

The things that I most strongly feel are much easier for me to demonstrate than to speak. I can say how much I value my work with the soup kitchen here. I can enthusiastically proclaim my love of cooking. I can wholeheartedly pronounce the wonder with which I beheld Mount Everest on the single day when the cloudy curtain permitted a prolonged peek during my CC course in Nepal this past summer. I can proclaim my pride in the well-earned dirt on my clothes after two consecutive spring breaks working with a massive dog shelter in Dalhart, Texas. I can describe in depth the inexplicable joy I found discussing Shakespeare's *Henry IV*.

But in no amount of words can I conjure the warm coffee and wise company of a Sunday morning at the soup kitchen. I cannot simulate the peculiar smell that is my first indication that the oven there is once again on fire, nor the electric frenzy of rushing in to fan the smoke away from the fire alarm, while simultaneously attempting to salvage the flaming hams, lest we lose our meat course for the day. I cannot paint for you the sense of cohesion, community, and belonging fostered when 250 people come together to serve and share in a meal. Nor can I paint the concomitant sorrow of knowing that for many, there is no other option. I cannot do this.

I cannot verbally depict the rooftop breeze at a café overlooking Boudhanath stupa in Kathmandu. I can't recreate the curry and lemon soda I had there, or the delicious eat-at-your-own-risk yogurt, which luckily spared me its potentially unpleasant aftereffects.

Nothing I could say would describe my mixed emotions walking through the 50-acre outdoor Dalhart dog shelter. Nothing I could say could touch a fraction of the reality. The kennels of more than 800 dogs literally extend to the horizon. In my imagination I can hardly recall the full scope of the place, or the feeling of being watched by hundreds of barking dogs waiting for me to fill their food bowls. Someday I will adopt a dog in Dalhart, Texas.

I suppose I could actually recreate for you my enthusiasm for discussing *Henry IV*, I could perhaps elaborate on my practical admiration of the pseudo-fool Falstaff, or my fascination with jester characters throughout Shakespeare's plays... but maybe it is better if I spare you these words for the moment.

I guess this is a rather roundabout way to say that I can neither quantify nor describe the great opportunities that I have had at Colorado College. I cannot express with words the things that I never expected to do, think, or see that I have done, thought, and seen. My words are at best mediocre signifiers of memories and emotions that have transformed me over the past four years in ways that I cannot yet comprehend. I can tell you all the details in the world, but I cannot really convey what CC has done for me. The classes and clubs, the friends and discussions... the true impact of these is engrained in my very being. And consequently, the greatest ways in which CC affected me are inexpressible. But I will try to give you an idea.

I grew up in Oak park, Illinois, two blocks from the Western boundary of Chicago. In high school I ran track and cross country, and also swam for one year. I was a decent runner and an abysmal swimmer. I literally hit my head on the floor of the pool while trying to turn around in three separate races. I was a good student and I challenged myself moderately in class. I was a shy kid. My life was encompassed almost entirely by school and sports. I was not particularly proactive in my college choice, I sent in applications to the schools that my parents and counselors suggested, but I did not think too much about where I would go to college. I knew going in that it was going to come down to the money.

I came to CC because it was my most affordable option. With financial aid and scholarships, it was more cost effective to attend Colorado College, transportation included, than to attend the University of Illinois. And thank god for that. CC opened up the world to me. I

found classes, clubs, and friends that reshaped my perception of everything. By the beginning of my Sophomore year, I was managing the on-campus soup kitchen, an organization with which I had volunteered extensively during my freshman year. I was also co-chair of CC's Queer Straight Alliance and a member of the grassroots living learning community. I routinely participated in and led service trips. I have persisted and grown with these activities since then. They have taught me to interact with a wide variety of people in a wide variety of situations. I have learned to assess situations not by my predisposition, but by my ongoing experience. I have learned how to act in order to move an organization in a positive direction and how to adapt when an event does not pan out as anticipated. I have learned to listen to everyone who had something to say, and I have learned the value of listening even when I cannot possibly provide a solution to the problem presented.

In the classroom I pursued subjects ranging from plant biology to the history of art during the Dutch Republic. I found great joy working with 3000-year-old human remains during my Human Osteology class, cleaning and identifying the tiniest fragments of bone. I eventually declared an anthropology major when I realized at the start of last year that I had already taken  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the courses in the major. But some of my greatest experiences have been with courses entirely unrelated to my major. The drama course I took in London two years ago, in which we saw and discussed plays daily, transformed the way I approach literature and the way I view the world. The art history course in Venice this past year similarly redefined my view of the world. Last summer's course in Nepal was mind blowing.

I have heard that the liberal arts education is designed to prepare students for every situation they will encounter in their lives. As much as my courses and extracurricular experiences have given me specific knowledge, they have provided me with a toolkit for

approaching every challenge with confidence and enthusiasm. CC offered me wonderful classes under excellent professors, but further, it gave me a chance to see the world and to lead. This school trusted me and other students to coordinate a weekly soup kitchen where if we failed we would leave 150 dependent guests hungry any given week. The school gave us resources and a support network, and let us run with it. And we excelled. For twenty years now the soup kitchen has never missed a Sunday. The school took a risk putting such a socially significant operation in student hands. I'd like to think that we lived up to the challenge they posed. CC challenges every student organization and trip with the burden of responsibility. And time and time again, the students here prove themselves worthy of the challenge.

It is great to attend a school willing to take a risk. It is great to attend a school where students are encouraged to pursue great opportunity and assume great responsibility. Colorado College presents a broad field of chances to excel and gives each student the resources that she or he needs to explore their passions. This to me, is what makes CC great. This is why I feel so incredibly lucky to have been accepted and received the funding that I needed to attend Colorado College. Not every school places such confidence in its students, but it seems to me that the key to excellence is in the willingness to take risks, to give students the resources and support to do unexpected and extraordinary things. CC takes risks. The block plan itself was a risk, and it has proven itself mightily worth while. This is what sets Colorado College apart, and I sincerely hope that the college will retain its spirit of individuality and exploration in the future. When I graduate this year, I will leave with confidence and pride. I feel that I know how to question, address, and improve the world that I will enter.

Working as an admissions fellow this year, I have had the opportunity to meet and interview many of next year's prospective students. The candidates for the class of 2016 are

spectacular. I have never seen so many vibrant, eloquent, and intelligent young people. Some students have accomplished so much already that I can only marvel at their futures. I wish that I were around to behold their growth and impact at CC. This is a great school, and each successive generation of CC students promises to continuously transform and redefine that greatness. The future reflected in the prospective students that I have had the privilege to meet is a great future indeed.

Looking forward, I can only envision CC prospering. With new waves of vibrant, brilliant students every year, how could we not? But among this new cohort, perhaps the most compelling, the most promising, will be those with the greatest need. I sometimes worry, however, that in an environment of ever increasing academic competition, those students of great need who have most enriched CC and have been most enriched by CC will be crowded out by those with greater privilege and social access. I fear that as the number of expected AP classes in high school perpetually rises, as the standards for admission in schools across the country grow ever tighter, that only students of great privilege will have the resources to build the prerequisite resume for college admission. I fear that it will become harder and harder for potentially great students to compete against the gilded resumes of average valedictorians. If this were to happen at CC, if we stopped taking risks on the potentially great students in favor of the safer, more polished candidates, everything that I believe about this school would crumble nightmarishly beneath me.

But even as I fear the consequences of privilege and disparity in education, I hold in my heart an inextinguishable hope. I, after all, was provided for. CC has given me the world. But CC was given to me. You all in the audience, you did this for me. It is because of your generosity and faith in this school's mission and in its students that I am here, that any of us

scholarship recipients are here. I would never have made it to this podium if not for your dedication to Colorado College and to taking risks on students who could not make it this far on their own. Working with admissions this year, I have developed a great confidence that CC will always have a place for students like myself. They are doing their part to ensure the perpetuation and improvement of Colorado College as a truly unique community. But you, you more than anything else reassure me that the future here will be more vibrant than the present. Your contributions in scholarships and aid are critical to the Colorado College that I know, and the surety of the funds that you have created dispels the fear in my mind. Students like me will be able to come to CC in the future. I cannot possibly express my gratitude for that – which brings me back to the start:

The things that I most strongly feel are much easier for me to demonstrate than to speak. Nonetheless, on behalf of myself, my fellows, and the vibrant students who are yet to come, I would like to offer you the sincerest thanks that words can convey. And know that the true value of that is deeper than I can express. Thank you.

Slow down the pace, enunciate. Mark your pauses. Adjust the mic, say ‘can you all hear me?’