major. Some were supportive and some were not; the ones who were not with me 100%

where my parents and relatives to some minor extent. I would be told that architecture, while a fine major, doesn't provide good pay and that engineering does at which point I would sometimes interchange the two careers. Honestly, that wouldn't be the only time where I would hear the former; sometimes I would read and research about successful careers which make obtaining a college degree worth going to college, but would also undermine my passion. Another recurring theme was confusion over differences between engineering and architecture. I was aware that the two careers were different but at least catered toward my academic and observational strengths. As I already pointed out, I would sometimes interchange the majors because each required some level of drawing and visual skills. Eventually, I was convinced to do engineering because it was a well-paid, more in demand career.

It was official; I chose my major in civil engineering and the next process concerned the college selection process. While I was unaware at the time that choosing engineering over architecture was a career path mistake, little did I know that it would also lead to college choices that I wouldn't like. Even so, the prospect of choosing where I would want to study and live (which was a big jump in my lifestyle for me) was overwhelming on its own terms. Upon searching for colleges that offered engineering degrees, I kept in mind to only focus on regional but highly ranked institutions for a number of reasons. For one thing, I only wanted to attend college close by where I was raised because I didn't have it in me to move far and leave behind my old, customary lifestyle. And second, I was very pressured by my family to attend a high ranking college because they believe it shows prestige, recognition and class.

Following this, I would apply to each college (6 in all) and would wait on the admission decisions. To note, not every college I applied to was approved by me. I was told

by my father that I needed to have as many choices possible in case I received rejection letters for my primary choices, which I hesitantly agreed to. Afterwards, I began to receive admission decisions the following spring. To my surprise, I got in 5/6 colleges but to my fear, not my number 1 choice! From there on, I began to worry how I would be able to realize the reality that would soon become—actually setting foot on a campus that I wasn't sure I was ready to go into. Aware of this, it is common for high school graduates to feel shaky and nervous for entering the next educational tier. For me personally, I fell right into that sentiment and really, really felt it. To explain, I would think about the start of college on my rides toward the orientations and then as soon as I stop and take a step forward on the campus, I slowly and hesitantly go about the day ahead. Ultimately, what I would do is envision myself at the college while I was there. I ask myself questions. How do I see myself as a student of this university? What can I expect to do on my downtimes here? Is this place really for me?

In the end, I ended up choosing a college that felt the best in terms of good ranking and relative geography, at least after being faced with five other choices that didn't meet my expectations. At the time, I felt that I had everything in check: my major and my college; little did I know that I would soon face huge difficulties in studying the major. At first, when I began to tackle prerequisite courses (math and sciences) for engineering, I thought to myself that it was normal to cover topics of such difficulty only months after graduating high school. But much later, when it was rather late, I realized that selecting civil engineering for me was a huge mistake. There are many reasons for why it took me till the end of my sophomore year to come to my senses about rethinking my career path. The one primary reason I can give is to avoid the negative consequences that would result from exiting the major. Those

consequences encompass everything from letting my family down to making up for transfer credit upon a new career path. Due to wanting to prove myself hard for staying in engineering upon graduation (even with a subpar GPA) with being faced these issues, I stubbornly refused to make a switch until I was reassured by my parents to do so.

Left in the wake of an uncertain future, I made it my goal, soon after, to restructure and reposition myself in college. Today, I can say that I am content with the decisions I made since switching majors but there is still a long road ahead for more action. Until then, I can only reflect upon two years of experience that has impacted me a lot. Firstly, prior to the experience, I usually went with the flow of things instead of having a moment of careful thought regarding decisions, whether to my sole benefit or a group effort. Prior to the experience, I certainly was comfortable not stepping up, not taking an active role and not thinking seriously before committing to something. I was usually told what to do and I did it. Secondly, I had to start thinking in terms of *wanting* to do something instead of *needing* to regarding passion. Simply put, I had to visualize myself as someone who either is going to love or hate their career in spite of the pay which, in the end, influenced my decision to leave my old major. Truly, I have learned that it is the passion of something that ultimately counts and not the requiring without passion that ultimately leads to a better career outlook and success in its own right. And thirdly, I have learned to be practical and strategic—all with respect to my personality. I just have to make decisions that most likely fit my accommodations and knowing more about myself through strengths and weaknesses have certainly helped. Some of those strengths and weaknesses have included my ability to learn certain concepts quickly and struggling to take tests that focus on memorization respectively.

In all, my narrative was about a turning point in my life and there is still a lot to be told and a whole lot more to be physically done for myself to succeed. As individuals change their perceptions, their behaviors, or even their goals, one grows from any given experience and this such experience involving the college transition process is no different from a story involving a first move or a second relationship; if in the end we learn from our mistakes, one can garner up all their faults to avoid and in the end, it will all lead to success guaranteed. Certainly, this an aspect of life that I had learned and I can honestly say that one has to grow up and develop through various ups and downs in order to see what resonates and what doesn't. Over a period of time, whatever decisions we ultimately make shapes each of us as the person we become, for the better or for the worse (hopefully the former). I hope that one day I can be a person who can guide others to the path of their own success based on my own relative experiences.