

Attending university had always seemed like the natural progression of things. I dreamt about becoming a Griz just like my mother and her father before her. I dreamt about turning my passion for technology into paychecks. However, as I wrote about in my I Am From poem, it would likely be unattainable. With my historical (and ongoing) difficulty coping with my mental disabilities — and I do mean disabilities, as I refuse to sugarcoat my struggle with euphemisms — it seemed like I would keep dreaming.

Looking at me now, seeing the person I have become, no one expects my history of more in-school suspensions than I can count. I was unstable and unpredictable, and, for a while, no one knew how to help me manage it. But they saw hope: they knew I was smart. Frighteningly smart. I was a delinquent with an IEP who was in ECS, the gifted ed. program in my district's elementary schools, and who took tons of honors, AP, and dual credit classes in high school.

By my third year of high school, we — my family, therapist, case manager, and other important figures of my life — knew that I was ready. I would no longer be forced to dream. My entire college plan changed, too. I originally planned to attend Great Falls College, MSU for around two years before transferring to the University of Montana to finish out my bachelor's degree. The new plan involved me taking a metric ton of college-level classes so I could graduate from Great Falls High with an honors diploma and from Great Falls College with an MUS Core gen-ed certificate — all while working on earning Eagle Scout. I might have been the only person in my graduating class to achieve all three. I turned my mental disabilities into superpowers. I book-ended this chapter of my life when I signed the credit transfer of 39 credits from Great Falls College to the University of Montana.

I am from troubles.  
from rough behavior.  
from growth.  
from honor.

Now I'm to college.  
I didn't know it could be done.  
But I am from growth.

I am from growth.

Now I dream of immigrating to Germany. I find America's future to be rather hopeless, and the path it might choose is not one that guarantees my safety. Before I can become a German citizen, however, I must achieve residency, which involves sponsored employment and fluency in the German language. I surprised myself after completing the German placement exam when it gave me a fluency score of B1, the requirement for residency. However, citizenship requires C1, so I still have some work to do. I am minoring in German, which will get me the C1 fluency I desire, and, in conjunction with my membership in the Franke GLI, it will grant me a great opportunity to study abroad in Germany to see if I actually want to live there.

You see, I visited Germany with my family this summer as a part of our two-week European vacation that began in London, traveled through Amsterdam and Southern Germany, and ended in Zurich. We even had the chance to visit Dublin for a night when our flight was

canceled — though I imagine our time in and around the airport was not very representative of the city as a whole. While in Germany, I did find myself enjoying it. However, we were only there for a week and slept in a different place almost every night. It was fun, but London and Amsterdam were better, which is why I want to give it another go before I really judge it.

Studying abroad is expensive though. I will apply to as many scholarships as I can, but I am also fully prepared to take out a loan to cover the remaining cost. I am determined to study somewhere outside the US for at least a semester, no matter what it takes.

While I would love to continue my four-year streak of 4.0 GPAs, I am setting my goals realistically. In my words from my first year of high school, strive for “at least a 3.0. Anything after that is a bonus.” I have thought about potential causes for my First Semester Despondency, and the word “honors” came to mind. In high school, honors classes (as well as their AP and dual credit friends) were often significantly more challenging than their non-honors variants. Because of this, the two were consistently distinguished as the easier and harder courses, *per se*. However, I realized that this distinction is rarely made in college — because college *is* honors. Those who take few honors courses in high school are less likely to attend college, while those who take many are more likely. I knew this, yet I only made the connection today while riding my bike from my room to the UC to write this very assignment.

Thus I must remind myself to treat *every class* as though it were honors. When facing difficulty understanding or completing an assignment, I must be proactive, not apathetic. When — not if — I become bogged down by past deadlines I missed and new ones that loom just over the hill, I must admit my difficult situation to my professors, advisors, RA, or anyone who could offer help. I must admit this plainly, because, as I have been told many times, and as I continue to tell myself, no one can read minds.

...which is probably a good thing, because my mind can be terrifying.

I work in IT as one of many student workers. The way I found out about it was quite funny, but it deserves some time of its own to properly tell it. I really enjoy working there, surrounded by familiar things and sounds, working with fellow nerds with strong opinions about technology. In fact, it has become my motivator to be productive and stay on top of school, because I am not finding joy in most of my classes this semester, and my job depends on it.

My bosses have talked about previous student workers who were invited to join them over the summer to work on larger projects that cannot be completed while school is in session. Some student workers were even offered full-time positions. This intrigues me as a potential path to advancement. My prospects are higher than average, specifically because, at the time of my interview, I was the only student worker in a while who preferred using Macs. There are now two of us, but we number only two out of a department of at least twenty. This path to advancement will allow me to earn more to cover the costs of living and studying abroad, as well as going on adventures one can only really have before one decides to raise children.