Cole Gannon

Professor Cudahy

EWRT 1A

1 February 2021

The Big Transfer

"Learn by Doing, Learn by Caring". When I first stepped foot into The Nueva school, I couldn't contain my smile. The natural light let in by the giant glass panes in the foyer brought life to the picturesque sprawling across the multicolored walls. Beyond the suspiciously well-maintained field, the tour guide led us to the vast gymnasium where, as students, we would engage in fulfilling, team-building sports like dodgeball and badminton. As we walked back to the main building, the blend of brutalist and modernist influences caught my eye. The teachers gave us the rundown of what we would learn and the education style of the school. When I went home that day, I already knew that this was going to be the perfect environment for me to socialize and enrich myself in.

I didn’t get in.

I thought this was the school meant for me. Unfortunately, Nueva did not feel the same way. When I went to talk to a friend of mine who did get into Nueva, he told me: “You should've taken that test more seriously.” I couldn’t protest. I didn’t really give it my all. So how much did I really want to go there anyways? The next few months went by quickly and I still hadn’t fully internalized their rejection. I began at Sequoia High School, a public school like any other. Nothing wrong with that, right? Just a normal high schooler. Nothing wrong with just staying on the path that was decided for me. After all, it was easier to just do what everyone else told me to do.

Those dusty old Indian Red facades were my real welcome to school each morning. I was one of only two people from my middle school attending Sequoia. In this sea of about two thousand others, there was nobody I could call a "friend". As I looked around me during break and lunch, it dawned on me that the social groups formed from previous schools had already cauterized into impenetrable social cliques. I was alone and there was no real outlet of people for me to break into.

One remarkably unremarkable day, my mother asked me to take public transport back home. While I absentmindedly hopped on the bus, I thought about class and school in general. Today had been a day like any other at school, learning next to nothing, talking to nearly nobody, and unhappily sitting alone at break and lunch. Class was also boring and slow as usual. It felt like the we could only move as fast as the slowest person. As the bus crossed the bridge to the lake blue Oracle towers, I agonized over what felt like a waisted high school life. But just then, I happened to spot a girl in a Design Tech High School hoodie.

I mustered my courage, “Hey, you go to d.tech? Can you tell me about the school?” She looked up. “It’s very self-directed. If you wanted to get ahead in class, there’s nothing stopping you from doing so”. I had to know more. I called one of my friends who went to d.tech and explained my predicament at Sequoia. “It’s more than just self-paced learning”, he said. “You get a lot of freedom to choose what you want to do if you’ve finished your work for class. We even have a machine shop that some people visit during class time!” I knew then that this was my chance to go to a school where my friends were, to go to a school that was anything but ordinary or normal. I emailed the office of admissions and set up a day to go visit.

The scent of burnt chocolate wafted into the autobody shop of the wacky and uncharacteristic "Design Tech High School". It was a scrappy school, nowhere near as immaculate as the elite Nueva school, yet it had its charm. Chairs and tables made out of various materials and formed into odd shapes were scattered around the building seemingly with no relation to each other. There was no sunlight inside the building but it was clear to see that even the furniture would not conform to a specific theme. There were no teachers who gave me the rundown of what our year would look like and there was no tour guide.

After seeing what the school was like, I walked into the office for the interview. I wondered what kinds of questions I was going to be asked. Was I the right fit for the school? I remembered the final interview at The Nueva school. Would they say that they didn’t want to accept me? The admissions officer asked me what I thought about the school and my interests. I was eager to answer and I told her exactly what I felt: "I want to go to school here".

This time was going to be different than Nueva. I wanted this for myself. It wasn’t my mother or friends pressuring me into going to school here. Transferring to d.tech was a conscious effort to derail myself from the standard track of my high school life. “Great! We’ll see you in January!” Just like that, the interview was over.

It was my first day of school. That is, my first day of school at d.tech. It was also my second time taking the train by myself. I was nervous about meeting new people. I worried I’d have difficulty adapting to my new environment. But I was getting on that train to go to school, worries or not. After all, this what I wanted to do, and it was up to me to make it happen.