

THE CELAC STUDENT VOICE

A College Student's Life

by Afnan Kuriri

University is the mother of experience; it teaches students lessons for his/her entire life. My college life was tough and complicated. I had been suffering in many aspects for five years when I began studying for my bachelor's degree, but I realized that a college student could become stronger and more aware than before.

In the beginning, I was tremendously excited to be a college student. I finally started to catch my lovely dream of being accepted in the College for Applied Medicine. The school was located in magnificent scenery; it was placed over the bank of the sea. Students were reading their books while they sat on the beautiful beach. Although I had lovely moments there, I encountered challenges which I could not solve by myself.

The college was a one-hour drive every day. With this difficulty in transportation, I could not focus on my educational goals; I was unable to think as clearly as I should. As such, I had to set an obvious target in order to be a dedicated student. That was to focus and get higher grades. The situation was a mess, and almost all first-year students looked like ones who were chasing chickens.

Nevertheless, there were many moments where I was either in funny or annoying situations that happened while attending school. There was no public transportation, and I was commuting by a private bus. I remember one time when the bus was occupied by about 13 students from different places. One day the driver was going back home, and he drove all students at their home except me. I was sleeping when the driver stopped at my home and he thought that I got out.

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When he had to stop at his final place, one student said, "Excuse me sir, someone is sleeping here." He responded loudly, "Now, I should go to my home." I woke up and I hardly opened my eyes and said, "Where am I?" I was forced to wait at the driver's home until my father came to collect me. We were laughing hilariously.

The second incident made me annoyed. Being in medical college, I was studying medical terms. My father had been suffering from abdominal pain for two years, and I learned many diseases in my school. One day, I had found my father's hospital papers and I found that my father had Hepatic Cancer. In that moment, I wished I did not know any medical terms. This news was depressing and I could not pass it. However, there was a big gap in my awareness between first and last year. In my last year, I realized that all my educational challenges had made me a strong, optimistic, and successful person in life.

In conclusion, I have done a lot of success and I have gotten adequate knowledge that would help me in my future job, like passing the difficult subjects of neurology and physiology. These difficulties have created a very successful person.

Reflection Makes Me a Better Person

by *Chenyu Tang*

"Who is the best person in the world for us?" I think everyone has his own answer. also have their own cognition, more have their own opinions. I think, in this matter, perhaps some people say that their lover, or their children. I think it's our parents. And I know that because of what happened to me when I was 15 and because of that, I think my life is starting to get better. I began to reflect on my actions every day since then.

I was 15 years old, and probably due to the onset of puberty, I was becoming more rebellious. I started to get tired of my parents' discipline and to antagonize them. When they told me to go out for dinner, I locked the door on purpose. I turned a deaf ear to them when they wanted me to help with the housework. At that time, I often felt that they treated me badly and wanted to harm me. Now it seems that I was really not sensible.

During an argument with my parents, I blushed and growled and said to them, "You'd better leave me alone. I hate you very much!" Then, I slammed the door and left my devastated parents behind. But the amazing thing was that my parents rarely disciplined me after that. I could do what I wanted. I could get up in the middle of the night and watch TV, skip meals, and eat snacks. At that time, I thought I was having a wonderful time! Just when I thought I was right to resist, something happened next that made me change my mind.

During a physical examination, I was told that my kidney function had developed serious problems due to the long hours of staying up late and an irregular diet. If I didn't hurry up to get treatment, I would get uremia. When I heard the news, I almost broke down. I didn't expect that my rebellious behavior would lead to such serious consequences. I walked home distraught with the diagnosis.

At that time, the sun was setting, and the beautiful sunset allowed my heart to feel a trace of comfort. When I got home, I laid helpless in bed. I didn't know how to deal with this. I felt hopeless, and I began to regret what I had done, so I began to cover myself under the quilt in the bed silently crying.



For the next few days, I lived like a zombie every day. I kept searching for treatment on the Internet. A week later, I went back for a check-up. The doctor told me that my condition was still getting worse and that he needed to call my parents immediately. But I turned him down out of defiance. The doctor ranted. He found my home phone number in my file and called my parents to explain my illness to them.

Mom and dad drove to the hospital in a hurry. My mother held me and began to cry. I also began to cry. Dad asked the doctor carefully about the treatment. Then I was brought home by my parents. They asked for leave from their job at the company, and helped me to ask for extra teachers. They stayed at home every day to take care of me. At dawn, they would prepare a recovery breakfast for me. Then, they would take me out for a morning run, encourage me to eat on time, drink on time, and go to bed on time. They would go to bed after I fell asleep. When I saw their tired eyes, I couldn't help crying. I realized that I had been completely wrong. Why would I think my parents were trying to hurt me, and that they would be mean to me? I was naive. My parents love me very much. They love me more than themselves!

I reflected on my problems and understood that parents give strict discipline in order to let us live better, live more healthily. From then on, I began to listen to my parents carefully, take the initiative to share the housework for them, and gradually trust my parents. I know, in this world, if there one person who loves you the most, that person must be your parent.

Alice in Wonderland: The Au Pair

by Camila Fernandes

It was the summer of 2016 in the Southern Hemisphere, when a younger version of myself made a decision that would change our lives forever. A young lady with her life already planned decided to quit her excellent job and dive head-first into a journey to the unknown. Sometimes, what you are looking for is not necessarily what you will achieve, and embracing that gave me a different perspective on life.

First, a brief explanation of the “Au Pair” Program. The exchange program’s main purpose is to be paired with a North American family and exchange cultural experiences. It is a match-making decision for both sides; you choose each other. After satisfying the requirements, you are ready to move to the USA and be part of their family and take care of their children, living together as partners. I can hear it as if it were yesterday, people close to me, the ones that should support my decisions and be by my side, saying things like “Wow! But you are going to drop everything to be an Au pair?”, or “I don’t believe she will take care of children in the United States. What kind of choice is that?” Having people talk about your life without your permission sometimes can be an overly complicated situation.

In April 2017, at the age of 24 I landed in New York City. I wish I could say I was impressed, and for a half second, I was, but growing up in a colossal city bigger than New York ruined that for me in some ways. Yet, it was a dream come true experience. With sweaty hands and big eyes, I tried to process all the bright lights in front of me. It was hard to believe that I was so far away from the place I once called home. I was overwhelmed—one day I was in my home country, and the next I was an ocean away. During my first year living in the U.S, I had all kinds of experiences and the “first time” words didn’t leave my mouth for six months. Everything was new and felt like I was doing it or trying it for the first time, even the simple things like walking down the street, buying a pair of shoes, or eating ice cream.

I made great friends and met people from all over the world, but learning English, which was my main goal, ended up being left out. Learning the language was still something I needed to work on, but my mind changed completely when I got here.



Regardless, when my first year ended, all my initial expectations had changed, I came expecting to be part of the family, but the reality was far from that.

By the time I decided to change cities for my second year, I felt I had grown five years. Once I arrived in my new city, the first thing I noticed was the weather change; the high desert climate was strong and the dryness on my skin was something I had never felt before. A new place that should only be temporary changed my life all over again. I met a family who welcomed me and made me feel like I was one of their own. I was never expecting to find a safe place in such a random city like Albuquerque.

During my second au pair year, I grew close to my host family and had the chance to watch my host kids grow in life and lean on me in any situation, as if I was their big sister. When the end of my second au pair year was around the corner, I thought I had everything sorted out, and was ready to go back to my country. But life happened again, and all of my plans changed in a wave of new decision. A quote from a movie I had watched once said, “You know, sometimes all you need is twenty seconds of insane courage. Just literally twenty seconds of just embarrassing bravery. And I promise you, something great will come of it.” I like to believe that was what inspired me: twenty seconds of insane bravery changed the course of my life once again.

I overcame barriers I didn’t even know existed inside of me. My personal growth and maturity had exceeded my initial goals so naturally that I didn’t even notice it happening. It was as if it was meant to be like this. Looking back, now at the age of 27, I take pride in everything that the Au Pair program gave me—all the cries, friends, sleepless nights, the loneliness, the farewells—because that made the person I am today.

How to Live in High School

by Zhouwei Chen (Wade)

When I walked into the high school gate for the first time, I could feel a taste of books. The things I could see were unfamiliar objects. This was a special feeling, a feeling for a new environment. The sound of reading aloud came from afar, and the upper-grade students had already started class. Sitting in class, surrounded by unknown people, everyone had different emotions. Many people had smiles on their faces, and some did not speak but started to read. Others started talking loudly because they met someone they knew. I observed the surrounding situation in secret. I was extremely nervous because I didn't know what to do, but also excited as three years were about to begin a different life for me.

One of my deepest memories of high school was our sports meet. Even though I am a person who does not like sports, I still participated. I also learned a lot in the sports meet and I did a lot of exercise to prepare; therefore, exercise has reduced my weight a lot, and it has made me more energetic. Many times, I did not get the best results, but I gained a lot from the steps in the process. These prepared me for continued efforts in the future. So don't be sad when you fail!

Another time I remember was when the blackboard DDL was published. I looked at the manuscript, looked at the silent surroundings, and suddenly felt helpless. I wanted to finish the Blackboard paper with other classmates, but unexpectedly, my friend left. Only me and the cleaning classmates were left. I sighed and started painting. It used to be easy to write good words, but now, I wiped and wiped, and after a while, I wrote a sentence. When I finally finished writing, I looked at the blackboard, and the words on it were jagged and crooked, like mocking faces. Then I looked at the clock again, it was half past five. But I am still working hard. I found other friends in the class next door, and finished the painting using my mobile phone and the cartoon book I bought. From this experience, I learned that sometimes there are many accidents, but they lead to many opportunities.

After graduating from high school, I went to university and made more friends and learned more things. The knowledge we acquire is getting more and more complex, which also means that our capabilities are getting higher and higher. But I still miss the high school life when I used to know nothing.





Afnan

My name is Afnan Kuriri. I have obtained a bachelor's degree in Physiotherapy. I am a physiotherapist. My hobbies are cooking, reading, books, and adventures.



Camila

I am Camila from Sao Paolo, Brazil. My favorite book is *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte, and I enjoy rock music and cheesecakes.



Chenyu

Hello, my name is Chenyu Tang. I am 21 years old. I am studying Communication Engineering. I like playing table tennis and running when I am free.



Wade

My name is Wade and I come from China. What I like most is photography and traveling, testing different food from different countries.