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Is your college experience how you imagined it would be?

Coming into college, I had no idea what to expect. My life at that time was mostly centered around swimming and always getting better. I had some idea of what studies I would be interested in but even now I have some uncertainty about the future. I was also about to move across the country, away from my entire support system and social group to basically start from scratch. With wide eyes and an open mind, I jumped in with both feet. My time here since then has been the most incredible experience of my life. I have struggled, succeeded, laughed, cried, and everything in between. I had always imagined that I would continue to improve as a swimmer in college, but I had never imagined how much I would improve as a person. These four years have not been at all like I imagined but I would not trade them for the world.

Did Santa Clara Swim Club prepare you for this experience?

Santa Clara Swim Club was a great model for what my eventual college experience would be like. Not only the training but being part of a team that had goals beyond each individual. College swimming is the biggest team environment that we have in the sport. Every dual meet, conference meet, and National Championship is centered around everyone contributing, whether that is while you're racing or cheering on the sideline. Everyone has a role on the team whether it's as the top point scorer or the most positive person. Learning to swim for something bigger than yourself was something that I had learned early on at SCSC.

What is the best thing you have learned about yourself while at college?

The best thing that I have learned about myself in college is that I do not need to do everything on my own. I have always been fairly shy and making friends by starting a conversation out of thin air always seemed like a feat of magic to me. Fortunately for me, I was thrown into a setting that made it nearly impossible to stay shy. From spending 20+ hours a week in training with 60 teammates, to having tutoring with athletes from every sport, to finding people in my classes who I enjoy spending time with, I have never had a shortage of friends around me. Before I came to school, I would bear the weight of everything that I could all by myself because I never wanted to be a burden to others. However, once I became comfortable with the people around me, I realized that there is no reason to go through anything alone. Having a support system of friends so close they are practically family not only makes it easier to bear the burden of failures, but it also makes moments of success so much greater. I distinctly remember seeing 60 teammates and all of my coaches cheer after watching me finally break through my sophomore year. In that moment I realized that all the struggles I had gone through had been shared by my teammates and in turn, that success was also shared by the entire team.

Do you have anything you have experienced that you were not prepared for?

SCSC Alumni

There will always be curveballs thrown at you. You can have the most perfect plan and it can still go wrong when you least expect it. I have faced a lot of situations that I did not prepare for such as, not making NCAA's my freshman year, having to repeat a class because meets caused me to miss too many labs, and several others. In these moments I learned to not ask "why is this happening to me?" But rather to say "This is happening, how am I going to change it moving forward?" Being able to adapt when things are not perfect is something that everyone will learn in college.

If you were to give any advice to swimmers preparing for college swimming and the college experience, what would you tell them?

Go in with an openness to new experiences and be willing to challenge your comfort zone. I have gone through the whole college swimming experience myself as well as watched others come and go. I have seen that the people who succeed in their time here and long after they leave are the ones who were always willing to challenge themselves. They did not do this just by making themselves work harder in the pool or study more in the classroom. They achieved this by developing themselves as people over the years. The ones who are willing to have a tough conversation with a teammate to try and inspire positive change. The ones who heard all the negative sentiments floating around the pool deck and despite being dead tired themselves, decided to say something positive. Those are the people who have the most character and take everything they can from their time in college.

Tell us about your experience swimming at NCAA's?

NCAA's is quite possibly the most insane meet in the world. I can't even remember how many records and barriers I saw broken over my four years. Just when you think that there is no way people are going to go faster... they do. Simply making the meet is one of the greatest challenges I have faced in my swimming career. After missing it my freshman year, I was determined to represent my team there every year thereafter. I was able to make the meet the next three years but sometimes just by the skin of my teeth. Being in that environment of the fastest and strongest swimmers in the country for a week and just knowing the unpredictable nature of each swim is a thrill. Despite the fact that I may not have performed as well as I would have hoped at NCAA's every year, simply getting to go and represent the university I love at the highest level was always an honor.

If you have anything else you would like to include, please feel free.

Thank you for sharing this with the SCSC community. It has been hard no longer living in California and I miss seeing Santa Clara almost every day. I have nothing but appreciation for everyone I met in my time there and the lessons that I took from my journey as a part of SCSC. To anyone who has dreams of swimming in college or beyond, I wish you the best of luck and I hope that sharing some of my experiences helps you prepare for the next chapter of your life.