

Narrative to decision: Narrative essay

Narrative to decision: Narrative essay

Amanee Garcia

Department of Interdisciplinary studies: old dominion

IDS 493: ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO PROJECT

DR. Gordon-Phan

November 16, 2023

Abstract

I have always been told that we are placed on earth to complete a mission and find the path that was created for us individually. I have lived my life with this mindset due to several experiences, barriers, and achievements. It is easy to say that everyone you meet will impact your life, albeit good or bad, and we recount the situation and take away what affected us the most.

It was 2014 and I had completed my first semester of community college at J Sargeant Reynolds in Richmond, Virginia. The college offered many opportunities for those that wanted to advance their education. Just a short six months earlier, I received a letter advising I was a chosen candidate for the Altria Scholarship. This scholarship opportunity was based on a high school essay submission and would result in a four-year full ride scholarship for seniors. My first thought was, “What could it hurt?” I didn’t want to miss out on the chance to go to college. My brothers and I were raised in a single parent home and the thought of affording college was paralyzing. I didn’t hesitate to submit my work and was proud to have taken the steps towards my future.

I was winning in high school but college was different and my grades were falling. I was learning to adapt and was excited to receive the letter from Altria in the mail. My heart was pounding through my chest in anticipation until I read the first sentence beginning with “We’re sorry”. Those two words together could not be good. I immediately knew that I was not chosen or something I had was being taken away.

The decision

Devastated, I laid in my bedroom thankful that I beat my mother to the mailbox. I needed that time alone to think. It took seconds for me to start weighing my options. Initially, disappointing my mother and biggest cheerleader weighed heavily on my soul. Immediately and instinctively following was an inner voice saying “This will never happen again”. I wouldn’t allow some other entity outside of myself to determine my future. I didn’t come from money so continuing my education through college was removed from the list of “what next?” My mother’s income made me ineligible for financial aid and even though she wanted to save for our education, life happened. It pained her to be honest but she didn’t make promises she couldn’t keep and for the first time, she wouldn’t be my go-to. She has been our problem solver since the beginning of time and her not having a solution was agonizing for the both of us. What to do? I instantly considered the military. Privately, I gruelingly researched the branches of the military and compared it to my wants and needs. I spent many days and nights talking to recruiters and reading. I couldn’t have all of my wants but landed on a decision that changed my trajectory. I joined the military! Shock is the only description I can give to what happened next. For context, my younger brother had been courting a National Guard recruiter for quite a while. My mother would take him down to his appointments because he was underage and we would sit and listen to their conversations and my mother’s many question. When it was time for him to sign on the dotted line, he had a change of heart and decided on the Marines. I was there to take his place. I knew I did not want to deploy, I wanted to have my college paid for fully, and I didn’t want to be controlled by the military on their base and be away from my family. The National Guard Army focused primarily on education and stated that after training, you go back home for good and only require one weekend a month as well as pay for school and related ancillaries. I jumped to my feet and knew that this sacrifice was what was best for me.

The sacrifice

The first day of Basic Training taught me that the Army was not a place that wanted you to feel comfortable or safe. I worked in healthcare, retail, pizza chains and waitressing and it was not anything like the training I got for any new job. Everyone was treated the same, regardless of race, color, origin, or sex because to them, we were just people that didn't know anything. The training and rewiring were punishing. Endless yelling, running, studying, memorizing, and calculated restless nights made us soldiers. Not all of us made it but we all grew in our own individual ways and collectively as a team. Our experience in being torn down and rebuilt to triumph against internal and external forces was empowering. The reward was advancement and traveling to our chosen jobs for additional training. I chose Aviation. Aviation consist of everything helicopter related that our country may use to protect. This requirements at this school were strict. Failing any test resulted in removal from the class and being kicked out of the field. In this field, timing is everything. Lateness and sleeping is prohibited and life threatening. My body was pushed to its limits and pressure was constant. Failing meant wasting more time that I already did towards furthering my education and being the first of my siblings to go to college. I kept the mindset of doing good now to be better later.

I must mention that I recognized an angel that kept me grounded during my time at Aviation school. I met a woman and she took me under her wing. This was a male dominated field and she guided me to see beyond what was in front of me. She shared the tools that was once given to her and explained the light at the end of the tunnel of success is a light that you create for yourself.

Fast Forward

Who knew that I would love structure? Six months after Basic Training and Aviation School, I landed back in my light purple and Tinker Bell green childhood bedroom on a tactical mission to get back to school. I felt accomplished having been trained to defend, protect, and provide for my country's safety. I applied back to school but this time with a plan to start small with a community college and transfer to a 4-year college. I researched to find my best fit and purpose and it is to fight for and help people. I take pride in being the source of help to others and guiding those that need someone to lead them to be their best self. This drive has lead me to be an Interdisciplinary major because my field of study hasn't been revealed to me yet but learning the disciplines of every major career opens your mind to many possibilities. I have had to apply different strengths to be able to be where I am today and my courses reinforce those practices and have me digging even deeper to gain new understandings of each subject. I want to lead and leading starts with learning more than one path.

Attending Old Dominion University after completing my Associate Degree of Science was my true start. Early on, my general major open the door for me to pursue physical therapy as a career along the lines of wanting to help people. That all changed after my first semester at ODU. This university was built to not only develop the student's mind but to build character and show true progress. ODU bolsters my belief that I am on the right path of not limiting myself to

Narrative to decision: Narrative essay

one field of study or practice. I want to be someone who impacts the life of their coworkers, employees, and peers.

Dream big or go home

Job experiences and the military processes have taught me how to listen. I grasped that those in charge served a purpose to meet a target, a function, or an agenda. They understood the assignment and were not deterred by obstacles or distractions. Those are skills. I also learned that being accomplished in your field or good at some things does not automatically make you capable of managing people or facilitating their growth. Interdisciplinary studies incorporates the fortitude of a layered complex major and the aptitude of an individual's mind. A study that combines both skill and mental awareness to accept and understand how an individual person thinks will encourage a positive impact on those that support me and are influenced by me in my future roles in society.