

My Four Years as a Forester: Advice to the Class of 2018
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Dear class of 2018,

In the blink of an eye, my Lake Forest College experience whizzed by. As graduation looms closer and closer, my mind is flooded with my favorite Forester moments: winning Alpha Phi Omega's six-hour dance marathon, hiding in the Physics floor bathroom for three hours to avoid being killed in Mafia, and bungee jumping in majestic New Zealand. I am sure you too possess such happy memories from high school, but you are eager and anxious to start this new chapter of your life. Although Lake Forest has been incredibly rewarding, I have faced many challenges, particularly as a science major, as I'm sure you will too. I hope to pass on a few pieces of advice:

- 1) *Accept the fact that you will eventually fail.* No, I don't necessarily mean literally. I mean that, at some point in your college career, you will disappoint yourself. As someone with a type-A, perfectionist personality, I am constantly demanding way too much from myself and holding myself to unrealistic standards. When I first got to Lake Forest, I was so enthusiastic and determined to leave my mark here that I expected myself to earn straight As, hold down two jobs, and be involved in a billion activities. I felt invincible, but this view eventually came crumbling down. You too will have moments of faltering confidence. Maybe you have to drop organic chemistry, causing you to doubt your dream of becoming a doctor. That's okay! Learning that you aren't good at something or that you hate something is a really valuable experience. Just because your life doesn't turn out exactly how you imagined it would be at sixteen doesn't mean it will be any less fulfilling.
- 2) *Maintain a strong support system.*
Since I'm from out-of-state and didn't know anyone when I first got here, I was extremely nervous about meeting new people. Even though orientation was pretty overwhelming and silly, I am really glad I participated; I met almost all of my good friends in my first few weeks at Lake Forest. Make friends in your major. The science department is a close community, so you will most likely take many courses with the same handful of students. I spent countless long nights studying for exams and running experiments, and having a friend there made these moments so much more bearable. Make friends outside of your major. You may need a push to go see a Lake Forest theatre performance, football game, or choir concert. I never would have experienced the diversity of campus life without diverse friends.
- 3) *Stretch the limits of your comfort zone.* When I was an incoming freshman, I never could have anticipated all the personal growth I would go through in college. Most of that I attribute to taking risks. The most rewarding experience I had was studying abroad in New Zealand at the University of Auckland my junior year. I am extremely close to my family, so the prospect of living on a different hemisphere for five months made me extremely nervous. It was completely worth it. Despite a fear of heights, I went bungee jumping, and without any background in camping, I joined the Auckland University Tramping Club. Every weekend was spent exploring the vast beauty of a magnificent country, and I gained treasured memories and lasting friendships. Take advantage of all the opportunities you can in. Study abroad. Apply for that competitive internship.

Explore Chicago. Join a club or a sport you've always wanted to. Become the version of yourself that you have always wanted to be.

- 4) *Take a deep breath and look at the big picture.* It is so easy for college students to get bogged down in everything that has to get done and develop tunnel vision. Life can begin to feel like a never-ending check list: write a paper, study for an exam, finish a lab notebook, study for the GRE, finish applications. But one night when you're up late, cramming for an exam, hyped up on coffee, take a step back and remember why you decided to become a science major. You are studying some of the most complex, fascinating questions that have captivated man's attention since the dawn of time. You will be part of the next generation of scientists that finds cures for mankind's most pernicious diseases, that works to prevent global warming, that unlocks the mysteries surrounding the origins of life. Every time I look under a microscope, I am awestruck that a whole other world exists invisible to the naked eye. Whenever I hold a human brain, I am fascinated that the key to human behavior, intelligence, and personality weighs only a mere three pounds. Science is really hard. But it's also really cool, and incredibly rewarding to study.

As I finish up my senior year and look towards the future, I feel many of the same anxieties I did as a freshmen. However, I am extremely grateful for my time here and know Lake Forest has prepared me well. Enjoy your next four years. They will go by so fast!