

Manvir S. Chahal - Business-Accounting

Student Reflections

Friday, May 20, 2016

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Good evening everyone, my name is Manvir Chahal, and I am a College of Business graduate with an option in accounting.

Tonight, I have been given the honor of reflecting on my experiences here at Chico State. But first, CONGRATULATIONS to us all for making it to this day!! For many of us, it's been a long journey; while for others, it's been a REALLY long journey through college. We have two colleges in attendance tonight and I want to hear applause from each one when I call them out. First, there is the College of Humanities and Fine Arts (\*WAIT\*). And then there's my home away from home, the College of Business (\*WAIT\*). Lastly, I want to give recognition to the special people who have helped us get here. They might be friends, family, teachers, or even coworkers, but please, let's give them a hand!!

When you first come to Chico, you hear a lot of talk about the “Chico Experience.” Before I talk about my Chico experience, I want to read to you a quote by Steve Jobs. This quote really relates to the position that we are all in. He said: “You cannot connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backward. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.” What he’s talking about here is that certain moments in our lives don’t necessarily seem relevant or important right now. But when you look back at a later point in time, they end up being crucial. After reading this quote, I started looking back to see what led me to make the decisions that I made, and ultimately how I became the person that I am today. My hope is that parts of my story and the lessons learned will relate to you.

I was raised in a small farm town less than an hour away from Chico. Growing up, my sense of family was a little different than everyone else because most of my family immigrated from India, and settled down together in the same town. So I was not

raised by my parents alone, I was raised by over 15 family members who lived down the block from one another. But I am thankful for growing up with what I like to call “a village upbringing” because it ultimately taught me to value relationships. And when I connected the dots for myself, I realized that I chose to go to college because my family pushed me to do so. They encouraged me to get an education, so that I would not have to work exhausting hours picking peaches, like they did, to make ends meet. Ironically, accountants actually work long hours. Unfortunately, it’s a little too late to change my major now. (\*PAUSE\*)

But it was from my relationship with my family that I also learned the importance of giving back. Throughout my time here at Chico State, I’ve been involved with the students and the surrounding community in many different ways. I’ve tutored students who struggled in accounting, and helped them to pass the classes that they needed in order to complete their major. Luckily, I saw a few of them in the crowd right now! It’s

nice to know I wasn't that bad of a tutor. What I noticed from my time as a tutor is that students who struggled the most, were the one's who didn't believe in their own abilities. It was through tutoring that I realized that I had a passion for helping others, especially those who are disadvantaged.

That is what led me to join and run the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program, also called VITA. For those of you that do not know, VITA is a program that provides free tax preparation services to those in the community who need it most. This year alone, our volunteers impacted the surrounding community by over \$1 Million. Being involved with VITA has been one of my proudest accomplishments. That fact was made apparent to me when I ran into a couple last month that I've been helping for the past 3 years. I've helped them with everything from taxes to health care. I will never forget what they said to me when I saw them, they said "we can't believe you're graduating. We remember when you first started out, you didn't even have a beard, you just had whiskers on your face!" After meeting with

them, I now know what the best thing about Chico is: it's community involvement. That is what has shaped my Chico experience, and that is what I've come to appreciate most about our school. We have CLIC, an organization on campus that provides free legal consultation to those who need it. We have CAVE, an organization that is committed to providing students with numerous volunteer opportunities from planting trees to adopting grandparents. That is what makes this campus unique, it's the scale of involvement within the local community! Look back at your time here, and you'll see that you have been involved with a cause one way or another. Connecting the dots is a lot easier now as I'm about to graduate with all of you. My upbringing from an immigrant family shaped me to ultimately devote my college career to the service of those who needed help. I hope that many of you are connecting the dots for yourselves, and realizing how the smallest decisions in your life have added up, and brought you all here today.

At this point, I understand that you all must be tired of hearing my voice. Quite frankly, I am too, so I'll make this quick. The 3 key takeaways from my story that I have for you are this:

1) value relationships. One person cannot do everything by themselves. A close support network is essential to being able to reach your full potential; just like how my family pushed me to go to college. Everyone of you have a friend, a professor, or a boss that has greatly influenced your life one way or another.

2) Believe in yourself. I've tutored countless students, and the biggest obstacle that I've observed people face is themselves. If we convince ourselves that we can't do something, then we won't do something. And finally...

3) UNCERTAINTY... it's unavoidable. You cannot change that. What you can change is how you look at it. Uncertainty is not a new feeling, many of us didn't know what we were going to do when we first came to Chico, or what our experience was going to be. Personally, I once changed my major twice in one semester. TWICE IN ONE SEMESTER!

Can you imagine how uncertain you are gonna be after that?!

But it all worked out for the best. It helped me to find out what I'm passionate about.

We all shape our own experiences, and I hope that when all of you look back on your experience here at Chico State, you realize that you are well equipped to succeed. So as we all begin the next chapter of our lives, draw upon those past experiences and trust that you will end up where you need to be in the future.

**THANK YOU AND GOOD LUCK TO THE CLASS OF 2016!!!!**