**Long Questions: (250 words)**

***The Stanford community is deeply curious and driven to learn in and out of the classroom. Reflect on an idea or experience that makes you genuinely excited about learning.***

My first encounter with biopolymers was in my Grade 9’s science experiment. Since then, biopolymer has become my regular search result in my browser’s history. I learned how biopolymers are potential solutions to our long-running plastic waste issues and how optimizing their production is a long-standing hot topic.

One day, during a family dinner, I observed something interesting: our steamed crab dish leftovers showed waxy layers surrounding its shells. “Could this be polymeric?” So, I did more research and found that crustacean shells contain chitin: a promising biopolymer. I was excited that I looked up “chitin-based bioplastic experimental procedure.” As I was about to propose this for my project next year, the pandemic hit, the school was closed, and bye-bye biopolymer experiment.

I waited until August 2020 hoping the pandemic would dissipate, but it was far from done. I considered conducting this experiment in my mom’s kitchen. However, it wasn’t feasible because it required strong acids and bases. My only hope was the school lab.

After several attempts of proposing to my school, I finally got consent to do the experiment. I almost lost my outlet to pursue my interest, but I learned that unpredictability (the pandemic) is a part of life: Murphy’s law always applies. However, it can be overcome as long as one perseveres. No matter how long it takes, as long as the fire called passion has not been extinguished, one will see a light at the end of the tunnel. For me, this light is my deeper understanding of biopolymers where every time I search deeper, it makes me want to learn more.

***Virtually all of Stanford's undergraduates live on campus. Write a note to your future roommate that reveals something about you or that will help your roommate – and us – get to know you better.***

Dear future roommate,

When we are going to meet, please don't judge me immediately. Take time to know me more. Trust me, once we get to know each other, I can assure you that we are going to have a blast of a time.

Throughout most of my life, though I have never shared my room, I got the chance to stay in my school’s dormitory with a roommate for two years (why? I had to move schools in another city), so I am pretty sure everything can go smoothly.

In my spare time, I love to play the guitar (since it's portable, unlike a piano). So maybe if you can play guitar or other instruments, we can always play together, or maybe I can teach you some basic skills if you haven’t tried playing it. Other than that, I usually watch videos from YouTube, mainly videos that give me more knowledge or make me learn or understand certain things, since I don’t really like to spend a couple of hours watching and not walk away with anything. These are probably the main things that comfort me, especially when I just want to escape from the business of the world. The things I do in my time alone. With that being said, I really don’t mind if you disturb me or need my help, feel free, because I noticed that sometimes I tend to forget about the people around me.

Cheers,

Darren

***Tell us about something that is meaningful to you and why.***

The dynamic and harmonious melody produced from the 88 black and white keys as they are pressed with bent fingers at certain tempos; I still vividly remember my first piano lesson 12 years ago and how I, as a brat, never had a reason to play the piano.

When I started, I felt it was just another mundane, once-a-week routine that my parents had forcefully enrolled me in. I kept on with this for four years until, one day, I realized that my piano was somehow able to make my parents’ tired expression from work into one that is fresh and relaxed. This moment motivated me to learn to play the piano seriously.

I continued to pursue piano by volunteering in my church’s worship band. Here, instead of a soloist, I became a part of a band where I learned music collaboration by being able to adjust my tempo with the band so that the music sounded harmonious. Moreover, this experience enables me to develop my perfect pitch as well as expand my piano genres from classical to gospel and jazz.

Piano has not only helped my parents sway away their work stress, but also enabled me to continue to improve my skills as both a soloist and accompanist. For this reason, I have now found out that piano has become very meaningful in my life. Had my parents not enrolled me to my first piano lessons, I wouldn't be having the harmonious life that I have now.