

## Fall 2015 Narrative

I like learning about everything. Specifically, I take special interest in mathematics, social studies, music, sports, and philosophy. I am majoring in mathematics, but other than classwork, I also do recreational mathematics. Since sixth grade, I was interested in patterns, especially square numbers. Over the years, including this fall, I have accumulated several patterns and done independent research, from which I hope I can jumpstart future research in the area of number theory. This year, I participated in the Putnam contest and communicated with students with more experience in mathematics, which broadened my knowledge in the subject. In addition, I love learning about geography, history, government, and politics. As a child, I took deep interest in learning capitals of countries and other geographical facts and statistics. In middle school, my interest grew in government, and I read biographies over almost all Presidents and a few First Ladies. Over the past semester in the height of the 2016 election campaigns, I have avidly followed politics and watched political satires like *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert* and *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah*. In addition, I am minoring in music and have played the violin for the past seven years. Even though I do not practice violin as intensely as I did in the past, I still participate in the TU orchestra, play in church orchestras, and like listening to recitals and concerts. I like exploring all types of music and am curious about how other instrumentalists excel in their respective fields. Finally, I hold deep interest in sports, especially cricket and soccer. I avidly follow cricket and read relating articles. I have several sports idols, and I apply the struggles and lessons from sports into my own life. Furthermore, I love learning about philosophies and religions. Apart from spirituality and religion, I also like contemplating on the education system, political systems, and world events. Over the past few months, I have

been contemplating on these philosophies and who I truly am in this world. All in all, these are some of the areas I am most interested in.

I have been thinking about several aspects of life and learning over the past few months. I am beginning to connect all my philosophies into one big philosophy. Through my past experiences and reading books like *Punished by Rewards* by Alfie Kohn and watching movies like *3 Idiots (2009)*, I have developed thoughts on the education system. I read *Punished by Rewards* in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and it was a huge influence on how I think. I loved to learn until seventh grade, but that year, I became grade centric. This book completely changed my way of thinking, and now I am back on track on learning just for the sake of learning. Similarly, *3 Idiots* questioned the Indian education system and stressed on a similar theme, “Don’t run after success. Run after excellence. If one is excellent, then success automatically comes after them.” These experiences combined to develop my thinking on education and the education system.

I hold several opinions on the education system and these have immensely influenced me, especially this year. I believe that grade should not create divide. I noticed that students who were encouraged early in their middle school kept doing well in school, while those who did not get rewards or positive feedback, became highly discouraged and stopped working hard. The differences were evident at the end of their respective vastly contrasting high school careers. Education should be able to encourage learning for the sake of learning and not to pressurize students to take meaningless tests and be incentivized to receive good grades to earn a good degree in order to secure a good job and make a good living. Also, I also believe in giving back to the community with what one is good at. Until now, I have only criticized the education system and pointed out its flaws. The combination of both these thoughts has inspired me to become a teacher or professor at some point in my life to give back to the community. This way,

instead of just criticizing, I want to go in the system to modify it. In addition, I still want to help others with what I have at this moment. Therefore, a few of us have taken an initiative to start a Circle K at campus, a community service organization. Serving others is a joy and makes one think about problems other individuals have, which takes any self-centeredness or egoistic feelings away. One should always be grateful for what they have. Similarly, after reading and watching *Tuesdays with Morrie* in the past few months, I have reflected on life and have realized not to worry or stress about trivial things as I have in the past. Finally, I take an extra effort to attend “Conversation Club” because I love the underlying goal. The goal is to build relationships with others and to experience the beauty of other cultures and diversity. Overall, I have explored several different philosophies this semester that has been key in molding my identity.

My classes have been a nice combination of mostly everything I like. Two math classes, a discussion based honors discussion class, English, computer science, and orchestra. I was not looking forward to either English or computer science, but they have turned out to be rather important for my thinking. My writing has vastly improved, and I am consistently experimenting with my writing instead of just writing from a stale template. This has caused my writing to be the best it has ever been across subjects. I struggled with computer science, but I am now able to connect how computer science is important to the future of mathematics. For this reason, I have decided to minor in it. I was initially skeptical about Honors, but it has been a wonderful experience. It has broadened my reading comprehension, and the discussions have been intriguing. I take the main concepts out of my class every week and see how the major themes of old literature still apply to daily life today. Furthermore, I am trying to explore several areas of mathematics and trying to connect them. Instead of just treating it as a mere course subject, I am trying to think of it as much more—as the language of science or even the world. I

am trying to look at the world as a mathematician would do. I am trying to solve more problems through a different mode of thinking. Furthermore, watching *Theory of Everything* and learning about different mathematicians in our introduction class has instilled a different mindset within me. Still, anything done in excess is harmful, so I am doing math in moderation. Taking humanity classes really help me go away from the science and math and focus on other facets of life that are just as important. Lastly, I am playing in the orchestra and minoring in music, starting next semester. Music is essential in any form at any age, and it influences other subjects positively as well. Altogether, the balance of my schedule with diverse subjects has kept my mind engaged.

All in all, I have been able to connect my past beliefs and current experiences to think of a broader scope of philosophy. I have been able to intertwine all of these philosophies both in my education and personal life. In the past semester, I have become a better writer, violinist, mathematician, thinker, and a student, but one can always improve. Therefore, I would like to explore, experience, learn, think, read more and become a better person as a whole in the following semesters and years.