

Difference-Education Program

Note: *These transcripts were edited to keep the identity of the speakers and the university confidential.*

1. People come to college for many different reasons. What did coming to college mean to you?

Panelist 1:

I've always been really motivated to learn new things and motivated to be in school just for learning so college is an obvious choice in that respect. Also everyone wants to be successful in their future job and I think going to a good school, just like [University Name], is definitely key in having success later in life in terms of occupation. In terms of family background I think my parents definitely had an influence. Both did get Ivy League educations, whether for grad school or undergrad.

But I'm also really lucky in the fact that my parents are supportive no matter what my choices are. So I think I could have gone to art school, or gotten some kind of technical job without going to college and as long as I was putting effort into something I cared about, they still would have been supportive. But I think the way I've always been really focused on school and really enjoyed it, I think it was kind of expected of me and it made sense due to my interests.

Panelist 2:

When I was decided what to do after high school, I guess I kind of just followed along with everybody else. I knew I was gonna go somewhere after college, but there really wasn't any deep-rooted reason for it. I never thought that I needed it to support my family or anything like that. It was just, from my understanding as a high school student, college was something that a good student was kind of supposed to go and do to support yourself in the future. And that was really kind of my main motivation.

As far as [University Name] goes, it meant a lot to me to come here in particular, because [University Name] has such a great reputation as a school that breeds students that are very engaged. So since I've been here, I've been involved in national and state politics and local politics. And I've also been really involved in improving the community at [University Name]. So, for me, coming to [University Name] also meant building relationships and contributing my own abilities and service in volunteering for my community and being proud to be a part of a lot of different communities.

Panelist 3:

Going to college has always been very important to me not only because a lot of the things I want to accomplish in my life would be impossible without college

but also because I don't want to miss out on the whole college experience and all the things that college has to offer. Also, my mom has been encouraging me to pursue higher education since I was a young child so it's just been expected that I attend college.

Panelist 4:

Since my parents didn't outright tell me that I would be going to college and studying a certain subject, like other kids, it definitely took some pressure off me. I still put myself under great amounts of pressure - to the point where my mother would tell me to not take everything so seriously - but not having parental pressure about college changed what college meant. Attending college meant fulfilling my own self expectations, not someone else's. I was motivated by myself, but also by the idea of making my parents proud of me. They would be proud of me as long as I was working hard at something, but I wanted to do well and excel to make them proud. My parents wanted me to make the choice to go to college for myself and do what was right. They didn't feel that they had room to tell me how to make my decisions, as they had never been in that position. Sometimes, that made it hard because I would have liked a bit of input from my parents.

Panelist 5:

By watching what my parents did for me as immigrants, it felt as if I had no choice but to prosper, no choice but to take advantage of all the opportunities that were given to me (and college was a really big one). Also, I always grew up with the notion that the only way to bolster myself in this country and in life in general is to earn an education of high caliber. In this sense, from my perspective, college wasn't necessarily a choice but more of a requirement in order to lead a successful and fruitful life. My choice was really how great of an education I wanted to work for.

College appeared to me as one of the most formative periods of any individual's life. Prior to it, your parents are in charge and you are their dependent. Afterwards, you're completely equipped with the tools to be entirely independent. That means that somewhere in the middle you have to figure out who you are as a person, who you are as an individual, and how you're going to lead your life without any sort of domineering influence or guidance.

Panelist 6:

The main motivator was increasing job prospects for my future. The independence that college allows a student to have- living away from home, living in an environment around your peers where you have to be responsible for the decisions that you make- that was also very alluring to me. Also to have a better outlook on life than my parents had; they went to college later when they were adults and for me to have a head start, to go to college right after high school and be able to get a good job early on is very motivating for me.

Panelist 7:

By attending college I represent more than just myself, I represent my whole family. In the Chinese community, the progress of my educational success shows how well my parents have raised me. Neither of my parents went to college. Because my sister and I are the first in our family to attain a higher education, I feel that I have a greater pressure to do well. I feel the need to meet the expectations of my parents.

Panelist 8:

Attending college for me is really about creating opportunities for yourself as well as really getting to know who you are. I feel as if people treat college as an opportunity to get a college degree, it's also really about the experience of going to college itself. To me, that's really what it's all about.

And there was also a lot of family motivation. Not that there was peer pressure but both of my parents are fairly well-educated and it was just sort of the expectation that I would go to college and pursue perhaps a degree beyond that.

- 2. Students can have a wide variety of experiences when they transition to college and come from many different backgrounds. Thinking back, what was the transition to [University Name] like for you?**

Panelist 2:

My transition definitely worked out a lot better because I live really close to home. I'm only about an hour away. So, when I moved on campus my freshman year, I was still close enough to home where if I needed anything or if I got sick or whatever, I would be close enough to drive home for the weekend and not be away without any help. That kind of eased my transition.

But otherwise I think my transition went really well. I think like anybody the first week at college, it was difficult gaining friends and seeking out friendships with people and getting to know everybody. But definitely, once I put myself out there, and met new people, my group of friends definitely became my new support group. And I felt like I could go to them and ask questions about anything, which really helped ease whatever other troubles I had with transitioning.

Panelist 3:

The transition from my life prior to college to attending [University Name] was almost seamless because I immediately immersed myself in campus life, kept myself so busy with studying, spending time with friends, and meeting with student groups that I never really have time to feel home sick. The only time that it was hard being away from home was when I felt that I was missing out on something because actually I ended up missing my cousin's sweet 16 party and my family trip to Jamaica which was really difficult because my entire family was together for both events and I was the only one who wasn't there.

I definitely was not expecting the social life or the student life at [University Name] to be very good but I was pleasantly surprised to see there was always something to do, something to see, or something to join. I was surprised to find myself becoming a part of all these different groups and not only feeling completely welcome by all of them but really getting to grow close to a lot of these people in these groups. By the end of fall quarter I had a group of international friends in [Group Name], a group of latino friends in [Group Name], a group of friends in [Group Name] and so many friends from different sororities, fraternities, and student groups. I had never expected to make such a diverse group of friends or to be a part of so many different groups. I was also able to meet so many people of different ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, and religions and this was really refreshing because my hometown is predominantly white and Christian.

Panelist 4:

My transition was difficult. I acted super confident about going to college because I was watching all of my friends go before me and then move-in day came for me.

I didn't feel energized in the beginning of the year simply because the transition took a lot out of me. What took the most out of me was putting up sort of a front - I didn't want people to see me struggling with the novelty of college or thinking that anything was wrong, even when I was overwhelmed by a new city, new difficult classes, and making new friends was beyond hard. I think that was a huge reason that I felt so drained in the beginning. I began to think of transferring and even downloaded applications at one point.

Overcoming these rough patches took time. Changing up my lifestyle at school was a huge factor. I joined a sorority and found a great group of girls and some of my best friends. Having friends that reminded me of home made me feel fully comfortable and put me at ease. A few girls in my sorority, who also were in a lot of the [Education School Name] classes with me, are a huge reason I stayed. The biggest factor, however, in not leaving [University Name] was realizing what an amazing impact that the [Education School Name] was having on my life and would continue to have. I found no programs that could quite compare and I knew that dealing with the occasional feeling of not belonging 100% would be worth it to continue pursuing my degree. The education and opportunities I came into contact with was too much to give up.

I learned that feeling connected would require some efforts on my part. I stopped trying to be the person I thought I was expected to be, and started the journey to become the person I knew I wanted to be. Now, I am in such a better place. I finally found friends and organizations and a school that I truly feel a part of.

Panelist 5:

When living at school, I didn't have to go home and worry about whatever problems were occurring there. My job was to be a full-time student and all I had to do was worry about that. So I think it was a very smooth transition for me.

Additionally, when I was unhappy at my previous university, I made the move and I transferred to [University Name]. While here, I faced numerous challenges to what I held as inherent interests, beliefs, lifestyle. I was challenged through my everyday encounters. I think being challenged and asking questions about what I have believed, and finding those answers, has led me to be an entirely different person.

I couldn't use a better word than 'formative' to describe my [University Name] experience thus far. I found that every choice that I make when I'm living alone-outside of the home is completely on me, so I decide what's right and what's wrong, I'm the one being challenged by different decisions, different thoughts, different beliefs. I think I've changed more over the past two years than I have in my entire life because never before have I questioned so much and then acted upon it too.

Panelist 8:

I'm an only child and my family and I spend a lot of time together. So it was actually really hard to say bye when they dropped me off for the first time. In fact it was the first and only time I've seen my dad cry. It was really difficult. Also, despite going to a sort of "college prep" high school, I found my existing study habits to be really lagging the college rigors and so really adjusting to both academics and leaving family and being in a completely new place. It was all really overwhelming for the first couple weeks and it was extremely difficult for me.

3. Can you provide an example of an obstacle that you faced when you came to [University Name] and how you resolved it?

Panelist 1:

I went to a pretty small private school. I think it was the best college prep that I could have had. And sometimes it did feel like a bit much because we were doing online searches for college as freshman so I got into high school going, "Why are you having me look at colleges?". It was kind of scary but I'm so grateful for the experience that my high school gave me.

But, it was definitely a big adjustment for me going into classes with 150, 300 people and learning really either to learn on your own or just to learn without the help of the teacher as much. I was definitely more used to individual attention so being in big classes were kind of hard. So I think my background of having really individual learning and a lot of individual attention was definitely a challenge because in college you don't have that quite as much.

I learned that even as a freshman if you want to take advantage of the opportunities they give you and the best professors, you really can. All it takes is a little ingenuity to e-mail a professor whose class is closed and ask, “Can I get into your class? I really want to take it.” And nine times out of ten they’ll say sure; I’m excited that you’re so excited about being in this class and you can get some really great opportunities that way.

On more than one occasion, I wanted to get into a class that I knew would fill early or that was already filled, such as a Humanities class with [Professor Name] and [Professor Name], or a class about the Nature of Plants. Throughout the year, I e-mailed the professors of those classes (found on [Course Catalog] and looked up in the directory) and told them I was excited about taking their class and was wondering if there was any way I could get in. Every time I asked, the professor ended up sending me a permission number to get into their class, so it worked out great. It also definitely helps to look at classes as soon as they’re available and e-mail professors ASAP.

Panelist 2:

One of the things that I remember finding difficult in particular was just figuring out which classes to take. Because I honestly had no idea where to start. My first few months were sort of all over the place. I applied here as Biology and pre-med and I changed that before I even got here. When I came here, I decided I was going to just do political science. And, at that time, I really didn’t know what classes I needed to take, if political science was even a major that was going to be good for me. And to make matters worse, I ended up taking a philosophy seminar, which was sort of difficult because my professor for that seminar, like every professor for [School Name]’s freshman seminar, was my freshman adviser. So I had to go to this philosophy professor to ask about what political science classes I should take and if that was a good major for me. And It was kind of difficult because the advice that I was getting wasn’t exactly tailored for me or at least the person who was trying to give me advice didn’t exactly know the best advice to give.

So that was definitely a challenge- just figuring out which classes I should take, what major was best for me, what kind of path I should take while I was at school. But it worked out, I figured everything out. My freshman adviser was actually the one who suggested that I transfer into journalism school because of my writing and so I ended up transferring to [Program Name] a year later and I’m incredibly happy where I am but that whole situation was definitely an obstacle right away. And because of my background, I didn’t really have a network of people or family or parents to go to and say, “What did you do when you were in college? What’s the best options?”, I had to rely on people who were supposed to give me advice on school but who may not have been fit to give it, like an adviser who may have had the best intentions, just not the best information. So that was definitely a challenge.

And I guess I definitely felt a lot different in that respect because I didn't necessarily have the best network behind me to make the best decision about my future.

Panelist 4:

Since neither of my parents attended college, I felt like there was a disconnect. It became frustrating to me to not be able to ask my mother for help. Other kids at school could talk to their parents about papers they were writing or classes they were taking. My conversations were a lot more one-sided.

Not being able to turn to my parents for academic help had great repercussions into my first year. I didn't know how to ask for help because I had never been in a position where there was someone available. Even in the beginning of college, I found it hard to ask TAs or my classmates for help understanding things I didn't understand. I was so used to doing it all on my own.

Once I came to [University Name], I realized that I didn't have to be strong all of the time and that these people had no expectations of me besides to try and put in effort in classes. After that, I realized that there was no shame in struggling or asking for help. It was a huge step forward in my life.

Over time, being able to use my peers as a resource was incredibly helpful. They are like, really great about going to them for advice, you know with classes, what I should be taking or any personal dilemmas I may be having. It's just really comforting to go them.

Panelist 5:

Learning to balance the duties to my parents and my sister with the duties to myself as a student. Because, to me, the grades and the success don't really matter much if my family feels neglected or if they feel that they need me and I'm not there because I'm too focused on my own thing- that's just unacceptable to me. They're really big players in my life and I want them to know that and I want them to play that role. But that becomes difficult when you have exams and midterms, especially on the quarter system, first two weeks are okay but every week until the final exam you have exams and papers and so on. I had to really learn how to balance everything.

Panelist 6:

Time management was another obstacle that I faced- trying to balance extracurricular activities with your homework and social activities as well; For example, I belong to Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity incorporated. I am involved in the executive board of [Group Name] which is the [University Name] black student alliance. I am involved in the National Society of Black Engineers and [University Name]'s Dive club. It was an obstacle that I faced to try to make sure that I had all of my priorities in order. And I feel that my background and boarding school helped me with those things because I was able to adapt to those

sort of situations instead of having to take a long time to figure out how I should improve on those things, I was quickly able to roll with the punches, as they say, and fix those obstacles that I was facing.

For me, I attended a magnet school in [City Name] for the first year of high school and then I attended a boarding school in [State Name] for the remaining three years of high school. And in terms of academically, both of the schools that I went to were challenging schools so they prepared me for having to think critically about the situations about the problems that would be posed in engineering courses.

Panelist 7:

For most of freshman year I felt a little bit lost. I was taking random courses and jumping from club to club not knowing for sure where I belonged. My parents pressured me to be pre-med, but I wasn't sure that medicine was the right field for me. I was still trying to figure out a right balance between my interests and what was practical. I wanted to please my parents but becoming a doctor was not my dream, it was theirs. But I decided to rebel against them in that sense. I finally decided to major in Economics sophomore year. I think that Economics will provide me the analytical skills that other majors will not be able to provide. So sophomore year was definitely the year I started to gain a better sense of myself. I took the time to sit down to plan out what courses I want to actually take while I'm here at [University Name]. I don't want the next two years to go to waste. I want to make the most of it. After talking to my adviser, I realized that I should also take courses that interest me, even if they are not related to my course of study. I want to be able to look back and say I was able to gain a well-rounded education from [University Name].

4. Did your decision to attend [University Name] affect your relationships with your friends and family at home? If yes, how?

Panelist 1:

Overall I would say everyone seems really supportive of my decision to go to [University Name]. My parents were both really really excited about it- they both visited last year during fall quarter and my friends have been great too. My two best friends came to visit for [Campus Event] last year which is really exciting. I'd say mostly it didn't affect my relationships with my friends and family and they've all been really supportive.

Panelist 2:

I really wanted to come to [University Name] and when I mentioned [University Name] to my high school guidance counselor, she actually tried to prepare me and say, "You probably won't get in". So right away, there was a stigma. There were a few other students that also applied to [University Name] and there was a few of us that did get in, But I was the only one who was actually serious about coming here, everybody else was from my school- all of the honors students who were

going to college, at least, went to [State University] – that was basically that the school that everybody went to. So when I said that I actually wanted to go to [University Name] I think everybody thought I was just trying to be elitist, that I was only going because it had a better name and not because there were programs that I was interested in or the size of the school was interesting or the closeness to where I lived appealed to me. Everybody from school thought that I was only going there because of the name. So it definitely affected that relationship. I think people viewed me a little bit differently. Even my high school teachers would ask me why I was wasting my money to go to [University Name] when I could get the same education somewhere else. So it definitely from a high school perspective it came from my friends, my teachers, counselors, they all kind of questioned it.

From my family, I think, they really wanted me to go where I was going to be happy. But I think, with [University Name], the big impediment was money—would we be able to afford [University Name] compared to [State University]? So I remember one instance in particular, we were at a family gathering and I was talking about how expensive [University Name] would be and how we'd have to take out loans in order to afford going here. I remember my dad got really upset that I was talking about that in front of everybody else because at that point it just seemed like that was something kind of private, all the loans you had to take out—it was almost embarrassing the amount of loans that we had took out because at that point we didn't know that that was kind of what most people do. You take out loans to pay for college. So that at first was kind of an interesting experience dealing with finances and figuring out how we would afford it and that kind of affected the family dynamic. But once I got my financial aid and once we figured out that there's a process you go through to afford everything I think it all worked out.

Panelist 3:

I feel like I'm still very close to my family even though I'm so far away from home. I've just had to make more of an effort to keep in touch with everyone. And as far as my friends are concerned it's been relatively easy to stay in touch with all of my close friends because we're always texting, talking on facebook, using Skype and when I come home we always make a point of spending time together. But it's kind of inevitable to lose contact with some of my friends just because when I am home I'm too busy to see everyone and unfortunately we've drifted apart over time.

Panelist 4:

As far as my family goes it has caused some strain. School puts a financial strain on my family. That definitely makes things hard. Another thing is my mom hasn't experienced college for herself, so sometimes she just doesn't understand a lot of things that I'm going through. So when I'm stressed, she doesn't get it.

As far as friends and the people I knew in high school they see the fact that I go to [University Name] as a big, defining part of my identity. The kids that I went to

high school with some of them know that it's a good school and they make sure to emphasize that to people that they introduce me to or when they talk about me to people I don't know. It makes me feel really awkward. Where I'm from, it isn't typical to leave [State Name] so a lot of kids from my high school end up going to in-state schools- so I think that actually has a lot to do with it.

Panelist 6:

For me, with my family they were happy that I decided to choose [University Name] because I'm from the [City Name] area so they really liked that I would be close to home and I would be able to- I wouldn't be too far if anything happened to me. But once I got to [University Name] it was kind of a pressure to come home often. It came to the point where my parents and I just had to have a talk and I told them that I needed to stay at school more than come home. Once they realized I was being pulled away from school, they stopped having me come home so often so I was able to have the independence that I needed.

Panelist 8:

My choice to attend [University Name] really was supported by everyone in my family. There was no sort of imposition by my parents, "you need to go to the university of [State Name]", or anything like that. It was like, "wherever you want to go we'll fully support you in any way that we really can" and so they were very open with it. There was really no after effect with any of my friends or anything like that so it was actually a really lucky situation to be in.

5. What would you advise other students to do with backgrounds similar to your own?

Panelist 1:

I would say follow your passions. I think it can be really tempting to throw them away when everyone is so career-oriented but it's important to remember that you do what you love to do and what you're passionate about. It's so easy to want to go pre-med and major in chemistry or be an engineer just because you think that will get you a good job. A lot of people that's what they love to do, which is great. But at least for me, keeping in mind what I really like helped me legitimize my whole English major. What I really thought at the beginning of the school year was I can't be an English major, what am I going to do with a job after school, it's not a good idea to spend so much money on a degree and get a degree in English which you might not have a set career. But I think even if you're focused on success and career-oriented it's really important to keep in mind what you like to do and you'll figure it out later- what you want to do as a job.

Panelist 2:

So if I were to start college again I think I would definitely start thinking about what I wanted to do after college sooner and start seeking that kind of advice as soon as possible. For a first generation college student, that to me is the biggest challenge. It's not necessarily like I said about choosing classes, that is something

you could figure out, but the advice that really matters, the advice that is really helpful that hasn't really come to me is what to do when you graduate, what to do with your degree, what to do once you leave [University Name]. If I were to start college again I think I would start asking those questions sooner and start finding the people who would be able to help me answer those question, like a professor or an adviser who I could connect with and who could help me out. So I would definitely do that differently, seeking that kind of help and advice about what I should do with my degree, where I should go after [University Name], I would have sought that out a lot sooner.

Because, I think from my perspective it's definitely kind of nerve racking to think that you might make a wrong decision or a wrong choice because you might not have the best information or the best advice. So definitely seek out someone, or multiple people, early, who have the knowledge and the background to help you with those decisions.

Panelist 3:

I would advise students to keep an open mind when meeting people and not to feel limited or restricted to just one group. As a minority my experience has probably been slightly different than that of a white student. As a minority student, I became really familiar with a lot of the minority student groups on campus and I attended a lot of their events. Although if I was not a minority I would not have been targeted to participate and probably would have missed out on meeting a lot of the people that I met in these student groups and missed out on going to a lot of great events.

Panelist 4:

I'd say just adjust to the changes and deal with it as it comes but don't be overwhelmed. I mean it's inevitable, at some point you will feel overwhelmed but don't let it get to you. There are a few individuals here at school that I don't know where I'd have been without. But I think along with that you need to realize that there's no weakness in admitting that you can't handle things alone.

Panelist 5:

Challenge everything that you've ever thought to be true. Challenge everything that people tell you is true. Although it may sound misanthropic or conspiracy theorist-y, I think you should find truth for yourself. So challenge everything, absolutely everything. It is our duty to understand and know what is going on in this world and what's happening before us. That's a major lesson that I've learned.

Panelist 6:

For me, I'd tell them that they should sit in the front row of classrooms. That was what I was told at the National Society of Black Engineers meeting the first week of school that you should sit in the front of classrooms and I never really thought that that mattered very much but towards the end of the year I saw a lot of my

previous professors throughout the year that I had throughout the year and most of them remember me because I sat in the front of the room, I was engaged. And I feel like though I didn't always do the best on tests or on homework, they still knew that I was doing my best in class, they knew that I was giving an effort and they appreciated that. And I feel like I have good relationships with those teachers because I sat in the front of the class, I paid attention, and I think teachers really appreciate that because you're teaching to an audience of maybe 200 kids, 50-200 kids and you know, some of them are asleep, some of them are on their computers and I think teachers really appreciate the students that sit in the front of the class, take notes, and show that they actually care and want to learn.

Panelist 7:

Because no one in my family had previously attended college, it was up to me to discover things for myself. I wish that I had not been so shy about speaking with graduates from my high school about college back then. I would have received a truer perception of what life on campus was like.

If I were to start college again I would probably tell my parents more about the things that I do here. They don't realize that there is more to a university than just attending classes. I would have liked them to know more about all the clubs and activities that I wanted to be a part of so that they would understand why I wanted to be on campus more often. I wish that I had allowed my freshman self to be more involved with student group activities on campus, so that I would have had the opportunity to be more than just a student early on. Studies are important, but I should have also considered the importance of playing a role, making an impact on the student body as well.

My parents had no idea what it was like, and communication was obviously key to keeping them involved. They were constantly worried, which made sense. I was in an environment unfamiliar to them.

Panelist 8:

I would say to them to take advantage of every single opportunity that you can. Even though you may be focused on just earning a degree because you're coming to college, it's definitely a lot more than that. It's really a life experience as well. It definitely teaches you a lot about yourself.

I feel that it's never a bad thing to know more people, to have more connections on campus and definitely, the first week or so during orientation when you're just put into this new environment and everybody else is trying to find their place, try and be more outgoing. I would try and be more outgoing and just try and meet as many possible people as you could because it could never really hurt you.

Even if you don't want to join their group just having the connection can be important. To be able to say, "Oh, I know the president of such and such group"- if someone comes up to you and is interested in that particular thing maybe you

can put them in contact with it. So it's just don't burn your bridges. That's one of the lessons I've learned.

6. What experiences that you had prior to [University Name] prepared you to excel in ways that you wouldn't have anticipated at the time?

Panelist 1:

One experience I had that prepared me for [University Name] was working on the newspaper my senior year of high school. This experience helped me talk to people I haven't met before, from all different backgrounds. It also really helped me to learn how to manage my time so that could get the paper out. Being editor-in-chief, if I wasn't on top of everything, the paper wouldn't be published. That definitely helped for my first year at [University Name], where suddenly everything is on you to succeed, and in order to do so, you need to be prioritized, organized, and responsible.

Panelist 2:

The fact that [University Name] seemed like such an improbable destination for me as a public school student, and the fact that I feel like I overcame the odds to be here, really prompted me to work harder and contribute more to [University Name] now that I'm here. I've spent a lot of time in student government here at [University Name], and I've actually met a lot of students who take their experience for granted. And, Of course, I'm generalizing, but a lot of students, especially student government people, get caught up in trivial arguments and debates about really meaningless stuff. And I think, for me, because of the tough time I had getting accepted to [University Name], I appreciate my experience so much more, and I want to cut out the trivial and focus on what I think really matters, like building a stronger community at [University Name] and making sure students feel like they belong somewhere. That's what's important to me. And I feel like, because of the nature of how I got to [University Name], I'm able to really stay focused on that goal.

Panelist 3:

I feel as though everything I've done up to this point has prepared me for success not only at [University Name], but in life in general. It's hard to pinpoint specific experiences because even seemingly insignificant events and experiences have proven to be useful at [University Name]. Something as small as a shared interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has helped me bond with one of my professors, while participating in various extracurriculars throughout my life has prepared me for leadership positions in student groups at [University Name] as well.

Panelist 4:

I've been through a lot in my life and am sure that I'm not alone in that but that defines everything about me. It gave me perspective that made [University Name] a lot easier to tackle. Midterms and papers seem hard, and they are, but at the same time they just seem like another drop in the bucket and I love that

perspective sometimes even if I occasionally forget to look at the world through it.

But sometimes you do have to fight your way up from the bottom and you'll be a better person all around because of it. These fights often happen when you're most comfortable. For example, I really felt settled when I started spring quarter but I ended up starting it in the hole. I took a history class that was harder than I could've imagined at the same time I had a sinus infection that lasted for over a month that I stubbornly didn't get checked out. I started out my history class with the grade of a C+. I'd never gotten a grade like that before in my life. Instead of being defeated by that moment, you need to use it- you use your shortcomings to fuel your personal growth.

There's always gonna be kids that took more AP classes than you or they had better teachers, they read more books, their parents could let them do more things, they went overseas more times than you. So to me, it's really about assessing what you have and moving forward from that instead of looking at what you could've done better up to that point.

Panelist 5

I didn't think that going to a different university prior to [University Name] would work in my favor. However, because two universities are listed on my resume, it often serves as a talking point and proof of growth as a person and academic. This could be in the context of interviews, talking to professors and so on.

Panelist 6:

One of the most unexpected college preparatory activities that I participated in before beginning college was my summers spent at summer camp. Beginning at the age of ten, I spent at least four weeks each summer living 4 hours away from home at a summer camp in Michigan. This experience allowed me to meet new people and bond with them in a short period of time. In college, I never had homesickness issues because I was used to being away from home. I made friends easily and I was comfortable with diversity. My time spent at camp helped me immensely in my adjustment process at [University Name]. The easy transition helped me excel at [University Name].

Panelist 7

I initially did not realize how often I would get frustrated with studying or anxious over schoolwork in college. There is definitely much more pressure now, though I always try to remember that I want to succeed at [University Name] for both my parents' sake and my own. As I've mentioned before, I feel that I represent my family. I rather that they not worry, but I am glad that my parents tell me that they believe in me. Their simple words of encouragement remind me that after all those nights of endless cramming and terrible midnight snacks, I can have a worthwhile future.

Panelist 8:

I was a transfer student at my old high school, having moved from [Country Name] to [City Name] sophomore year. The change was extremely difficult for me at first. I had issues with both adapting to American culture, as well as getting used to the school system. I think the experience of having to adapt to an entirely new system at the age of 15 really helped me get used to college faster than I ordinarily would have been able to.