1. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

The voice from the front yelled again, "Matthew, finance division," and "Darryl, sports division." I awaited the announcement of my name. My hope grew dimmer as more names were called. When I finally heard, "These are our recruits for this year!" my heart skipped a beat, and that line struck straight deep into my heart. Not even a speck of the hope I initially harbored remains. I quickly entered this space, a space where I was alone with the imperishable emotions of guilt and disappointment, which surrounded and possessed me. The voice in my head that expressed the terribly painful word "failure” deafened the thunderous applause given to the new recruits.

That was without a doubt one of the most hurtful times in my life: getting rejected from the yearly cup recruits. I used to be one of those students who shine briliantly in academics. Getting straight 7’s in IB and topping the class rankings, i never seemed to stop grinding on my studies. I once thought to myself, how hard can it be to pass the recruitment process and my confidence was boosted even more as submitting the report card was one of the requirements. However, I vividly remember the time I stepped into the interview room the intensity stupefied me and I stand in front with three fierce eyes fixated on me. I remember my heart beating rapidly, my mind clogged every now and then, and stuttering while I speak. In simple words, all the red flags for an interviewee. I got rejected.

I eventually come to terms with a word that I had previously found difficult to accept: failure. Despite all the pain, I reflected upon my interview and in an even bigger scale, I reflected upon myself as a person. I realized that I excelled in academics but I Iacked social skills. I used to avoid crowds, avoid meeting new people and not to mention that I was the quiettest in the friend group. I was too shy and reticent to voice out my opinions to others, scared of being judged, and fear my “top student in class” title being tainted. That’s why I have always been in my tiny bubble i felt secure alone. I had to breakout of this mindset.

I waited a few months for the next recruitment, which was more difficult and selective because it was for the next student council batch, which accepts a fewer number of members compared to the previous recruitment after extensive sreening. However, I was still the same shy person, but I tried to be more mechanical during the preparation process. So, I gave it another try. I trained days before the interview, reaching out to my friends who got accepted last time for tips and even scripted and rehearesed responses for some frequently asked interview questions. As a result, I got accepted.

During my time in the student council, I looked up to the president and his vice for their charisma, wit and strong leadership. I thirst for their ability to speak confidently in public and openly express themselves. I coerced myself into talking to my seniors, taking part in discussions and contributing as much as I could in the student council. As I dragged myself out of my tiny bubble I felt secure alone, my communication skills grew as I interacted with more people. Contributing more and more to the student council, I finally reached the position I once looked to, being the student council president.

However, the key takeaway from this linear failure to success process isn’t the fact that I stayed resilient, worked hard and finally succeeded. It was how I changed and shifted my view on life. I realized that before I was booksmart, not streetsmart. I could answer challenging exam style questions, not simple real-life problems. I may be the teacher’s favorite, but not someone a ruthless society favors.

After stepping down from my presidency in the student council, I decided to join a non-profit student led organization focusing on digital literacy with the hope that I could meet people from other schools who are also driven and after almost a year spent there, I climbed up to being president. I am now a changed person. I am no longer that naive boy who spent five minutes contemplatating whether or not to send a single line message to a whatsapp friend group chat, but someone who is capable of leading an organization filled with diversed and driven people.