Let me paint you a picture. I’m a senior in high school where nothing could go wrong. ‘Senioritis’ begins to kick in but only one thing holds me back: college. It’s a big decision that I’ve always put off knowing that it can be a life altering decision. I tour the schools and begin to get a good feel for what I’m signing up for. I have always heard classes are hard but never really let it sink in. This is the start of my story.

I always thought of college as something that was going to be hard, but I always put it off. Going into engineering, I was kind of hesitant. I knew I wasn’t the brightest in high school but I always enjoyed math and it made sense to me. I didn’t really think twice about it. This could not have been further from the truth. I walked into my first calculus class that I’ve ever taken. I always thought to myself that I could do it. Our first day, our teacher began reading the syllabus and it began to give me a glimpse of what we were heading into. This is when I started to realize that this was going to be a battle. To add to this, our teacher had a health issue that caused him to take medical leave and we got a sub to teach us the rest of the semester. The sub was very smart in calculus, but he was not good at relaying the information to us. I struggled the whole semester with this and my grade began to tank and suffer. I wasn’t passing tests or quizzes and I began to lose hope. It set in that if I can’t do a Calc 1 class, how am I supposed to do every other math class as well as the engineering classes on top of this. Math is the base of an engineer and I struggled with the basics of calculus. This was a harsh reality because my whole life, I’ve wanted to be an engineer and had such a high view of myself and what I thought I was, that failing began to shut me down and lose hope. I was in the middle of the storm and had no idea which direction to head. Everything seemed to close in on me. Knowing that this was not the right path to be on, I did what I was always told: go to your counselor. I went into my counselor with the thought that I don’t belong in engineering in the back of my head. I asked her what to do and she referred me to the math tutoring lab. In what seems like a simple solution, I realized that I was going to have to put in lots of effort which is something that I didn’t always do. I spent countless hours in the tutoring lab doing homework or studying for quizzes just looking for some hope. As a result, I became good friends with the tutors, spending most of my afternoons with them and even Sunday nights trying to comprehend what was going on in this class. I put in the work and going into the final, I was hungry to pass. I hit the point that I thought “If I put this much work into this class, I wasn’t going to take it again.” My only option was to pass and going into the final, I had a 67% in the class and needed a 70% to pass and move on to the next math class. I Knew it was going to be hard but it’s what I had been working for with all the hours spent in the tutoring lab.

The day was December 13, 2021, and our final was here. I woke up and got ready in the same way I always would. I walked to class and even threw an AirPod in treating it like a gameday. I briefly looked at a study sheet I had made but I really focused on staying calm. It’s just another test but internally, I knew what was at stake. I walked into my classroom, and it all began to set in. I could see the teacher the holding the final shuffling the papers as if he knew he was going to ruin me. I was wearing jeans and a big Carhartt jacket. It got very hot suddenly. I began feeling worried, yet relaxed. It was a weird feeling but I knew that in an hour and a half, it would be over. Everything that I did throughout the semester was going to be over. It would be out of my control.

Fast forward to the next week and I was sitting in the shop on a NAPA Auto Parts chair and my phone began to buzz. I checked it to see the notifications saying that the grades have gone in and had been finalized. I couldn’t help but worry. I had put so much work into that I knew I would accept the results. I went in and opened that class. It lay on the bench wide open just waiting to be looked at and I finally gave it the attention it wanted. 80%. My final grade was an 80%. I sat there thinking “There’s no way. There’s just no way. How could this be.” I began scrolling to see the grades and realized I had got an 82% on the final. With a combination of a few other classes being dropped, It brought me to an 80%. I don’t think I can explain the satisfaction of this. I sat there in the shop just looking around. I took all the emotions in and sat in it. It was one of the few times that I saw a concrete form of hard work paying off. My dad started walking into the shop and I didn’t say a word. Somehow, he knew what I was thinking about and I let out the smallest grin. I told him about passing, but not just passing the class. I passed the class with an 80%. It was a surreal moment that sparked a fire in me wanting more. I beat that class and I beat it good.