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Narrative Essay - Collegiate Journey

It all began when I realized that I wanted to go to college. Throughout my high school experience, I was never top of my class. I excelled in sports endeavors and anything to do with nature, but never much of anything outside of that. This is not to say that I was stupid. I was an average student, earning B's and C's, and never did poorly in any of my classes. I had always assumed I would be in some sort of law enforcement, nature-oriented, or blue-collar work in general. Again, I am not stupid but was just never all that interested in academics.

One day, I was with a good friend of mine taking a walk in the woods near my house. He was talking about visiting colleges and he was so passionate about what he was planning on studying. I realized that maybe I hadn't looked into college that seriously. I thought about what I enjoyed doing, and I came to the idea of pursuing a health-related career. I was told I have a good personality for the field. I knew that I did not like certain aspects of the healthcare industry, such as those found in the medical field. What interested me was the dental field. I thought that it was extremely fascinating and was so excited to learn everything there was to know about it. I interned at my local dental office the summer before my senior year in high school and loved it. I decided to apply to college in pursuit of a degree in Dental Hygiene.

However, after almost two years of studying in this discipline, I realized that I did not like it as much as I thought I would. There was not any room to grow; it was limiting.

Furthermore, there was only one application for a Dental Hygiene degree. So after a lot of hours contemplating and analyzing the pros and cons, I just felt that I was not passionate enough about it to continue my education in the field. As I made the final decision to drop out of the health science track I felt a huge relief set in. I think that deep down I knew that it was not for me after the first year, but the idea of being undecided or unsure of what was to come was so terrifying it helped me shut down the idea of leaving it entirely. I soon realized that this was a terrible reason to stay in a degree program and that I should study what interests me, not what feels safe and comfortable.

Next I fell into the idea of teaching. It was the same rush I felt at the beginning of health science. The late nights at the library were fun and the work felt more like independent research.

I felt as though I had found my calling. Similarly to the health science/dental track, people seemed to be extremely supportive of this endeavor. They were even saying how much they liked the idea of me being a teacher. I got support from my family, friends, and even some of my childhood teachers growing up, saying that it would be a great profession for me to join into.

Another thing that they were talking about was the benefits of teaching. Although teachers don't have any traditional vacation time, they have built-in vacations around the school schedule. To non-teachers, it seems as if working in the school system allows for several vacations.

Thanksgiving, followed by Christmas break or winter break, then there's spring break topped off with having the whole summer off. Sounds good when put in that context! They said my personality was good for teaching because I was patient and good with kids. I was convinced and shifted my major to teaching for a while. But I was unable to escape the downside of teaching,

which is not making very much money. That is not to say that money is the most important consideration when choosing a career. However, as a college student with college debt, I needed a way to pay it off and to live comfortably. A lot of the teachers I've met did a side job, such as real estate, tutoring, or coaching. At first, this seemed like a workable solution.

However, the idea didn't last long, due to my worrying about not being able to find a side job that reasonably supplements my income. I still had to finish out that semester in my junior year with my practicum. That included a 30-hour teaching assistant internship, so I still had lots of time to decide whether this was something I wanted to do. For my practicum, I got placed at a preschool in a little local Catholic school, Saint Patrick School. This made me fall in love with teaching all over again. These were some really good kids to work with and teach some very basic skills. I would go there two days a week for the whole day to fill my 30-hour requirement. The two teachers I worked with were extremely kind. After the practicum was completed, I realized that at the moment it was something I enjoyed, but the further I got away from it the more I just started to worry about all the things that I was worrying about before. Namely, that my passion for teaching was not there like it was at first. This made me question my major yet again.

With my time here at ODU running out, I was anxious that I would never find what I was supposed to be doing. I decided that since I was a decent writer I would take that skill and see where it might take me. I changed my major to English at this time. Through taking more English classes, I found a lot of pleasure in writing, and I realized that I was pretty good at it. I loved the creative aspects of writing and I also enjoyed the theory and investigative aspects. Thinking about what I could do with an English degree, other than teaching, had me stymied again. At this point, it was the end of the semester and I was headed home, unsure of what I was

to do next. Over the summer, I worked at a financial advising and money management firm. Though my position was low level, I fell in love with the industry, more and more every single day. I was able to sit in on meetings and surround myself with the culture that is the world of finance and investing. At this point I was going into my senior year and was only willing to change my major again if I would still be able to graduate on time.

I tweaked my major slightly, to Professional Writing, and took some business classes to further broaden my future career prospects. These classes have afforded me the opportunity to write professionally and have taught me skills in communication, ethics, marketing, and management. The teaching track taught me presentation work as well as patience and the health science track taught me perseverance, detail and tenacity. Through this adventure of trial and error, I was able to find what I enjoyed doing, and will hopefully be able to do for the rest of my life.