

# Why IB - Student Words

Henry Goh, First-year at UCSD (Eleanor Roosevelt College), Human Biology Major

First thing's first: I'm writing this in the middle of my statistics class, so go ahead and judge my hasty writing, I did my best in the time available.

Now onto my real message. I don't think I should say whether IB was worth it or not; I think experiences can speak for themselves. During fall quarter I took a vector calculus course. Not all of it was easy, far from it in fact, but the entire class was far less confusing and daunting because HL Math and Mr. Maxey had prepared me to handle vectors. Even now, as I write his letter in the middle of my statistics class, I remember the HL Math section on probability. Learning things for a second time really makes a difference.

If that's not convincing enough that IB is worth the hassle, think about the HL History IA for a moment, however painful the memory may be. For ERC's general education writing requirement, we have to create and answer our own question about a time period in history using primary source documents to support our argument. I hope that sounds familiar. HL History has, unsurprisingly, prepared me for my college's history classes, while everyone around me has been complaining since day one. Even the Intro to British Literature class I took last quarter was a place where I could relax and relieve stress from my math and science classes because HL English equipped me, a human biology major, with the skills to get an A on my papers even though the class included second and third year literature majors.

Things won't be easy, but I'll take my level of struggling over the suffering some of my new friends are going through. Honestly, I'm sad to say one of them had to ask me "What is a rhetorical device?" They stay up to 4:00 am while I actually get sleep. They get stuck on understanding what a prompt is asking when I'm already writing the essay. They miss the days of high school when they could cruise through classes, while the seeds of genuine effort that I had planted in Great Oak now returns the fruits of my labor.

A few months ago I was waiting like you all. I spent the entire month of February, which seemed to last forever, in anticipatory anxiety. When March finally came, any excitement that I felt over my fast approaching future was extinguished by university stigmas perpetuated by IB culture, fear of rejection, and lack of college funds.

The best advice I have for you all while navigating this time is to consider all the possibilities and remember that sometimes the best things that happen to you are those that you could never have anticipated.

I had always wanted to leave California. I was stir crazy, so I applied to every college out of state that even remotely interested me. However when application decisions rolled in I grew more and more bitter, because regardless of the colleges' decisions, my finances were going to be the ultimate deciding factor.

At a time of my life where I was supposed to be the most excited, a time that would certainly never come again, I was dejected and honestly spoiled. I almost tore my family apart. Of course it wasn't worth it.

I had a lot of friends who felt the same way. They weren't seeing the possibilities open to them but instead the failures, the missed opportunities. I'm not saying it's wrong to be a little hurt when confronted with rejection or other circumstances, but I implore you all to not let it obscure your decisions moving forward.

Looking back, the college admissions process is a lot like dating. The rejections will hurt, but in the end, the universities that choose you, want you. They picked you over thousands of others, which means they know that you will be the perfect fit for them. And once you do finally choose your university or new path, you will feel married to it. I promise.

When I stopped focusing on everything I thought I lost, and changed my perspective completely, opportunities fell into my lap. I now love my university, and I'm certain that it ended up being the perfect place for me, even though it came unexpected.

I wish you all the best and both my sympathies and congratulations, because moving forward is always a little scary, but you will end up exactly where you are meant to be.

Genevieve

Hi Mrs. Casady! I saw your post on Facebook and I wanted to share my own (hopefully) motivational advice for all the seniors in your class. I'm currently in physics right now so I'll keep this short, but I couldn't pass up the chance to talk to everybody from great oak once again. I still remember sitting in English last year and listening to all that advice as though it were yesterday. One of the biggest things I took away from high school was all I learned through IB program. I know everybody's already heard that millions of times, but I never fully appreciated IB until my first week here at UCLA. I definitely think that IB is what makes the difference in applications. Here, it seems like everybody knows about IB, and so many people actually went through it as well. That being said, I can tell you hands down that great oak has THE BEST IB PROGRAM you can find. Nobody I've talked to had the kind of support and community you can find at great oak; from amazing teachers (like Mrs. Casady and Mr maxey) to the amount of IB classes offered to the sheer size of the graduating IB class, great oak IB is truly one of a kind. To give you an idea of how beneficial it was, I wrote a research paper for a history class last quarter in just a weekend (definitely not my best work). I still scored better than my classmates who had to pull all-nighters, and I have Mrs. Arban and Mrs Casady's class to thank for that. The tools you learn will make college so much easier. It may seem difficult right now, but I guarantee you will not regret it a few months from now. Where ever you end up, you will be miles ahead of everyone else. Take a deep breath and enjoy your last few months at great oak, because before you know it you'll find a new home at a completely different school. Axel Malaheuide

Hey Mrs. Casady! I hope all is well 😊 Here is a note for the Seniors (assuming they are IB seniors, if not, let me know and I can throw something else together!) "Seniors, congrats on making it this far through the IB program! You are crushing it, and you have all of the support from the alumni. Graduation is right around the corner and will be there before you know it. Make sure to finish strong and give it all that you've got. I promise that there is a light at the end of the tunnel! Hard work pays off. Once you get to college you will be more prepared than the vast majority of your peers because you challenged yourself in high school and did not just coast your way through. For the most part, college will likely be a lot easier for you than the IB program. Looking back on it, my memories from the IB program are some of my most cherished. (This is not only the case because I had the best high school English teacher in the world). Without a doubt, graduating with an IB diploma was well worth all of the time

invested. I made life-long friends, learned a great deal, and set myself up for success in law school and beyond. Enjoy your last few months of high school! Cheers, Sean Lobb Class of 2009"  
Sean Lobb '09

This upcoming year will be the time to reclaim, reconstruct, and reestablish the mosaic mural of your life. a time to confront and unlearn the systemic inequalities, institutions, and weak reparations of society. a time to practice self-love. a time to explore your ancestry. a time to experience the most beautiful human connections with the wackiest souls. a time of 2:00 AM conversations, filled with art, existentialism, and Nietzsche. a time of bliss, fear, courage, hope, and other technicolor emotions. a time to truly *feel* the wonders of life.

College is a beautiful journey, but it also comes with struggles. My narrative as a minority, FLI (low-income, first-generation) student came with a million obstacles. Thus, I'm rooting for every FLI student who is hearing this message. Know that you are filled with resilience, determination, power, and intelligence. The ability to work multiple jobs, speak multiple languages, and take multiple AP/IB classes is something you must be proud of! Don't be ashamed of your hard work! Be proud of your identity—whether you're a woman of color in the sciences, a FLI student in the humanities, or an activist in a racist society. Your place in this universe is unique, bursting with light and magic. *Never* let society kill your stars.

Frankly, I was sort of that weird, art-crazed student in high school, but you will soon realize that college is filled with people just as eccentric and odd as you are. Together, you will discuss impassioned topics, create visionary projects (that may or may not succeed), learn from each other's stories, and change the possibilities of the future. Maybe I'm just optimistic, but college makes you realize how powerful our generation is. We have the power to invigorate our culture's love for science, art, history, literature, activism, and humanity.

Finally, never let anyone dim your mind's burning sparks. During my first college quarter, Alice Walker took me to an orchestra. When I asked her why she chose me out of the entire class of students, she replied saying, "I find beauty in your curiosity". Her response made me realize that being a vulnerable human, filled with unknown questions and inexplicable emotions, is what makes college (and life) such a marvelous experience. So, ask questions, do things that make you afraid, embrace what you love!

Remember: life is not an AP test or test score. Intelligence could not be defined by a single perception. You are a complex individual, and I beg you to explore those complexities (in not only yourself but those around you as well! The souls you will meet will change your life in raw and remarkable ways. I'm excited to see how the class of 2018 will take on the world!

ALSO, Mrs. Casady's class enriched my life in so many ways. Cherish it! I remember crying on the last day because I knew how much I will end up missing it (which is still true! GOHS's English classes are profound and beautiful, and I wish I could retake it again!) ... Enjoy the simplicity, the mundanity of high school. It's such a strange time.

-Lora Supandi (She/Her/Hers)

GOHS | Class of 2017

It is so easy to get caught up in the idea that high school and your life at home is the only bubble that you are living in. It can be hard to grasp at first, but when you move on into college, everything suddenly becomes completely new in the most refreshing way. No matter where you end up, so much new independence is bestowed upon you and everything is able to start anew. I believe high school was the final push of those long, stressful nights of studying and worrying about grades, because since I have been in college I have largely been able to dictate my own schedule. There is so much more time to do the things you want to do and to focus on bettering yourself in the process.

The IB program is something that I am proud to be a part of every day, because with the knowledge that I made it through that program, I know I am more than capable of tackling college courses. I think it is definitely important to realize that the teachers in the IB program are some of the most supportive people that you are going to encounter in your school career. It could be hard to notice at times since Great Oak does such a great job with their faculty as a whole, but senior year is one of the last times that there will be a large tight-knit community that is there to help guide you and direct you in every way possible, so this is the time to take advantage of that. Listen to the advice that is given to you by your teachers because they definitely know best and it is something that will be greatly missed as you go on to your life after high school.

I don't have much time to write more, but know that everything definitely gets easier, and you are going to find a new home in wherever you end up.

Julianna, Berkeley 2021 (or maybe even 2020 with the help of the IB program)

Hi Class of 2018, First off Congrats on making it this far. Senior year pushes you farther than you ever could have thought but it also helps you to realize your strengths. First semester is rough, having IB deadlines, Papers, college apps, and various other commitments. I know how terrifying it can be to submit applications and worry about whether or not you "did enough" to be considered for a school you may have dreamt of for months or maybe even years. You are all very smart and talented individuals and college decisions by no means are EVER an indication of how smart or capable you are.

My senior year, I struggled a lot, both emotionally and academically. I gave up time with friends, family, and some extracurriculars to focus purely on academics because going to a top college was all I cared about at the time. I spent long hours worrying and there were a few spent in tears but I'm here to tell you that it does get better. It's important for you to understand that you are never alone. There is almost always someone else struggling with the same problem. You will be surprised how much you can learn about and bond with your peers during stressful times. Take advantage of the resources available to you :)

I was never the smartest, I was never a purely straight A student, and because of that I often felt overwhelmed. I questioned why I worked so hard, why I failed sometimes despite studying for hours on end. Failure is not the end. Failure is merely a way to help you grow as a person, student, and as a learner. Failing is part of learning and you won't reach your fullest potential if you don't fail at some point in your life. Senior year will push you to your ends and it will make you question literally everything but I can tell you that it will teach you more than anything, the beauty in resilience.

I remember the college decision month vividly. I remember sitting in your seats, in class, spending many days scared, nervous, and worried about what I was going to do if I didn't get into a top school. How I was going to handle the words "we regret to inform you" and somehow move on from it. Then it happened. I received my rejection from my dream school (University of Washington) at the time, and I was absolutely crushed. I thought that

was the end, and I genuinely believed that if I couldn't get in there, that meant that I wasn't good enough for any school at all.

A year later I am happy to report that I am alive, in my second semester of college, studying nursing at Emory University which is ranked in the top 5 nursing schools with Duke, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Pennsylvania. A year ago I believed I didn't deserve to get into a good school let alone Emory. I didn't think I would get to go to college anywhere reputable because of a number on a piece of paper and a singular letter grade on a transcript.

**PLOT TWIST: YOU CAN.** You are capable of anything if you are willing to work hard for it. Your worth and ability is not determined by a university. Don't let rejection determine your happiness.

It's okay to be sad and it is okay to be disappointed but it is never okay to let that dictate how you are going to live your life. As cliché as it sounds, one door closes and another one opens. There is always something better in store for you, you just have to be willing to believe it. Don't give up and don't lose hope!

I wish you all the best of luck with these last 3 months and just know you are going to make it through and you will all amount to something great, your hard work will NEVER go to waste. I can't wait to read about all of the amazing things you are going to do. Keep striving and keep persevering.

Lauren Darley

Hey Melissa. Hope all is well. I'm sorry I never got in touch with you to meet up I had some pretty stressful things happen which prompted a move across country. I sincerely hope and trust you and your family are in a state of positive healing. If you need anything or want to catch up please reach out. I've been thinking of you a lot lately and noticed your fb request. Just a few very hard lessons I had to learn throughout my career past the comfort of high school.

Hey Melissa. Hope all is well. I'm sorry I never got in touch with you to meet up I had some pretty stressful things happen which prompted a move across country. I sincerely hope and trust you and your family are in a state of positive healing. If you need anything or want to catch up please reach out. I've been thinking of you a lot lately and noticed your fb request. Just a few very hard lessons I had to learn throughout my career past the comfort of high school.

Hello, Mrs. Casady! I saw the post on your Facebook about the stressing seniors, and as I am now a stressful senior once more, I thought I'd share what I've known this far. First, there is no such thing as a perfect plan. You may think you know exactly who you're going to be and what you're going to do, but you're about to experience for the first time, truly who you are—without your parents, without your life long friends. You are going to be you. Second, Don't forget to think outside of yourself because everyone is going through the same thing you are. If you really hate your university but can see the light at the end of the tunnel, stay but don't torture yourself. It's okay to transfer. It's also okay to take a "Me-day", but don't let those be every Thursday because your professor sucks and you can never hear him anyway. You don't have to do greek life, but you do have to do something. You can find your people! Mine are in the writing center, not in a sorority. Third, take a minor in something you just love. It will keep you sane and you'll need the credits by the end of it. Nonetheless, it will all work out. All of it. All of you will walk across the stage and be who you will be. It's scary and it should be, but it won't be for long. Everything you have worked on and prepared for this far, is what you've worked for and prepared for! Trust that you are good and intelligent and ready, because you all are. Good luck, but you won't need. Katelyn Starbuck

I remember how much it meant to me when you read letters from past graduates, and I don't know if I can do those notes justice but I'll do my best!! Senior year was one of the craziest years of my life. You're first applying to all these schools that you aren't even 100% sure you'll like, and then you have to wait MONTHS to see if you got the chance to attend (not even worrying about money, family etc). All the while, you're overloaded with a crazy amount of school work while also trying to squeeze in every possible experience with your best friends, knowing you won't be together in a few months. It's crazy difficult, and anyone who says it's not is lying. BUT, no matter how hard,

frustrating, time consuming or downright awful this time feels, it's over before before you can even imagine. Before you know it you're walking across a stage to get a piece of paper that you've spent hours upon hours of your life earning, and then it's over. You're no longer a high school kid, you're a young adult going to college, into the military, the workforce or whatever path you decide. And it's worth it- the moment you finish IB exams it feels like they never existed, and you're off to the races to do the next best thing and to take on your next big adventure. The weeks and months between now and those few seconds on stage fly by- looking back on my second semester of senior year it feels like it never happened. When you're in your second semester I know that all you can see is the avalanche of work that seems to be barreling towards you, but i promise that you'll miss it. If you look around you, you're probably in a room with at least a couple incredibly close friends, and even if not you're with lots of people that have really interesting lives that you may know nothing about. I promise that every moment of time and stress that you put into your work is worth it, but while you're working hard don't forget to spend a little bit of time hardly working. Enjoy your friends, family and home, you are so, so much closer than you think.

Hannah Savin

I've never written a message for the seniors because I always felt like I had nothing to say to help them. This year I finally realized that I've made it through a lot. The IB program taught me a lot about the hard work I would do the rest of my life. I never would have thought that my test scores mattered so much, but ultimately they got me into my dream college for undergrad, University of Michigan. I was never the best student, but I always worked hard. I'm now in my masters program for social work at USC and working with troubled teens. I love what I do and I could never have done it without my experiences at Great Oak in the IB program. Good luck to all the seniors! You don't need to be the best, but your hard work will always pay off. Your future will be bright! P.s. if any of the seniors have no idea what they want to do with their lives, that's normal. Keep it pushing. You will find your passion in college if you haven't already. I know I did.

Bre Luke

"Sometimes in IB you're forced to question not only yourself but also your relationship with other people. It's terrible to compare what results you've made in relation to others but in this environment it kinda happens naturally. It's great to bounce ideas of each other and I love that about IB. I'm going to UCLA right now and I love it here. No matter what acceptances or rejections you end up getting, it never ever subtracts away from your personalities and achievements. Don't worry about a major. To me, a major is just a new lens to look at the world. Nothing is set in stone. As long as you keep changing and evolving, you will succeed no matter what. Contact me at +18583533986 or christineinsilence@gmail.com if you want some IB study materials I stocked up on from last year. I'm super proud of you for following in our footsteps. Come meet me at Bruin Day!! I'll be leading housing tourssss. Shout out to Alissa Chen, Hannah Lee and all my IB family!! Lots of love to Mrs King and our beloved teachers "

Christine Yu

No pain no gain. You've all heard that phrase before, but let me tell you it's so worth it. I understand how frustrating, how tedious, how painful, how tiresome everything can be. It's so easy to be negative, it's so easy to look at the circumstance right in front of you that you may lose sight of your passions, your purpose, your goals that you've worked so hard to get to. Don't ever let that happen! In times of uncertainty and stress, you must (all the more) look at what has yet to come.

No matter how many times you mess up and fail, get back up because there are so many more opportunities and things to look forward to in the future. Look at your failures and see them as a means for you to improve your character. Rather than condemning and criticizing yourself for what you couldn't do, see what you can gain from the experience and move onward. Overcoming adversity will help you face even greater obstacles ahead of you.

Don't look to the left or right, don't compare yourself to others, everyone is running their own race. How are you going to keep running forward if you're so caught up in looking at someone else's race? Sometimes you might need a break; it's a marathon that you're running; there's no need to rush.

It's okay to not be okay! Realize that there are personal limitations as to how far you can go on your own. Sometimes you just need to let go of your pride and admit you can't do everything on your own. No one is perfect. Bombarded with history notes? Juggling your sports, clubs, and extracurriculars? Don't have a clue as to what an induction proof is? Overwhelmed by the million things that are due and coming up? Calm down, clear your mind, and think of ways to handle the situation. There's always a solution to a problem. You're not alone! Don't ever lose sight of all the friends and teachers around you who are there to help! Mrs. Casady you rock!

Uncertain about the future? At some point, you have to realize you can't have control of everything that goes around you. Unexpected things happen all time in our lives, so don't freak out! Worrying about college app results, worrying about the IA due tomorrow, worrying about the future is normal and it's okay. However, don't let the worries and anxieties consume you that you're stuck in fear and you can't move forward. You will reap what you sow. Your efforts will eventually pay off.

Well that was a whole lot and it might take some time to process all of this, but these are just a few things I learned along the way. Senior year of high school has definitely been one of the most formative years of my life because it challenges and stretched me so much. Treasure and cherish every moment. After all, this is the last year that you'll have free public education hahaha.

Feel free to contact me if you have any concerns or questions for me :) [jaydenkang@berkeley.edu](mailto:jaydenkang@berkeley.edu)

Jayden Kang

"Hello Great Oak seniors of 2018! My name is Samantha Sellars and I am a junior Elementary Education with Special Education and English double major at Seton Hall University on the East Coast in New Jersey. I graduated from Great Oak in 2015, not knowing what was on the road ahead of me but excited for what was to come! I'm sure many of you are just counting down the days for high school to be over! You want it all to be done so that way you can move on to the next exciting chapter in your life. I know you're tired, I know you want all the work and stress to be over, I remember when I would say to myself, "I've already been accepted into colleges and I know where I'm going, why do I still need to do this work." But just know that this is worth it! Everything that you've done, read, discussed, every math problem you've solved, and all the other things you've checked off your list will somehow come back to you. I can't tell you how many times I'm assigned something in my college English classes that I get all giddy about because I read it in high school, even if I hated it in high school I know that I will have the upper hand in being able to understand the text. I remember sitting in my Algebra 2 class thinking "oh my gosh, why does anyone need to know this! We are never going to use this again" but there have been so many instances where I have laughed and realized that I have used them again, and again, and again. I find myself also realizing that I am so glad that I went to Great Oak because I had teachers who really cared about me (like Mrs. Casady) who just wanted the best for my future. High school is hard but you can do it, you can get through it! You are so close to the end

that you can't wait to move on to the next great thing in your life! I also want to remind you that as you're nearing the end of your high school experience, don't just get the work done but make sure to enjoy your friends, your teachers, the school, and any other activities that you connect with Great Oak because you want to remember these moments and don't just let them pass you by as you're yearning to get to the next step in your life. I know it may sound crazy but these are the moments that you're going to miss when college gets hard, when life gets hard, and when you wish that you were back in high school and could have that experience again. So don't take your high school experiences for granted and make sure you don't look so far ahead every once in a while and just live in the moment. You got this seniors! Be proud of yourselves for getting this far and for earning yourself the next step in your future! Just remember that it may not feel like it now but it will all be worth it. I wish you all the best of luck in your future endeavors! Go Wolfpack!!”

I apologize if it is too long, if you like it I can always cut it down and re-send it. Thank you for everything! As I am going through school learning how to be a teacher I often find myself looking back on my experiences in your class and hoping that I can someday be a teacher like you who makes learning exciting, and truly cares about us all. Thanks again! I hope you have a great day!

Sam Sellars

I love seeing this post every year. I remember it being so helpful to hear from alumni of how it is worth it. For me, this program gave me the opportunity to graduate undergrad in 3 years. That is a full year of tuition and expenditure that isn't added to my student debt. The fact that I graduated in 3 years instead of 4 also helped me get into law school. It was a highlight of my resume that I wouldn't have had without the IB program. I am now a student at Washington University School of Law and I was the youngest member of my entering class. It is stressful and a huge time juggle between a ton of different activities and requirements. Sometimes, it reminds me of my times in high school. In my experience, it is worth it because I faced the same stress again, but this time I knew I could get through it. I did it before. Of course I could do it again. So can your students. I mean, they do have you as a teacher, so they are already getting amazing experience that is going to be helpful in their further education. If anyone is interested in hearing my experience or just needs to talk to someone who has done it, you can give them my email [natalielewis211@gmail.com](mailto:natalielewis211@gmail.com). Thank you for being such an amazing teacher! Natalie Lewis

Hey Mrs. Casady, I hope you're doing well! For advice for your class, I would say that take a second to live in this moment without the stress. Life will never be the same, once high school is over, everything changes for better or for worse. Thank the people who support you and remember that it's never that serious. You will get into college, you will find your place, it might not be easy, but it is worth it. I have 3 midterms tomorrow and on days like this, I think back to sitting in your class and how stressed I was then, if only high school me knew not to sweat the small things, enjoy it while you can!

And know that you are loved and supported, Mrs. Casady is still the best teacher I've ever had  
Allie VonZup



It's been a trying year and it's only March, I'm sure you're all feeling the same. The last few months of high school are a sprint at a pace you didn't even know you could run. You're stressed about picking a plan for yourself after high school, I'm 3 years out and I'm still figuring it out (hint— you'll always be figuring it out). One minute I want to raise corgis and then next I'm diving head first into a career.

Life is kind of cool because I remember coming home crying to my mom senior year of high school because I was so stressed about where I was going to end up, who I was going to end up being, leaving behind any sort of comfortability in a town I had grown up in.

Fast forward three years, I'm currently sitting in an office in Dublin, Ireland stressed out because I have deadlines to complete. It's a different case of stress but this one I don't mind. I'll be the 1000th person to tell you it will be okay but it will be. Add in some extra self care tips throughout the next few weeks to get you through this rough patch — hashtag treat yourself!

Chloe Peterson

Seniors! You're about to face some of the most challenging months in your life. March 2014, I was sitting in my SL Spanish class, and my teacher was handing back our IB practice exams. Guess what I scored, a 2. My teacher left a note on my test saying, "I'm concerned about your Spanish, I don't think you will pass." I'm pretty sure she left a sad face on my paper. I was about to cry. Life was not heading in the direction I had originally planned out. I was not only stressing about IB exams and school, but I was also very disappointed in myself after receiving a rejection letter from my number college choice, BYU. On top of that, I was exhausted from waking up at 5am every day to attend seminary, spending 2 ½ hours after school swimming, and countless hours studying for my exams that I believed I was going to fail. Some of you may have similar problems, maybe some of you are facing other problems with your family, friends, or your boyfriend/girlfriend. What can you do? I followed the simple advice given by an animated fish, "just keep swimming." (I literally said this to myself over and over again during swim practice) I used all the last strength and energy I had to make the best out of my senior year. I received tutoring and advice from my teachers and peers and ended up passing all my IB exams and received a diploma (and yes, I passed Spanish haha). I found the best prom date ever and I still got accepted to a college. Just remember that these difficult moments are just refining your character. I learned patience and how to handle rejection during my senior year. I also learned that complaining wasn't going to get me anywhere. I readjusted my plans and went back to work. I served a mission in Mexico, and now I'm fluent in Spanish. I reapplied to BYU, and now I'm on a half tuition scholarship for academics. I just landed my dream internship at Merrill Lynch this summer, and I couldn't be happier. Reflecting on my time as a Senior, at times felt like a failure, and that my dreams were slipping away. Seniors, I would like to share an important quote my mom use to tell me (and still tells me this because college exams are hard) "you and I may be failures, but we are not quitters." Endure these challenging months that lay ahead of you, and don't get discouraged with the outcomes. You have plenty of time to achieve your goals and make a difference in the world. Enjoy life, take some risk, fall down and get back up! We all have faith in you, and if anyone can achieve their dreams and make a difference in this world, it's you. Andrew Anton

Listen up ya filthy animals:

"Pain is just weakness leaving the body" was like our wrestling team's motto or something but that's some major BS because they obviously never took HL history, HL english and SL chem at the same time while being an active member of 5 clubs and blah blah blah the point is the pain

is very real and what you are going through is not something to be belittled!

Know this, perhaps it will comfort you: a fellow IB alum and I both live in NYC now and we recently caught up (aka he let me crash on his couch while I was homeless.) We both went to top 50 universities and laughed our faces off at the fact that the hardest we ever worked academically was in high school, and this is coming from a dude who went to yale and studied architecture (not me, him; I studied creative writing & film because YOLO.)

All this to say, I know you're tired and grumpy and your mom doesn't respect the hustle but just keep sluggin' slugger because it's worth it. I was incredibly #blessed to be able to attend university on scholarship, study in London for a year, do a fully funded internship in Israel (where I worked for a commercial drone videography company) and now I'm livin out my dream as an aspiring comedy writer in New York. I say all of this to brag my face off to the moon but also to let you know that it gets easier and hard work really does pay off in my not at all humble experience.

ALSO: (warning: impending cliché about to enter orbit, prepare for involuntary eye rolling)  
ENJOY THE PROCESS. Never again will you be in hometown temecula surrounded by your peers all striving towards excellence so that you can go out into the "real" world and be awesome. And you will be awesome. The lessons you are learning now, the way you treat people, the way you diplomatically present an argument in a socratic seminar, all of this is forming who you are and who you will be and the things you will do, so don't take it lightly. What you are doing now is a very serious thing and you and the world will be better for it. So thank you. Keep it up. And also start drinking coffee now if you haven't already. It helps.

AJ Aldana

Hey Mrs. Casady -- take whatever sounds right for the kids this year!! Anything written here (<https://noteja.wordpress.com/2016/08/30/a-letter-to-the-graduating-class-of-2017/>) still really applies.

But for some new perspective, college is such a crazy, exciting place. First off, you're all going to kill these exams! It might not seem like it, but all of your teachers have set you up for success (trust me, I sometimes wish I was back at Great Oak because some of my professors are YIKES compared to someone like Mrs. Casady or Mr. White 😊 haha)!

When you get to there NOT A SINGLE SOUL is going to ask (or care for that matter) what your scores for your exams were. I know this is easier said than done, but instead of locking yourself away in the library or your room to study enjoy the little things at home while you can. Enjoy the laugh of your family or friends, take in the views of our little bubble of Temecula, remember the weird musty smell that some of those Great Oak classrooms seems to always procure. It's these small things that will make you feel the best when you're away at college.

And more importantly, people are really excited to get to know YOU. They want to see you explore your passions, they want to see what you do for fun, they want to know you for all the things that you didn't think mattered. What I mean by that is you probably think that your grades, your test scores and where you're going to college are the only things that amount to who you are. (1) Let me start by saying YOU ARE NOT REPRESENTATIVE of any single score, test, etc. You are all incredible people and are all going to make an impact wherever you go. (2) I totally relate to this sentiment, but I didn't realize how excited people are to see me for more than any class that I'm taking, or how many units I'm enrolled in. Because quite frankly, these things don't matter. YOU matter!

Love yourself. Love your body and nourish it with the things that it needs (i.e. sleep, healthy food, work outs, laughter, water, etc.). It might not seem like it, but you have more time than you ever will in the near future, so make use of it!

REMEMBER YOU'RE ALL GOING TO KILL IT!!! YOU ARE MORE THAN PREPPED!!! Much love to you all.

A.J.

Hey Mrs. Casady!

Just some thoughts for your current seniors, I'm wishing them all good luck because I know how hard things can be in high school and especially in senior year:

I honestly keep looking back to this time last year and I can't believe how much everything has changed. Last year was so incredibly difficult for me and I never thought things would get better and I didn't believe the people who said they would or that I could get into such incredible universities. I cried every day in October because I thought I was too stupid to be taking HL Math, I had to work too many hours a week at a job with a horribly cruel manager, and I thought someone like me who was the first generation to grow up in the US and had such a different background and life experience from most of my peers could never be successful. But

after months of stress and fear and trying to plan a million backup plans for what I would do if I "didn't get in anywhere," I started getting acceptances from everywhere and even being flown out to visit and interview at some of my schools. In the end I was one of the lucky ones and I got into and accepted an offer from one of my top schools with a full ride, which totally changed my life forever. I could never have dreamed that something like this would happen and every day I wake up so grateful for how being here has made my life better than I could have ever possibly imagined. I just got done with midterms and after taking so many IB and AP courses and juggling so many commitments in high school, I finally feel balanced and happy in college. So I think my biggest advice is to keep pushing through applying to schools and for scholarships and aid, balancing your outside commitments, doing your IB and AP classwork, and keep reminding yourself that somehow, something great is going to come out of this whole experience and you'll have grown so much after it all is over, this'll be so worth it. But also, my school's global awards officer just told us this as I'm applying for a summer fellowship- "success is different for everyone, not receiving this doesn't make you less successful, you get to decide what it means to be successful in your life; whether your definition of success is being a good friend or family member, making the football team, or even winning the rhodes scholarship, go for that"- so stop comparing yourself to others, you need to define what you're going to feel is success out of this experience for you, it'll make you feel much happier with whatever happens by the end of this year than tearing yourself up for getting rejected from a school or not getting a 7 on an exam.

With that, I'm sorry I've gone on so much, I hope you're doing well and good luck to your seniors, I know everything is going to turn out okay in the end for them!

Sincerely,  
Shahinaz

Hi Seniors! I remember very vividly the week Casady had to pull out these words of inspiration for us. There was an Arban essay, a Socratic, an HL math test, and Baughman had like 9 billion labs and biomanbio assignments all due on the same day. So trust me when I say I get your pain. I know how bad it sucks to have all of this IB stuff going on, on top of the stress of not knowing what school you're going to. And if I had a nickel for every time I said "IB isn't going to be worth it", I might be able to put a dent in the crippling student loan debt I am soon to be in. But now I'm here at UCSB and by the grace of God I did manage to get my IB Diploma, so I just wanted to hopefully give you some insight and let you know that you can get through this! In my own

personal experience, because of my diploma and the AP's I took freshman and sophomore year, I'm graduating in three years! Which is saving me like \$35,000! Make sure you do your research when applying to and accepting schools, though, because some will cheat you out of these well-earned college credits. But honestly, what's even more rewarding is the fact that I am I have a huge academic advantage here because of the hell that was IB (sorry Casady). IB ABSOLUTELY prepares you for the workload you're going to have in college, and when your professor brings up Things Fall Apart or when you have to read Zora Neale Hurston again or when your classmates are losing their minds over an 8-paged paper, you'll be chillin. So in essence even if you do choose a school that doesn't give you all the IB credits you deserve, you will have an academic background that puts you ahead of the game, which is invaluable. So now on to the fun stuff. From someone who had a pretty rough high school experience, I can tell you that your life is going to get soooo much better in every way when you start college, even if you didn't get in to the school of your dreams. I came to this school knowing literally no one, but you'd be surprised as to how fast you make really strong friendships. And if you pick the right school, you feel a genuine safety and comfort immediately. Plus, you get to go to free, super cool artsy liberal events like spoken word and drag shows twice a week, and it doesn't get much better than that. But even when you're freaking out because you have like an hour to cram for your midterm because you spent the weekend..... volunteering..... you know you'll be able to do it because if you can do 18 pages of Arban notes during intervention, you can do anything! Literally anything! Sorry for being so scatter-brained here (just wrote a lit midterm RIP), but if you have any questions or need help applying to or choosing schools, please please please feel free to contact me. Always stay open-minded: chances are, you're not getting into Berkeley or Stanford, but that doesn't mean you're not going to have a blast at the school you choose. Trust your gut, and don't let other people's ideas of what school you should go to determine your decision. The next five-ish months are really rough, but things are going to get so much easier when the letters start rolling in. But sidenote, remember that in March you still have a bunch of internals to do, so don't think that second semester is a walk in the park, sorry. Above all listen to your teachers, they really do want the best for you all, DON'T CHEAT, and get through May because you're going to be thanking yourself a year from now. Good luck, and have a great oak day!

P.S. UCSB is the best UC hit me up if you want more details

-Alexis Glennie

P.P.S. Casady and Clabes and biomanbio and all of the IB teachers are so so incredible, don't take them for granted for a second.

Harrison Kaeller

I'm here typing this up in room 138 of Southwestern University at 11:06 PM after reading MC's facebook post about your current 17/18 year old existentialist crisis that is

happening due to college applications and the endless amount of work that continues to pile up day after day. Look, I get it. Right now, everything you do is to get accepted into your dream school. The whole 'dream school,' concept is just a load of s\*\*\* personally. No matter where you go, you will be successful. That's just a fact.

More importantly, y'all need to stop thinking about the future so much. Live in the moment. Take a risk. Go outside your comfort zone. Hell, I got a haircut yesterday for no reason. I rode my bike the other day for five hours. You will have PLENTY of time in your future. I work twenty hours a week, have four classes, four club obligations, a social life, and get EIGHT HOURS OF SLEEP. It's magical. However, right now, y'all need to slow down. Some of y'all are counting down the days to graduation, wanting it to be over already. Why speed through life? For all we know, we only get one shot. You know, it's funny one of my kids the other day commented on how he wished "life could just stop," because he wanted to enjoy every moment with me and his group as much as possible. In fact, I wrote down what he said today, "Mr. Harrison, it's unfair how life goes by so fast. Why can't time go by slower?" Now, for the sake of plot, I will tell you that I didn't answer his question due to the fact that he is nine. However, why in the hell can't us older folks understand how complex we make life. Just take a step back, enjoy life for what it is. Talk with your friends. Go out on the weekends. Go dance around in your room for all I care. Just do something that makes you happy and keep doing it. The twinkle of passion in someone's eyes is so amazing because you see how happy they are. And we all know how rare happiness is right now, living in such a divided world.

Now then, take a step back. No joke. Look around your classroom and admire the novelty of each person in the room. Look at MC. Tell her she's fantastic. Go to every one of your teachers, whether you like them or not, and tell them they are fantastic. Now, look at yourself. Or think in your head, that's fine too. Think about how unique you are to the world. There is no person in the world that is equal to you. You are an equation that is unequal to anyone else in the world. That makes you special. And you know what? You're fantastic. I may not know you, but any Great Oak student is fantastic. Fantastic enough to not fall down and stay down, but get back up and keep going forward. Fantastic enough to help those that have fallen so they can rise higher. Fantastic enough to stomp over any obstacle in our paths. You're fantastic. I'm fantastic. We are all fantastic. Man... do I love that word.

Hi Ms. Casady, I hope you're doing well! I think your status came at the perfect time, as I was just reflecting on how happy I've been the past couple weeks. I will admit, though, I miss HL English. My friend read McCarthy for her writing class and discussing it with her brought back some good (and some bad) memories from last year. If I could tell your seniors anything, I guess it would be this:

If you still feel lost at this point in your year, don't worry. College app season was undoubtedly a weird, stressful, and self-doubt inducing time. I applied to colleges haphazardly, not even sure of

what I wanted to major in or where I truly wanted to go. I had no dream school, and I grew increasingly frustrated with myself for feeling so dispassionate about such an important milestone.

By the time college admissions came around, I felt proud of my friends who got accepted into their top choices, but I was also envious. Although I had fared relatively well with my acceptances, I felt underwhelmed by my options. I applied to most of my college as a Communications major, but by the time acceptances were out, I no longer wanted to major in Communications. I felt stuck.

As chance would I have it, I applied to UC Irvine as a Business Admin major. UC Irvine was by no means my top choice, even among the colleges that accepted me. I had always wanted to travel out of state, which I expressed to my family, so they all expected me to choose an out-of-state college. I never would have imagined myself staying in California, and it took a long time for me to feel good about my decision. However, as I'm closing out Week 5 of my first quarter (and entering midterm week, yikes), I can say with confidence that I made the best possible decision. My school is way more suited for me than I could have imagined, and I'm extremely glad that I trusted my gut rather than what my family (and I) expected from me by going out of state to a school that I did not feel distinctly passionate. I guess the point I am trying to make is that you don't have to have a definitive plan at this point. College apps and acceptances are not the end-all-be-all of your future. I ended up choosing a path that I had never considered taking prior to college acceptances, and it turned out to be the absolutely right thing for me to do. Have confidence in yourself and trust your gut. Whatever you decide to do, make the decision for yourself, and I promise that it will yield the greatest reward.

P.S. IB is worth it, I promise. Don't lose hope. And the IOC is not as bad as it seems!

P.P.S. I'm sorry if this was a little lengthy! I'm trying to put off studying for midterms.

P.P.P.S. (this is just for you, Ms. Casady) It felt really nice writing to someone familiar! Lately I've been feeling a little homesick because my mom has been hospitalized and it's been hard to be away from her and my brothers during such a rough time. Aside from that, I've been stressed about my upcoming midterms (everyone is so right when they say that quarter deadlines creep up on you). However, reflecting on the positives by writing this email has really helped boost my mood. I hope everything is going well for you and hopefully I'll be able to stop by and say hi one of these days. See you on Facebook! :)

I hope all is well at Great Oak. Understanding your ethic and the caliber of your current students, I am assured that all truly is flourishing.

After experiencing your challenging classroom dynamic for two years and benefiting, the least I can do is answer your call for advice for current students.

At this point in your high school career, being able to grasp reality is a great virtue. This may sound a bit weird, but think about the stressful mess you are currently in: the stress of college applications followed by the excruciating anticipation of that e-mail, the barrage of IB assignments ranging from IAs to the EE, and not being able to differentiate between your right and your left because of TOK.

From a more complex frame of reference many of you may be struggling with more meaningful problems in your personal life. Being on the eve of college decisions may stir up fears of rejection. You may be afraid of disappointing your family, friends, and, more devastatingly, yourself.

Quite frankly, most of us want the prestige associated with certain schools. Failure to acquire that badge leads to silly notions of inferiority. The idea of denial from our dream school is terrifying to us. How will the rest of our life fall into place if our dream schools escapes our grasp?

It's a storm of melancholy and trepidation. Luckily, the reality of the matter is that prestige matters almost as much as being a decent human being in the 2016 election (exactly zero).

Empirically, college prestige doesn't matter for many career paths. Generally, economists agree that attending college matters a lot for future earnings. However, they pay less attention to prestige as a college degree in general is invaluable. To qualify the argument, prestige appears to benefit prospective business students. However, this is not exactly related to the academic curriculum provided by the institution, but rather because prestigious universities tend to have larger networks.



Guess what? All schools have expansive and diverse networks eager to help their fellow comrades. You don't need a bachelor's from an Ivy League to speak with a professional at a mixer. Just put on your best smile and be sincere.

A year ago, I wanted to go to Georgetown University. As an aspiring public servant, why wouldn't I want to go to a school responsible for the production of countless successful politicians?

On March 27th, 2016, I received my letter of rejection from Georgetown. Inferiority and disappointment definitely filled my head. I had been accepted to other amazing schools, but Georgetown was my 'dream' school.

On April 1st, I received an acceptance email from my current home: NYU Stern. NYU had always been in the back of my head, but it was overshadowed by Georgetown. Now, I yearn to deliver a basket of fresh fruit to the Georgetown admissions board.

It's pretty damn cold right now. Might be the only thing I regret, but I'm getting used to it. Other than that, moving to New York City to attend NYU Stern is turning out to be a very positive decision to say the least. Not only am I studying my ideal major, I also have the opportunity to travel abroad to London, Shanghai, and Washington D.C through out my four years as a part of my studies.

But is NYU my dream school? Quite frankly, no. I love it here. I am incredibly happy and every day is an amazing adventure. But I would assert that there is no such thing as a dream school. The term 'dream' school suggests lack of imperfections. Who wants that?

Here's your hallmark card message for the week: your life begins when you exit your comfort zone and never go back. A great college experience will have happy memories, but it will also should have tribulations that catalyze your growth.

For someone who had lived in Southern California for most of their life, moving to New York City was quite the gamble. Take that gamble. Yearn for the experience.

It really comes down to this: experience over prestige.

Keep your head up, eyes clear, and, please, treat each other like family.

Hi Ms. Casady! You always do this whole college thing right around midterm season at Berkeley, so I usually just feel like telling the seniors to suck it up and deal with it because college is way harder, but I figured I would try and write something this year. I'm currently starting to think about law school applications and am going through similar stress. I think it's always stressful not knowing what your future holds, especially when it feels like the name of the school that you attend for the next four years will determine the rest of your life. This is not true. No matter what school you go to, it is what you do with your four years that matters. Going to a less prestigious school and getting a 4.0 looks much more impressive than going to a school with a better reputation and being mediocre. Don't feel like you have to decide exactly what you want to do with your life as a senior in high school. Sometimes it feels like there is external pressure telling us we need to have a concrete plan for our future, but really, college is there to help us explore new topics that might interest us, and give us another four years to figure out the rest of our lives. It is also important to keep in mind that stressing over what college to go to is a good problem to have, and that there are plenty of people who would love to be in their position. The UC Berkeley student in me wouldn't feel right if I didn't remind the kids of their privilege.

Natalie Bayer

**Montana Massone** Ms.Casady one of the best pieces of advice I ever got was in your class when you told us that college will be good because we are good. Everyone in IB is so hard working and you create such a family that you look back on highschool understanding that all the sleepless nights and studying were what gave you the friends you'll have for life. Ultimately the most helpful thing to realize is that their final days in high school should be appreciated and taken advantage of; go to all the events even if you think they are lame and hangout with all your friends cause you won't always live in the same town. Don't worry about it ending because your next chapter will be good if you throw yourself into it and the characters that are important will make their way into the next stages of your life without question. I miss Great Oak and my fellow IBers all the time but the people who were important stayed in my life (Im even meeting up with Andrea Henthorn in Italy next week)

so tell your kiddos that they are going on to better things as they have new experiences with the important pieces of their past.

Like · Reply · 1 · 5 hrs



**Devin Walker** I have a few little pieces of experience and advice to offer. Seniors, take it for what you will...

You don't have all the answers and you're never going to, so go into everything with an open mind and always look for what you can learn from every experience.

You can't lose something you don't already have, so be bold and put yourself out there.

Get out of your comfort zone. If something is comfortable it's likely because it's familiar. Get out of your comfort zone and look for new and different ways to be involved in whatever community you find yourself in and I promise that you will learn a lot about yourself through seeing how you engage others and the world around you in ways you haven't tried before.

Don't be discouraged by rejection or failure

College is a safe place to fall and get back up.

Don't take things too seriously - be the person that brightens the room when they walk in. People will be naturally drawn to you as a result.

Complainers get stuck.

Laugh a lot. Especially when things don't go your way.

Be humble in everything - and that isn't to say think low of yourself. Just don't be prideful. You aren't going to finish a race if you've only gone halfway and decide that you're done with it. Be happy with who you are, but never stop trying to be better.

Also, take heart - I have never had to use MLA format ever again.

Like · Reply · 4 hrs · Edited



**Jerimi Vindua** I haven't read through the comments, so I'm not sure what has and hasn't already been said... but go into college with an open mind! Don't be afraid to try new things.

Judgement from others is always scary, but honestly, most people who are with you aren't going to judge you. And those that do... well they're not worth your time.

If you're going to college with high school friends, don't be afraid to branch out! It's very convenient and comfortable going around with the people you've known for the past however many years before moving on to college, but once you're comfortable enough, go out and meet new people! You grow so much in college and part of that is because of all the new people you meet.

Your high school friends won't just forget about you -- you can always reconnect after some time apart (and if they don't want to reconnect because you "didn't make time for them while you were living life in college" then... yikes LOL), BUT it's hard to make new friends if you don't take the opportunities when you're given them. Literally, you're at a college with a plethora of new people you can meet.

One thing I regret during my first two years was not branching out enough. I had a very small group of friends my freshman year in high school because I was too timid to explore and a lot of us began to go our separate ways after dorming. My second year, I was too focused on school and I ended my second year with only a handful of friends (who I love dearly, but still... I wish I had more!). Now here I am in my third year of college, exploring new clubs, meeting new people, and adding on to my list of good friends.

Learn from my mistakes and experiences and live your life! College has been such a great experience (and honestly, if you didn't really enjoy high school like me, you'll love college LOL).

Mykelin Higham To the incredible seniors-

Two words: For Now.

All of the pain you are weighed down with from college applications and decisions, poems to analyze, science equations to memorize: only for now.

Your close friendships/familial relationships with classmates, the opportunities to learn from your superlative teachers, and the warm food and bed you enjoy: only for now.

In college/life, everything is going to change a lot more than you expect. It's great and awful and weird. Sometimes it feels like it's going to break you. Sometimes it breaks you. But no

matter what, things will keep going and they will keep changing and you've got to get out there and pick some figs.

Find people and things that make you happy, and follow them! Survive this year and be stronger, wiser, more likely to succeed. You got this. Everything in life is only for now.

Like · Reply · 7 hrs



**Nate Stutzman** Let them know that their success doesn't depend on which university they go to, but rather on their own skill and effort. Every university has great opportunities and resources beyond the classroom; you just have to find and utilize them. I think this can be summarized by one of my new favorite quotes: "Things turn out best for those who make the best of the way things turn out" (John Wooden).

So tell them not to stress or worry too much. Everything will work itself out.

Also, let them know that the sleepless nights and daily grind of IB is only temporary. College is much less work and I get an average of 8 hours of sleep a night (a shocker for anyone that knew me in high school). Plus, if they commit to learning the material in high school, then all of the pre-requirement classes will be a piece of cake since its the same information as IB/AP.

College is such a great time, but remind them to cherish and enjoy their last year in high school too because there's no going back. Oh, what I would do just to spend a day in a Maxey/Casady/Clabaugh/Arban's class one more time!

Basically, work hard, have fun, and it will all turn out great!

**Conner Curnick** Not everything will workout the way you plan it, and that's okay! Life has a way of throwing for a loop and still manage to make things turn out all right! So have a plan A, B, C, and D because you never know how things will workout.

Like · Reply · 1 · 10 hrs · Edited



**Quinn Balder** College is about taking chances, and you're taking a chance every time you send in a new application. It can be stressful, but by the same token you'll end up where you should be. I got rejected from my "dream school" and ended up going to a university that some would look down on, especially when you're in an environment as highly competitive as Great Oak. The important thing is to make the most of wherever you go, because every school has something amazing to offer. I took advantage of my opportunities and ended up

with an internship in Washington D.C. after just my freshman year. So yeah, take chances and apply anywhere and everywhere that you think you'd like to go, but at the end of the day just remember that if you go into college with a positive mentality you'll have amazing opportunities no matter what. Get excited!

Like · Reply · 2 · 9 hrs



**Doménique Madrigal** Tell them that it even though they feel up to their necks in work right now it will get better in college. I know all they hear is horror stories about how hard college is but honestly it is so much better and sleep is actually a thing in college.... Also IB is definitely worth it because coming into college with all kinds of IB credits has allowed me to take a Tango class just because I could and I am still ahead in credits that I need for graduation, so keep at it guys because it will seriously pay off in the end and it will help you so much in learning how to handle school work and your personal/social life and all the new responsibilities of being on your own in college! You guys are more ready for life than you realize and its all thanks to the amazing teachers that you guys have right now!! :)

**Justin Daily** Words of wisdom:

Lord knows I screwed up more times than I could possibly count. However, IB prepared me, and gave me the set of skills necessary to dig myself out of whatever I managed to get myself into.

**DON'T FREAK OUT!** There are troubles that you will encounter in college that will put any high school troubles into perspective. Enjoy your remaining days with your teachers and friends at Great Oak. Everything will work out!

Hope your year is going well! Thank you for your amazing influence throughout high school! I love following along and hearing about the success of your students and your beautiful family on Facebook! Here is a little message for all those stressed out seniors!

Be confident in the path that you choose. There were many times in high school, especially as a member of the IB program that I felt inadequate because I wasn't able to afford a prestigious 4 year university. A common joke among IB kids was "if I get a B I'll be going to Palomar or msjc" but despite the negative image that people had about those schools, I continued to follow the path that I knew was right for me. After being a collegiate athlete at msjc I was able to transfer out on a full ride soccer scholarship to Angelo state university in Texas. Flash forward to today and I am finishing up my record breaking senior soccer season and will be walking across the stage to receive my bachelors in communication and business administration after just 3 1/2 years, and did I mention 100% debt free! Lesson here is, don't let the opinions of others hinder the path to your future! Do what is right for YOU and don't base your decisions on what

everyone else will think. You guys will get through this, take a deep breath and enjoy the rest of your senior year!

Demi Tsambasis

To those fretting:

When I was in the same position you find yourselves now, submitting that application and getting those letters seemed like the single most crucial event in my life.

Perhaps you all may not feel the same way, but back then I think so much of my identity was founded on being smart and being good at school. I thought that getting into one of the best schools in the country would mean something. And for a little while it was; it felt like the greatest form of validation. That year, NYU was the top 25 university in the nation AND it was cool. I visited the school for freshman orientation and I thought, "man, I EARNED this with all my blood, sweat, and tears". I probably even thought, "I deserve this."

I basically lived in my college sweatshirt and I probably even introduced myself like, "Hi, I'm Katherine. I go to NYU." I loved that the name of the school could do all the talking for me. Humble, I know.

I'm sure all of you can feel, at this very moment, how much you've grown and changed from freshman year until now. Well, imagine that same short period of time...but now multiply that growth and development tenfold. Seriously, tenfold. The years between 18-25 will be the period of life (outside of infancy) where a great neural "rewiring" will occur and when personality will change the most.

Your values will change. Your interests will change. You'll add more and more events to your repertoire of what you will consider "life defining" (and I guarantee receiving these letters will get bumped way down on the list). And What DEFINES YOU will likely change too.

You want to go to Stanford because they offer this dual major that no one else does. Guess what? The average student changes their major three times over the course of their career (EIGHTY PERCENT OF YOU will do this).

You want to go to that small school in Portland because it's a magnet for the social scene you belong to. Well, chances are by year three you'll be totally sick of that social scene and develop into a kind of person who seeks something entirely different from those who you surround yourselves with.

You want to go to the east coast school because it's farthest one from home. Chances are, you haven't thought about all the air fare needed when one of those people you're running away from falls ill, or one of your best friends left in Temecula dies.

What I'm trying to say is that among all this great anxiety and uncertainty that's going on in your lives right now, there are two things certain: shit will happen and you will definitely change.

None of you are psychic. So the school you're going to chose to attend now will better fit the high school you and not the person you are about to become once you leave. So don't worry about it so much, everyone made that misstep too...and it doesn't even matter.

Because no matter how much I wanted it to, a school can't define you. And chances are you'll end up transferring or studying abroad or dropping out. Where you are just isn't going to matter that much.

Even if you're shooting for UCLA and end up at the University of Redlands, life is about to throw so much at you that you'll just be scrambling to stay afloat while learning how to be an adult and a decent human being.

What happened to me? Half way through sophomore year at NYU, my parents' business failed and they weren't able to get the loans necessary for school (even with the 50% academic scholarship I was on). Because it was comparatively way cheaper, I ended up paying to go to the University of Nebraska which had originally offered me a full ride my senior year but I had actually TURNED DOWN because I thought i had "earned" NYU. I went to Nebraska kicking and screaming. But it turned out Nebraska was the best thing for me at that point in my development. Because I was now a big fish in a small pond, I got into a cutting-edge research lab (that I never would have gotten into in New York), got good grades without trying as hard, experienced smaller classes (which equates to more rule-exceptions and attention). But beyond academics, In Nebraska I changed the people I hung out with which changed my outlook on life and the way I spent my time. I finally felt that great kick in the ass and began exercising and lost 60 pounds (which has had a GIGANTIC impact on my life). I also experienced an incredibly grief at the violent and dramatic disintegration of my family.

A lot happens in those four years. My mind, my body, and how I relate to myself and others changed. And, actually, it wasn't until I was living outside of the country after college that I discovered my most favorite aspects of my still-changing identity...and I assure you, my alma mater has nothing to do with it.

So just breathe and get through this final sprint now. Write the best essays you can and get it done. All I'm saying is don't go hurling yourself off the 300 building because you didn't get into the school that "defines you most as a person and thinker". Because it doesn't, it can't, and it never will.

Just buckle up for what's about to come. You've got have no idea what's ahead of you, but I assure you it will be both glorifying and darkening.

Good luck,

Katherine Vestakis, age 25



**Paulina Gonzales** I had this idea in my head when I was a senior that I had to go the exact right college or perfect college. The hardest but also best part of emerging adulthood (college and beyond) is realizing that sometimes your plans don't work out exactly the way you want them to and sometimes that is the best thing in the world that could happen to you. Wherever you go, you will learn to adapt and grow and change and if you have the right attitude and stay true to yourself, then it will be all for the better. :)

**Zoie Emery** Tell those hoodlums that if I can survive wedding planning and full time school, they can survive anything.

**Rachel Poulton** Tell them everything will work out-it always does! Something I learned from being on the college admissions side is that there isn't ONE perfect school for every student.

(And this is coming from the girl that bleeds UMass maroon 😊🍷) There are actually many colleges out there that will be a perfect fit for a student. I think that's hard for students to wrap their heads around especially if they are dead set on attending just one school-the perfect school. But there are a lot of perfect schools out there 😊🍷

**Stone Leachman** It's just about differentiating between falling in love with the idea and whether or not a school actually has what you're looking for. Idk if I'm making myself clear in that but my point is every school can help you accomplish your dreams, not just One

**Bailey Benson** Tell them that sometimes, you'll find the perfect school in a place that's 2000 miles away in a state you never thought you'd be in. I now want to live here permanently, I've met my best friends, I found my passion for my major. Also, listen to Arban, she'll probably be right about whatever award she gives you. I got "most likely to be seen on national television in full body paint at a football game", and lo and behold I now have my own football gif.

As a Senior at the true SDSU, not San Diego State, but South Dakota State University I realized how important it is to trust that everything happens for a reason. Do not feel like its the end of the world if you do not get accepted at your dream school- realize that there are better opportunities for you and a better university that fits you. However, you are in IB, you must be

smart, dedicated, and driven also the teachers have prepped you so well I guarantee that won't be an issue. If you choose to attend a smaller university- take advantage of the being the big frog in the little pond. You do not need to prove to anyone or attend Harvard or Yale just because it sounds legit and impressive. Even though SDSU is in the middle of nowhere, I've learned to make the most of everything! I never knew it actually got down to -20 degrees in the winter out here or the fact everyone but me grew up on a farm. Also, a majority of my professors ask students how opening day of duck or pheasant hunting went or they tend to share how they have to mow their lawns on the weekend. Going out of my comfort zone of moving 1700 miles from my family and friends and not knowing anyone my first day has been by far the greatest choice I've made. I have learned so much about myself and being able to embrace the different lifestyles and make the best of it! I am currently a NCAA Division 1 Equestrian athlete while a full-time student majoring in Speech Communications and minoring in Leadership and Health Communications. On top of that, I am an Admissions Ambassador who gives tours of campus to prospective students, a secretary of the Lambda Pi Eta National Honors Society and a member of the Mortar Board National Honors Society with a cumulative GPA of a 3.88! If you ask Mrs. Casady, she probably would have never guessed any of that to ever happen! However, that's because I took advantage of learning the characteristics IB has taught me- such time management!!! Give yourself a huge pat on the back for taking the initiative and being a part of IB- its not easy. It consists of tears, late nights, stressful days, and more tears, but know that it is worth every ounce of worry! It prepares you so well for college- more than I ever thought! This is such an exciting time in your life so take a deep breath and know that wherever you end up there's a reason for it. My mom still thinks I'm gonna transfer and ride for Fresno's team but I tell her she's crazy! Anyways, I always tell prospective students to tour as many campuses as they can to allow them to realize what they like and dislike while being able to picture themselves at that university. Whichever university you choose, there will always be countless opportunities and experiences for you to become involved in. Enjoy your senior year because it flies by but wherever you end up, embrace the change and experiences, don't pass up opportunities, and most importantly have fun! College is by far the greatest years- especially at SDSU. If you would like to visit South Dakota State University which you all should, I would be honored to give you all a tour and share how amazing it is 😊 take care.

Hehehe, hiii seniors! Happy Friday!

I'm a first-year in college, and it's hard for me to believe that I'm already halfway through my first semester. I think I'm still in the process of settling-in, and I've been taking my time with adjusting to the new environment. :) I think a lot of things in life take time.

I think senior year was my toughest year! Here are some tips / encouragement / lessons I learned:

•  
Acknowledge your feelings: Sometimes in stressful situations, people would tell me,

"Don't worry, everything will be okay. Just be thankful and happy." But that's hard – it's hard to wake up and feel thankful for the new day ahead when so much is on your mind. I also really don't like being unhappy, so sometimes, I would feel guilty about not being "thankful enough." I learned that it's important to acknowledge feelings of stress and disappointment. Sometimes, trying to suppress them or hide them can make them build up even more. So take time to recognize the feelings you may be having. It's also important to think about what you will do with those feelings, whether that entails being honest with a friend or reaching out to people and seeking help. Even now, I often find myself having to take a step back and slow down. It's hard to remind myself of the bigger picture/goal that lies ahead. I know it's hard because as seniors, the next step, as of now, is getting into college or planning for post-graduation. Mmm but maybe in the next few months, take some time to think about how you want to use this experience for growth and learning. What do you want to gain from this season?

Be mindful of those around you: Once college decisions come out (and for some, they have), it'll be exciting to share the news. But don't forget to be cognizant of those around you – your friends and your peers – because, for instance, your "safety" school may be someone's "reach" school. So just be mindful of your words and actions and even your thoughts. Celebrate with one another and be there for one another. I think this is really important.

Caution about senioritis: From my experience, the teachers and staff members at Great Oak will work hard until the very end, and you should try your best to try your best as well. They are taking the time and effort to plan curriculum and help you finish through, and I think that is something that should be respected and honored. They understand full well how it will be difficult to pull through towards the end of the year. I think senioritis is real, but constantly skipping class, trying to find "shortcuts" in completing assignments, and making excuses and lying to teachers don't reflect well on you at all. So be mindful of your teachers as well, and don't settle for the minimum when you've come this far already!

Also, the temperature where I am now is dropping quickly. It's been in the mid-40's all week, so please soak up a lot of sunshine for me~ Chelsea Ahn

I just want to start off by saying I'm proud of you for how far you've come to get to this point, but you're not done yet. I was in the same spot last year, and the letters past students sent in helped me so much so I hope this helps you. First of all, just take a breath and relax. It may not seem like it right now, but everything will work out one way or another. I had no idea where I was going to end up at college and applied to 13 schools across the country because I didn't know where I would get accepted or rejected. I am currently at Case Western Reserve University

in Cleveland, Ohio. I never thought I would end up in Cleveland because I wanted to stay in California, and quite honestly, I was terrified to move, but I sucked it up and made the move.

The entire first month of college I wanted to drop out and hated it, but I took a breath and realized that I have worked so hard to get to where I am and should appreciate it and am much happier having done that. This leads me to my first piece of advice, things right now feel overwhelming and you're stressed to a point you didn't even think was possible, but just remember how hard you've worked to get to the point you're at, and how much you have to look forward to. Take a deep breath and realize that this too shall pass.

Secondly, just remember test scores don't define you. Yes I got my IB diploma (barely), but I didn't get any college credit for any tests. Was IB a mistake or waste of time? No, because while everyone is drowning in college, I have a 98.7% in English because let me tell you, Mrs. Casady's class is much harder than college English, so get through this and you're set. Don't put so much pressure on yourself to get a 7, just do your best and let life take its course. You will end up okay, and you have a bigger support system than you know. Be confident in yourself and just remember, your life doesn't ride on one class in high school, you'll make it through this and just remember, "my mother is a fish" is a lot deeper than you originally thought! Enjoy the rest of senior year and I hope you guys all enjoy and don't stress too much!! Love you Mrs. Casady, good luck to the class of 2017!!

One more thing I thought of, I'm a nursing student at CWRU (pronounced crew, weird I know) and I've been working in the hospital for nearly 2 months now and I've seen patients from 91-44 years old, 409 pounds to 82 pounds, and had patients with diagnoses such as schizophrenia, dementia, constipation, C. Diff, depression, failure to thrive, heart failure, and the list continues.

When interviewing the patient about their life or why they are in the hospital, not a single patient mentioned high school, exams, or anything related to schooling for that matter. When in the hospital taking care of these people and when I found out the very first patient I took care of died, IB tests and my high school GPA wasn't on my mind. My point is, in the long run, high school exams or IB tests won't matter in all honesty. Even now as a freshman in college nobody talks about high school or how they did on an exam from high school. I want you to know that bigger and better things are on the horizon, you can make it. Things may be daunting now, but just stick it out and I will bet you anything that the stress you have right now won't even cross your mind a year from now. You can do this. Stick it out, better things are right around the corner. Also, thank Mrs. Casady for doing this, no other teacher does this for you guys, just make sure you appreciate her efforts and her soft side, you'll only see it a few times ;) love you Casady, best wishes class of 2017, you're so close I guarantee things will get better very soon!!

-Allie Von Zup

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To the Senior Class of 2016,

I want to begin this letter with: Congratulations! You've (almost) done it! You've survived over 12 years of standardized tests, endured the increasingly ridiculous requirements of the common core curriculum, weathered the coldest I.C.E.s (hahaha...) and mastered the art of starting a project the night before it's due.

And now you're a senior, deciding on which colleges to apply to, hoping to get into your top choice, trying to write an application essay that doesn't sound clichéd, pretentious, or depressingly pessimistic. You probably have a test next period or next week, some of you are retaking the SAT or ACT, a portion of you haven't completed your CSF and NHS community service requirements, a bunch of you have jobs, most of you haven't even started the EE, more than half of you have extracurricular sports or commitments, and I'd bet good money that almost all of you have a pile of unfinished homework sitting at home.

Breathe in...and out.

Because everything's going to be okay.

Where you go to college isn't the decisive factor in whether you succeed in life or not.

You are in the wonderful position of being able to apply to any institution you want, of even having the choice to pursue higher education. So don't be disappointed; apply to a good range of schools, and keep your options open. For those of you who end up in your top choice-- yay! You've worked hard, you deserve to be there, and that college is goddamn blessed to have you.

And to those who don't end up in your top one, two, or even ten schools (i.e. me, six months ago), you'll be completely, totally, perfectly fine. Better than fine. You're going to have the time of your life. College is what you make of it, so stop looking back and hovering over your rejection letters. Go into your freshman year with an open mindset, and I promise you'll love your college, so much so that you're going to forget those other universities even exist. College is amazing wherever you end up; it's full of awesome people, interesting classes, and incredible experiences. You get to decide what classes you take and when you take them, go on spontaneous food runs with your roommates, have mind-blowing intellectual revelations in class, and more. In comparison, high school is a really small bubble you won't even miss. There are still midterms and finals and hard classes and assignments, and you'll still have to work hard, but you're going to have a lot more fun and independence.

Which brings me to my next piece of advice: don't listen to anyone who tells you that IB wasn't worth it, because that's the biggest load of bull ever uttered in the history of the universe

(I exaggerate, but you get the point). IB is totally worth it. You might not really realize just yet, but Great Oak is a really, really good school, and Great Oak's IB is a really, really good program. Sure, your IB credits might not all be accepted, but the goal isn't to rush into and out of

college. You've made wonderful friends in IB, and you've been taught by some of the best teachers on the face of the Earth. You really have gained important skills and experiences that will help you next year: you've learned to manage an intense workload, Carnesecca lectures like

a college professor does, and writing the E.E. and World Lit papers was pretty much the same as writing the English essay I just turned in (my English class is reading *As I Lay Dying* next-- thank you Casady <3).

In conclusion, you're ready. You might not be as great as the Class of 2015, but you're a close second. You are all hardworking and intelligent and insightful. You can write solid essays in under thirty minutes and solve math problems that never occur in real life. You can memorize an astounding amount of history facts and defend your ideas eloquently. You can read between the lines of a novel and extrapolate its true meaning, even if it's technically just about clouds or sand or weird bird-children in baskets. You've learned to prioritize the things in life, and you know how much you can handle and how much you can't. Most importantly, you've (hopefully) learned to enjoy learning, just for the sake of learning itself.

So yeah, you're ready.

Love,

Julia Yuan

IB Alum: Four Tips for Current IB Fam

1. Utilize the IB community - everybody understands how hard and stressful it can be, and these IB teachers (especially at GOHS) are some of the best teachers and they all care about you and if you need help or advice or someone to talk to know that the IB fam and teachers are there!
2. YOU CAN DO THIS! Don't doubt yourself - I promise you can do this! And the study habits, the skills in note taking that you'll have built, will help tremendously in college courses (I can't believe how well prepared I am for my courses compared to some of my friends that may not have taken AP / IB courses).
3. If you ever need motivation, just imagine how amazing it will feel on graduation day when you get to don the IB tassel / stole. I don't care if you're certificate or full diploma, doing IB is

hard, and completing it is a tremendous accomplishment, and you should all be proud for signing up for it, for sticking to it thus far, and on graduation day you should be proud of yourself for completing it.

4. I know college apps are going on about now, but I want to remind you all to be humble. Obviously in the IB circuit you may feel more pressure to go to a prestigious school, but I will tell you right now, **DO NOT LET A SCHOOL'S REP OR RANK INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION ON WHERE TO GO!** Pick the school that you feel you can call home. Pick the school you'll be proud to call your alma mater. I was accepted by a handful of schools and I think I technically chose the one with the least prestigious rep / rank, but I could not be happier here. Why? Because rep and rank **DON'T MATTER!** They really don't. I chose UCR because it felt like a place I could call home, when I visited campus I felt so comfortable and it just fit me, and I will be so proud to call UCR my alma mater.

Megan Wells

Hi Mrs. Casady! Tell the seniors to embrace the friendships they make through IB and the insanity it puts you through. Some of the hardest classes...HL Math...cough cough....create the best memories. I mean who does not enjoy writing an essay on a mathematical equation. Also, IB is hard but that does **NOT** mean that college is easy. You still have to try in college, which



first semester of college I learned quickly. This does not mean that IB does not help though. All in all, just enjoy your last year of high school and know that everything happens for a reason! This is the most important phrase to live by during college decision making. Just know that you will end up where you are supposed to. By having that faith, it will make the college decision process less stressful  
Hannah Talpash

For all of you that are starting the college application process, let yourself be proud. Be proud of all the things you have done up to this point. All the little and the big things. Whatever you have been apart of on the Great Oak Campus, Off-Campus, or maybe at other schools you have made an impact. You get to proudly write down all of the wonderful things that you've done throughout high school on the college application. But more importantly keep all that you've done and all that you've learned close to your heart. Because when decisions for college come out it is so easy to see all the negative, when I can guarantee you there is so much more positive. Go after what you are passionate about, because interest does not equal intelligence.

-Be present. Put your phone down. In and out of the classroom. I know the football games are fun to take videos and photos at but take the time to soak it all in



- Thank your best friend for being your best friend. Because after you graduate they might be 2,000 miles away from each other and it's terrible
- Check out the smaller schools too, they have some incredible things to offer
- Don't be afraid to ask for help
- If you plan on going out of state, eat ALL THE IN & OUT YOU CAN
- Sleep. SLEEP. Sleep in your nice comfy bed, not in your car before school

Lastly, the University of Oregon is awesome, check it out. Become a duck, or don't. Just don't become a beaver. You can do it class of 2016!

Chloe Peterson

Hi Mrs. Casady! I don't have anything fancy to say, really, but I'd love to say to this year's IB class that it really does help. I see kids around me all the time complaining about how hard college is...but so far, it's been easier than IB, and that's the truth. Also, for earning my IB diploma, I got 30 units. With those plus my AP units, I came in as a sophomore! First quarter has been a breeze and I credit a lot of that to IB. College is amazing, and all of you guys will be benefiting from your hard work one year from now, just like me Juliette Asten

My experience of life after high school was a bit of a whirlwind but it always has a way of working itself out. Don't fret if you don't get into or can't afford the school of your dreams. I attended college for a year and a half after graduating Great Oak, but decided to take a different route after looking at the amount of student debt I was accumulating. When I was at Great Oak I got into the school of my dreams but had my scholarship taken away about two months before graduation due to something out of my control. I decided to move overseas and try college in another country. After an amazing year abroad I came back and went to school in San Diego, and after having to juggle two jobs and school I decided that I wanted to spend my younger years doing something that most people never do. I joined the US Navy, and I currently work at the National Security Agency just north of Washington DC. I get to do things now that most people won't ever experience or can't even imagine, along with getting to travel the world. You might feel that just because you worked so hard in high school to be the best, that you have to go to college or that if you don't, you won't ever be successful and that your work will be wasted. The things IB taught me still apply to my everyday life. Even though I am rather junior in the military, because of my high academic performance in my schools while in the military (yes they all count towards a college degree) I got an awesome opportunity to work with and be in charge of projects and missions that directly impact our national security. Not many 21 year olds can say that they get the opportunity to directly see their work save hundreds or even thousands of lives. I know I am not the only IB alumni to join the military, and there are current GOHS IB alumni serving as nuclear and computer engineers in the Navy, along with the other

services. Do not be afraid to explore and discuss other options. My life has been turned around more than once, and honestly I am glad that it did. I now do things that I could never have even imagined while I was in high school, and I wish someone would have told me that this was even an option when I was in school.

Feel free to contact me if any of you have any questions or are considering the military, either an academy, ROTC program, or enlisting. There are options for everyone and your academic achievements will not stop with school.

Dear students of Great Oak's International Baccalaureate program:

I am writing to inform you that you are in for a ride. No, I am not referring to the IOC that you have in a month. No, I am also not referring to the 28 days of IB/AP testing you will have in the coming months. I am talking about the slap in the face you will get in approximately 7 months when you cross the threshold into college.

I was once like you, if you never really had to study like I never did. Don't tell Ricken, but I never really read the entirety of the books that she asked us to. I tried, but not too hard, in most of my science classes. I was the cocky high school student you all are, sitting in your chair-desk combo in Casady's room, while she reads you this with the insistence that things are worth it in the end.

Now, some of you may want to have majors in the liberal arts. Some of you may want to go into the military. Some of you are perhaps choosing the noble life of a doctor. But, as sure as I am that there are people staring blank faced at a screen right now, there are a fair amount of you considering the path of the engineering major.

I want to start out by saying sorry. I'm very sorry. I'm really, truly sorry. You have chosen what should be considered the hardest major on your respective campus. You have chosen a life unlike the rest of your compatriots in your freshman class. They will have the chance to take a break and relax, you will not. For example, I study 40 hours a week, and I should probably do more. While granted I'm starting to ease into upper-division classes, life as an engineering major is hard.

Let me also introduce the harsh reality that you will fail tests. It would surprise me more if you didn't, than if you did. I once got a 10% on a midterm. I'm still working my way up to a B in the class, but that's another story. It's hard to explain, but there will be days when life is overwhelming and you feel as though you're drowning in schoolwork. Those are the days when

it's a great idea to take a break and watch an entire season of How I Met Your Mother on Netflix.

I know this all sounds terrible, but there is an upside. In an engineering field, I feel as though it's the only career where you can truly build and create the world in which you live. I chose my path as a civil engineer. I love the idea that I'm able to build structures that you live your life in and create those places that make up a skyline in your favorite city. I found my passion early in life, and through engineering I'm sure you can find yours. While it's never easy, nothing truly worth doing in life rarely is, and you'd be a fool to think that any major, at any college, will come easy.

To all the future college students sitting in the room, I want you to really think about where you want to be in five years. After you think about it long and hard, I want you to forget all about it. As IB students, I know you are all under the impression that you know where you'll be in five days, five months, and, knowing some of you, five decades. I was once like you and naively under the impression that you decide your life at the age of 17. But what I've learned through my first year and a half here at the U, is that life goes on, with or without you. So stop planning. Stop worrying about what university you get accepted to in Match. It doesn't matter in the end. All that matters is that you're happy, and that you find your passion in life before you find yourself at the end of your college career wondering where four years went.

Enjoy your last months in high school. Hug your parents, hug your cats, hug your favorite teacher (S/O Casady & Ricken), and maybe I'll see a few of you in Minnesota this August.

Good luck, you'll need it.

SKI-U-MAH,

Bailey

PS. Please go up to Assistant Principal Aimee Ricken and say the words "Ski-U-Mah, Michigan sucks, Harbaugh is an awful coach and I feel bad for you and your mascot-less team." She'll love you forever

Oh gosh, well I'll be honest IB did not give me as many credits as I had hope (I choose cal poly which doesn't have a good reputation for accepting credits of any sort) but man were my study habits a million times better than majority of my classmates. I actually became a study session leader this year (my second year) because I had so many great study skills built up already. Also I

didn't have to take ANY math, that was a relief bc college level math is 1000X harder (so I've heard). I got deans list 2nd quarter, and am at junior level standing, and I have not taken a single summer class. College is awesome. It is so worth the countless hours spent on applications. Don't give up. Find a school that fits, one that you love. I love it here. I couldn't imagine being anywhere else. I have really awesome classes (animal science major) so far I've gotten to see a cadaver, hold/dissect a heart and BRAIN A HUMAN BRAIN, I've seen the production of swine babies and then I actually watched them/participated in harvesting them, I've also seen a sheep get harvested. There is so many opportunities (not only classes but I have two jobs, and I volunteer at the animal shelter)and you are surrounded by such dedicated and intelligent people. Also you make life long friends, last year I met my best friend and we back packed Yosemite in spring when it was freezing and now we are roommates. I could go on and on about how much I love it. I guess my main point is don't give up, you're in the final stretch, and it's only up from there.

Went off on some tangents but I think I got the point across

Lauren Patterson

Sorry for writing so late I literally just got home from Mock Trial bonding at Universal Studios. I would like to start this by saying no one will know what IB is when you get to college. They will soon wish they have though, as you're sitting back with almost no homework and tons of units in credit. Upon entering my first days at UCLA, I conjured several fun anecdotes for what IB was, ranging from a cult with a high gpa to AP on crack. Yet, the name or program title really doesn't mean anything, the fact you can write an essay extremely fast and precise, as well as retain information better is the only perk you need. I have written quite a few philosophy essays based mostly on my TOK abilities and go to bed at reasonable hours on most school nights. In comparison, my roommate has not slept in days and is starting to worry me. IB will also give you this annoying habit of wanting to show up to class, which will greatly help you on your test, and put you head and shoulders above the people who have literally shown up to one lecture. IB didn't help me get into my dream school by any means, but it got me into the school where I am supremely happy and thriving. I am only happy as I have better time management and writing skills than most of my classmates thanks to the long IB essays. This has given me time to broaden my horizons and really find my place on this campus while still having every friday off. I have time to be on a club sport team, the nationally ranked mock trial team, and be in a service club. IB may not seem worth it now, with all the stress and ridiculous amount of work, but when you're sailing through college you can thank all of the amazing teachers who got you there.

If anyone ever wants to chat about college, see pictures of how messy my roommate is, or wants a tour of UCLA, message me! I'd be more than happy to mitigate stress or give hope in this undoubtedly stressful time. Best wishes

Karolyn's Kitkowski

