In high school, the pace of life was different. I remember times when I didn’t have any homework to do at home because I would finish it during school hours. Meaning I had from 3 pm to 10 pm free to do anything my heart desired. I mostly spent my time with a couple of my friends, playing basketball or video games. Then, my senior year came and I had some difficult classes, but the schedule didn’t seem to change, I still had a lot of time on my hands. I still remember the time when I needed to study for my Calculus and Physics exams, but that only took two evenings of the entire week and managed to get good grades on both.

In my last semester, I got a part-time job, working as a draftsman for a steel manufacturing company that sold steel shooting targets. This was possible due to the fact that I was CSWA certified, meaning that I knew how to use this CAD software called Solidworks and I passed a series of exams where I was tasked to draw specific parts and assemblies with the drawings provided. Being a draftsman required me to communicate with the owner, product specialist, and welders to design what was envisioned. There were many deadlines that I thought were impossible to reach, therefore I had to change something in order to be able to complete what was asked of me. It wasn’t too exhausting, but I was not used to communicating with a lot of people in order to accomplish a task. Therefore, I had to learn how to work with multiple people and be able to stand my ground when things went wrong, or needed revisions based on previous unfinished jobs by the past draftsman.

This is where I first noticed the change in time. I no longer had my usual hours free, I worked from 2 pm to 5:30 pm, and now I had until 6 pm to 10 pm of free time. But due to this new job, I couldn’t procrastinate and leave things to the last minute like how I was used to. After finishing the year strong, I realized that time is a valuable resource that most of us don’t know how to manage.

After signing up for classes during the summer and talking to Briceland, my Civil Engineering advisor, I ended up signing up for a couple of classes, including Calculus 2. This is when things got serious. Before the semester started, I was already assigned Calculus homework on the weekend, and it was due on Sunday if I wanted to get extra credit. Knowing that the class is difficult I decided to take a peak at the homework. In front of me was my calculus homework, and I can remember thinking, “why is this due so early?”. I got to thinking of all the things I have planned for Sunday, but I had to make some changes. The more I thought about it, the faster I was breathing, almost having a panic attack. Thinking back to this moment, it might have been my first. I contemplated what I should do, but I remembered that the best thing to do is to act. So I decided to grab a pen and start solving derivatives. I finished my homework, earlier than anticipated, and I felt relieved. After finishing the homework on the same day, I realized that I had overcome this feeling of worry, and I also felt that I have improved my efficiency.

Time seems to just flow by, and if we don’t act, then there is nothing one can do at that moment, but to capitalize when given the chance. This is where I noticed that time brings unpredictable changes, and in a small amount of time, big changes can occur. My transition from high school to college made me realize that I had to change how I did things and my ways of thinking. I needed to change with the flow of time, meaning I had to cut down on TV, phone, and computer usage. In order to improve my time management, I would start using Google Calendar and plan out my day in order to become more efficient with the limited amount of time I had.

Even though I made a lot of progress, I felt that I could do more, so I decided to read a book called Atomic Habits by James Clear. Atomic Habits was about how the little things make a difference in our everyday lives. Here is where I was introduced to the idea of improving by 1% every day and if I did so consistently, then I would end up being 37 times better after one year. I found it hard at times to apply the new things I learned, for example, I had a really bad habit of getting distracted on my phone a lot. Therefore, my course of action was to make my bad habits harder to do, therefore I would try to put my phone farther away from me, in order to avoid picking it up. At one point I thought that I wouldn’t be able to be free from distraction, until one day, I decided to throw my phone at my bed and it was the most productive I have ever been.

My key takeaway from my high school to college transition is that time never stops, we all get the same 24 hours in a day, and it all boils down to how we use them. I have also noticed that specific time slots are better for certain things than others, for example, the morning is my best time of day to do hard work and for learning compared to the evening, where I feel that I’m slow and not motivated. It is important to note that investments in time management skills get incredible returns, and that can apply to any area of life, not just in academics, but in work and hobbies. Lastly, time is a flowing asset that one needs the right tools to manage. Without the proper equipment and mentality, one can’t take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves.