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## College June 2009

Verdadera is a publication created by and for Monta Vista teens for the purpose of instigating communication concerning the 'real world' of high school within the community. Each month, an issue on a topic relevant to the lives of our students is sent home for reading by parents and students alike. We encourage you to discuss and explore the issues and stories, as the publication aims not only to offer an outlet for expression but to improve our lives. Keep in mind that the emotions that flow through the text and the feelings behind the words could be those of your child, your classmate, or your best friend. While we do not edit submissions, we aim to publish personal experiences, not opinion articles. Please utilize all the resources present in the publication and feel free to email comments and feedback.

The Verdadera staff thanks you for your interest and support.

*This issue includes stories about college and the struggles students face when dealing with college.*

**Only seniors will be receiving this issue now, June 2009, and all other students will receive their copy in their welcome packet in the beginning of the 2009-10 school year. Enjoy!**

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### Student Submissions

Dear Parents,

In the fall, I will be attending my dream school, a private college I have envisioned myself at for as long as I can remember. In the month since I have received my acceptance letter, I have been asked by students and parents alike how I was able to achieve this goal. There is obviously no one answer I can give to this question, but I can say without a doubt that my parents were the biggest factor to my success. But I can also safely say that if you ask either of them, they will probably tell you I did this on my own. While this may just look like one of us is lying, I honestly believe that we are both telling the truth. In my opinion (and experience), this duality and shared responsibility should be the cornerstone of a parent-child relationship.

To explain, I have to briefly take you through my life to this point. When I was a younger kid, my parents put much emphasis on letting me make my own

opportunities. Yes, they signed me up for youth soccer and the occasional summer camp, but there were also many times where I felt they could have pushed me more. For a while, I was almost resentful of this, wondering why my friends had Boy Scouts and club sports lined up for them and I didn't. Instead I was told that if I wanted to play on an AAU basketball team that I could find a coach to call and my parents would support me from there. Looking back at these experiences, my parent's intent is clear: it is not that they did not want me to have activities, but they were simultaneously allowing me the freedom of choice and teaching me to take responsibility for my own future.

In the years since I have come to accept that lesson, I have thrived on this sense of freedom. Coming into high school, I have had no hesitance that I will have my parents' full support in whatever I choose to do, and that is quite a liberating feeling that I know is not shared

by all of my friends and classmates. One aspect of my college acceptance that is a great source of pride for me is the fact that I honestly believe I have never done anything simply to put on a college application or resume. However, it is often these things that I see parents pushing their students to do. I cringe a little every time I hear of someone volunteering somewhere they can't stand, sitting through an expensive SAT class that isn't helping them, or spending hours on an application to a college they cannot ever imagine themselves attending. What makes me hurt even more inside is when I hear the opposite: a passionate actor who is told that drama productions are too time consuming, an athlete being forced to quit their beloved sport, or a great leader being told that being a class officer is a waste of time. These are the kinds of activities that have allowed me to keep my sanity through high school, as it can be a very academically stressful environment. Those types of outlets, while they may be time consuming, have provided me a sense of balance that has been crucial to my high school experience.

In short, it is the mutual trust shared by me and my parents that have put me in a position to be successful, something that started developing at a very young age. My parents are far from uninvolved: they've coached my teams, volunteered for the PTA, and dedicated countless hours towards providing me with all the support I need. But they have also been sure to never come too close to the line of "helicopter parents", hovering over my every move to artificially create a successful environment. This balance is more than I could ever ask for, and they deserve to be proud of the job they have done as my parents, not because of the university I am going to, but rather because of the fact that they have prepared me for life in the real world, no matter where I go to college.

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*"The object of education is to prepare the young to educate themselves throughout their lives." - Robert M. Hutchins*

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Currently for me and many others at MV, college is the next step in life. When I think of college, it represents a pain in the ass, which requires a lot of preparation. Yet college can be a great source of joy if one gets into an excellent college, leading to preparation for a career. I not only associate college with SATs, SAT II subject tests, countless months of preparation, additional classes at De Anza, but with parties, an exposure to a new way of living and the chance to make new friends. These are the many things I look forward to during the application process to college and during my stay at a college.

College is not a ticket for success but simply another learning opportunity in life. What really matters is to develop social skills. You can be the smartest person in the world but if you cannot express your ideas you are worthless. This is where college comes into play. If you take full advantage learning outside of a classroom you will gain more from it. In today modern society those who have Harvard degrees cannot easily get jobs, but those who can show signs of leadership and management will get very far.

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*"To learn is to change. Education is a process that changes the learner." - Unknown*

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I think that college even though some of us have a long ways to go has become a major part of our lives. All kids at our school talk walk and eat with colleges in mind and the pressure of attending a prestigious one. Although I try not to get caught up into it is very hard to avoid. When I hear the word colleges I think get mixed feelings some of which are pressure, joy, and anxiety all at once. I sometimes laugh at myself since I myself have 2 years to go and I just hope I can look back and feel proud of the college I attend

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I want to go to a college because I actually like it, not because my parents think it's a good school. It really annoys me when my parents assume I'll go to UC Berkeley or UCLA just because they like it and it's close and it's a good school. They've pretty much told me my only choices for college are Stanford (haha yeah right), Cal, UCLA, and UCSD. When I told my mom that I was considering going out of state, she told me I would have to pay for tuition all on my own. Problem is, she won't let me get a job. I don't mind having my parents give me their honest opinions of colleges, but this is taking it too far. I don't want to go to a college because everyone thinks it's a good school; I want to go to a college that I'm excited about and that I know I'll have an amazing time at. All the parents out there that are trying to make your child go to the school of YOUR dreams, realize that you can't go to college with your kid. They are the ones who are going off to college, not you, so let them choose the college that they are passionate about. It will result in a happier, more enriching experience for everyone involved :)

In a couple of years the memories of high school will be forgotten and my life will carry on. Everything I work towards as a child is devoted to really one thing and that's what college I go to. I used to look forward to college as an escape from my parents and this overrated school. However I never really thought about what my actual duties were until a couple of days ago. People

think college is a place where young people drink and get high and have a blast. Wrong I realized it was going to be harder and the other people might necessarily like me. My whole life I had been waiting for the day I moved away from this town that lives in its own little bubble to realize now that life is exactly the same through out. I have come to realize I work so hard for that one college and once I get accepted; whats waiting for me is not a nice break but something even more stressful. I'm not scared but I'm disappointed at why kids like us wear ourselves out now and hope for better. In reality what we expect is not whats in plan for us.

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As a child I was trained to get good grades for the one thing that every parent had in mind, an prestigious college to help carry on life. Since I was little, I was never the brightest bulb in the class my parents had me working harder with tutoring classes. It felt like they lived my life not me. College was all they thought about and never considered how I felt. When they are mad they use the phrase "you wont get into college." BS I will get into college, maybe not the one of your dreams but definitely one I like and defines me. The pressures caused at home are unnecessary. I guess all I have to say is I hate my environment and how people around me act. The endless stress that monta vista causes on the kids are unhealthy. We don't live a normal high school life and probably more likely to get into the "bad stuff" once we get out.

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*"When we long for life without difficulties, remind us that oaks grow strong in contrary winds and diamonds are made under pressure"- Peter Marshall*

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College wasn't something that I ever thought about until just a few years ago when my older sister graduated from high school. I remember I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and she was in her senior year. She would spend long nights filling out her applications and then she and my dad would go on trips to visit schools. I thought it was cool that she got to go to so many places, and that she would get to live on her own far away from our boring town. Then, the letters started flooding our house. Small, thin, envelopes that made her cry. I remember dreading to be the one to check the mail, not wanting to be the one to disappoint her. A few acceptance letters came, our parents would congratulate her and she would be extra nice to me on those days. I liked those days. I would brag to my friends about how my sister was accepted here and there. Eventually she ended up choosing to go to school in Michigan, and I remember her announcing it to our family proudly and how my mother and father held her tight and then I congratulated her. That moment has stuck with me, I want to be the pride and joy of my family, to announce at our dinner table that I

was taking my life to another level and furthering my education. I asked my sister a year later if all the rejection letters were worth it, if where she was now was worth all the tears. She took a moment to respond and then firmly said, "Yes. It was completely worth it." And now that very soon it will be my turn to send out my applications, I am excited. It's not so much as where I end up, but it's the pride of knowing that I am following in my sisters steps, and that I am finally getting to further my life on my own and it's that one moment where I have finally conquered my high school years.

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Something just isn't normal about a place where students spend more time in any given class than they do deep in slumber. Something just isn't normal about a place where CSUs are something to be ashamed of. Something just isn't normal about a place where kids pour caffeine into their system – not because they think it is cool, but because it is the only thing that keeps them going after yet another night of no sleep. Something just is not normal about a place where friendships end over college acceptance letters. I can't help but feel that something just ain't right with Monta Vista.

Sometimes I get scared of people here. I get scared of talking to my overachieving friends. I cannot get rid of the block of ice that forms at the bottom of my stomach whenever they talk about their perfect GPA and all the colleges that they are sure to be accepted to. I don't think they are trying to make me feel inadequate, but somehow I can't help but feel insignificant, inconsequential.

But am I less of a person if I am not on my way to an Ivy League? Am I less capable just because I have not been taking SAT classes for the past three years? Worse yet, am I not normal?

Sometimes I wonder if I am abnormal for living my life and cherishing my childhood. Is it me or is it this mad, mad world?

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*"Pressure is a word that is misused in our vocabulary. When you start thinking of pressure, it's because you've started to think of failure."- Tommy Lasorda*

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Sometimes I feel like my whole high school career led up to going to a good college. I mean, being the Asian I am, my life has always been more about studying so that I could actually attend the college of my dreams. Sometimes it kind of annoys me, that this is what my life has become.

But my parents (and often friends) are always worrying

about me getting good grades and doing well academically, and that attitude has definitely rubbed off on me. I kind of want to go somewhere where people don't place so much emphasis on studying, a place completely different than Monta Vista. A place where people's priorities are placed more on learning about the world and having a good time.

That being said, I got into a really good university, yes. But people have told me that this place is so much like Monta Vista, that it has scared me into not wanting to go there. So I have a few other choices that I know would be perfect for me, and it would mean the world to me if I could go there. I knew I would enjoy everything about the college; the only thing holding me back was tuition.

So, I chose the college I didn't really want to go to. While I am excited to enter this new phase of my life, I really just hope that it is a *new* phase, not just something I have experienced before, like high school. I guess I plan on just making the most out of what I have. I made the decision, and I don't want to have any regrets, just hope that wherever I go, I will still meet new people and experience new things.

College is a chance to discover yourself and what you want to do with your life, to meet new people, to join clubs and organizations, to get your voice heard. It is a wonderful conglomeration of people from different backgrounds and ethnicities, all together to learn something, have fun, and perhaps even make the world a better place.

That being said, I CANNOT wait to go to college! I guess I have heard some negative things about the place I am going to, like the weather makes everyone want to transfer out after the first semester, I am still excited to be going to a totally different place.

Maybe I will transfer, but I don't really know whether I'll like it there, until I actually go.

These past few months I have been completely restless to just try something different, so I'm hoping that's what I'll get when I go off on my own this fall!!

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*"In the game of life it's a good idea to have a few early losses, which relieves you of the pressure of trying to maintain an undefeated season." - Lee Trevino*

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College has really been much of an enigma for me. There's always two opposing sides – you have to get into an elite college, or the college that you get into doesn't really matter because it doesn't define you as a

person. I really think it's somewhere inbetween. On one hand, I'm thoroughly bothered by my parents insistence I either get into a top-tier private or either UCLA/Cal if not I'm deemed as a "failure". On the other hand, I wouldn't like to go to just some random "party school".

I understand that where you went to college follows you around for the rest of your life, and in every job application people will have preconceived notions based on what college you attended. And yet, I also understand that oftentimes those preconceived notions are only that - they do not define you as a person and you can break through stereotypes with either hardwork or in some cases slacking off.

It's really quite a mystery that has got me puzzled, but I do know this. There's nothing wrong with working hard, and there's nothing wrong with taking a break at the same time.

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I've always hated college talk. Who cares about the future when you can live for now? Who's to say that which college you go to will determine the rest of your life, no, that can't be it, if not why do people even bothering living life past college and striving for achievements?

I think some of this hate comes from the environment we have here at Monta Vista. People will literally shape and mold their entire lives and daily routines on the basis of getting into what they deem an "acceptable" college – even if it involves dishonesty or other underhanded means.

I'm content with going wherever my transcript takes me, taking solace in the fact that I've thoroughly enjoyed these 4 years at an otherwise questionable high school by taking classes that I really like and enjoy, and taking classes that my friends really like and enjoy so we can have a great time together. I believe that in many cases building and maintaining relations that will last a lifetime are much more important than which superficial college label you have on your job application 20 years from now – which won't help you through tough times, go out to dinner with you, or anything really.

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*"A college education should equip one to entertain three things: a friend, an idea and oneself." -Unknown*

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With three older siblings, college is a very familiar topic to me. As of now, my oldest is long past college and working. My second sister is currently attending college for her third year at UC Davis. As for my brother, he's busy contemplating college and college applications as a junior. So of course, I kind of understand the atmosphere and meaning of college. To me, and to the rest of my siblings, college means a break from home. It

really means finally leaving our house and our parents and taking control of our own lives. It means I don't have someone watching over me 24/7 - no one to nag me or to tell me what I should or shouldn't do. But frankly, I'm scared of it. It's frightful to think about having to leave the safety of your own home and family that you've grown up with for 18 years. I kind of don't understand the thoughts of my senior friends, who tell me that they can't wait until graduation so that they can finally go to college. I can't stand thinking about leaving our bubble at Cupertino and my home, to the scary unknown that has anything questionable awaiting me. But yet here's another thought of college: a fresh start. I always thought about this during my times in middle school. I always thought about how it work if someone were to accidentally commit a horrid mistake that causes them to plunge into the world of social outcasts in middle school. Would they remain lonely for the rest of their lives? I mean, we're stuck with same people for another six years. But then I realized, once you get to college, it's a totally new start. The friends and classmates that you've been with for maybe 12 or 13 years are gone somewhere else, and you have a chance to take control of your life once again. It's going to be just like entering kindergarten again, except this time you have a sense of what social skills to use. You'll get to challenge yourself to meet new people, and then you'll get to shape a new life in some ways that you want to. So encourage you, as an underclassmen, all you seniors - don't take the thought of college so heavily upon your shoulders. If you're excited for college, think about what you're going to be missing. If you're scared for college, think about the fresh start you're heading into. God bless 2009! =)

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I don't consider myself the typical Monta Vista student, besides the fact that I'm part of the "majority" in a school with unusual demographics. The academics at this school these last four years were overwhelming, to say the least, and I don't deny that my health has probably taken a toll by the loads of schoolwork that consumed my days. Despite my efforts with excelling at school while balancing all the other activities I enjoyed, I never quite received the grades that I had hoped for. But I frequently asked myself "Why?" Why am I striving to reach the astronomic standards everybody has set, instead of going my own path? Why do I have to be like everybody else, to avoid getting trampled by their ambitions? Though I did have the whole scheme of things in perspective, I took on the mindset of trying to maintain a higher standard, in order to be "competitive". Other people's attitudes about school, college, grades, etc. didn't help my mentality either; reading people's Facebook statuses about which colleges they were accepted into not only made me feel bad about myself, but I couldn't help but wonder why they had to

announce to the world how amazing they are. Did they just want to garner other people's awe so they could feel more self-important? Or did they want to make people feel bad about their own college decisions? Whatever the reason was, I couldn't believe how much more full of themselves people became because a prestigious college accepted them. This turned into something I could pride myself on without shame; my lack of ego when it came to college decisions.

Deep down, I don't regret the choices I made during high school, despite a less-than-favorable string of college decisions that came in during March. It was my choice to take on the extracurricular activities I chose to do, and my choice to waste my time with distractions on all those school nights. One can argue that there is nobody to blame but myself for getting rejected by 70% of the schools I applied to, particularly the "higher UC's", but this is where I, along with almost everybody at Monta Vista, fails to put things into perspective; getting accepted into college is already a major plus, regardless of what school it is. As I was choosing colleges, I kept getting down on myself for factoring in the way people would judge me by choosing a certain college, but on the other side, I know that there is no such thing as a bad choice. It's extremely frustrating to hear other people talk in a condescending manner about certain colleges that I got accepted into, because then I can't help but wonder if my own worth is defined by other people's perceptions of colleges. But then I think about how I was using my time instead of focusing on grades, and I see so much worth. I thoroughly enjoyed being of service to Monta Vista through ASB Leadership, ran my heart out on the cross-country team while bonding with teammates, and spent much time being there for my friends when they were in dark times. Just a few days ago, Mr. Jennings gave my class another one of his "commercials", and he encouraged us to not revolve our lives around academics, but be real people. I know I will have a great future, and the college I'm going to will not define who I truly am. So Monta Vista, please learn to look past the stress you're putting yourself under, and keep in mind that the most important part of your lives you can hold onto are the people you care about.

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*"Life is my college. May I graduate well, and earn some honors!" - Louisa May Alcott*

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College. That word always caused an increase in blood pressure. Though I am just a sophomore I am already incredibly stressed about it. What school I get into, the price, and, of course, the application process. My sister is a senior this year and got into 7 of the 8 colleges she applied to. That fact is possibly the most stressful part about colleges, living up to my sister. But, I digress.

The point is that, starting next year I will be looking at colleges and taking the dreaded PSAT. I know that, in the end, it will be worth all the stress. But right now, I wish I could just forget about college.

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I'm excited for college next year. But mostly, I'm scared. I know that it's supposed to be "the best time of my life," but I'm not so sure. Living away from my family and friends is going to be so alienating. I mean, I'm sure I'll make friends eventually, but those first few months are going to be torture. I've lived in Cupertino all of my life, and I can't imagine calling another place "home." I don't talk to anyone about this because I don't want to admit how terrified I am. But I can say it here, because no one will know it is me.

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*"It's not your blue blood, your pedigree or your college degree. It's what you do with your life that counts."*

*-Millard Fuller*

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College is something that most students at Monta Vista strive towards. We focus on our GPA's and the amount of AP's we are taking more than how much life experience we get. Parents and other students pressure us into wanting to go to UCLA or UC Berkley or Stanford, when really some of us would have much more fun at a school that does not have an average acceptance rate of students with 4.2 GPA's. Over spring break I visited UC Davis and UCSC with my family and a family friend and I realized something about college. It isn't about where you get in; it's about how much you will enjoy being there. For me, I don't enjoy working my butt off to get the grade and not having time to hang out with my friends and always being tired. I hate that about Monta Vista, and I hate that that is expected. Someone that gets more than 3 hours sleep before and APUSH test is obviously a slacker and doesn't care what their future holds, which is just ridiculous and I'm tired of it. I want my college experience to be about fun. Learning of course, I want to take classes I want, study for the future job I want and work hard absolutely, but all because I'm doing it because I love it. That is what I want college to be about. Enjoying the time I'm there, learning about things I enjoy and am interested in, and learning who I am. I don't think that people at Monta Vista realize that as much as they should. When I went to the UC Davis campus I realized that that was where I wanted to be, not because of how good the school was, but because I loved the environment and I saw clubs I wanted to join and be a part of it. That is how I am going to base my decision on college.

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**Dad:** -my name- you know- your SAT scores are already pretty good

**Me:** -pause- It's not that good.

**Dad:** It is -talks more-

**Me:** -silence-

**Dad:** You know you don't have to go to top school, or get highest score. Middle (he means normal) colleges are good too. It's better to go to middle than high. Sure high is good, but middle is less stress and more time for other things.

**Me:** -no idea whatsoever what to say-

**Dad:** This society- this society you know, is more important about the middle people.

**Me:** *I think he's trying to comfort me for my bad scores. Is it because of that one time I was being a brat about going to such a competitive high school and all that?"*

Yeah. I have to finish homework now.

**Dad:** Exercise is important too.

**Me:** .....

What is the point of such an awkward conversation? I don't know, but it felt necessary to document it. I thought of possible reasons for him telling me this: possibly to console my tension ridden soul that I'm not stupid, to encourage me to exercise, possibly to encourage me not to apply to expensive schools, possibly to give me a life lesson that life isn't all about the scores, grades, and other measurements of my "intelligence". I don't know. I feel like I should misinterpret his words that I am a 'middle' person, but there's something nice about the conversation that I know it is not him calling me normal.

I don't know, all I really know is that I'm scared about my future. I'm feeling pressure about college and what is to come after that. I understand my dad's words when he tells me I don't have to end up at an ivy league, or Stanford. And I guess that in itself takes off most of my burden, he and my mom won't be disappointed in me if I don't end up at a top school. I could even go to De Anza and do my best to work to a future goal and they'd still be proud of me. So why am I still so afraid of what colleges I'm applying to? And if I'm even good enough for them to accept me. But, now that I think of this- my heart is more at ease. I have my parents' support and unconditional love behind me. Getting into college is only one part of the story, the larger part of the story a.k.a my life, is what I'm going to remember and not my rejection letters, sat scores, or g.p.a.

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*"Formal education will make you a living; self-education will make you a fortune." - Jim Rohn*

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I always had the hardest time as a child going to the next tier. In elementary school I would have nightmares about the big things that happened in middle school. I feared the concept of a separate teacher for every subject, of having more kids, bigger kids, who would

push me around. I was afraid of having to get to school all on my own every day, and of the teacher who would rip up my papers if I forgot to write my name on them.

Of course fifth grade eventually ended, and I went. I found that things weren't so bad. Some things were, but more or less, it was good.

Then, as the end of eighth grade loomed nearer, I started having fears of high school. Parents would constantly ask me what I thought about finally going to high school, and I didn't know what to say. I was afraid to being shoving into a garbage can, for instance. I had this terrible image of disgusting bathrooms with smoking stoners giving each incoming freshman a swirly. I was going to have to pick my classes myself, whether I wanted to or not. I still was afraid that now, inevitable, the teachers would start throwing away no-name papers and I would be left to the unmerciful taunting of fellow classmates.

It never happened. Sure, I got to pick my own classes, but it was awesome. MV didn't present me with any sort of bullying problem, and I made tons of friends. My teachers, even now in senior year, still don't rip up no name papers.

So now, as college draws nearer, I am starting to get anxious and a little bit uncomfortable. Once again I am at the top of the proverbial heap, a senior, and will suddenly be thrown into an entirely new environment far away from my family and friends. I will be mixed with other clueless students, all of them ruthlessly smart, and be surrounded by tons of older kids.

I know that I will be okay, but I still get a butterfly feeling every time I think about it. There are tons of exciting things waiting for me, but it doesn't change the fact that I am going to enjoy every second I have here at MV.

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*"Education is not filling a bucket, but lighting a fire."* -  
William Butler Yeats

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"I want to go to Stanford, duh!" These words were expressed by a young me (and admit it, many of you too) when asked where I wanted to go to college when young. I don't have any older siblings and didn't really talk to anyone about college. Back then, I thought Stanford was the only choice since it seemed like the epitome of Asian destinations. My friends and I would get so excited when we got A's in Kennedy and thought we were one step closer to the golden prize. I then entered Monta Vista and hmmm... Stanford seems to be a lot harder to get into than I thought. As I freshman, I wondered why the heck are people applying to these other schools? A UC? What??? I always thought uc meant "you see" on aim. East Coast?? Why would you want to fly all the way to who knows where to go to

school when there's Stanford nearby? As I progressed through high school, I learned so much more about other colleges and how the point is usually to be far away from home. As I've been hearing from my friends what colleges they've gotten into over the last few weeks, I realized that I'm not even considering hearing a "I got into Stanford" coming out of any of their mouths. Not that I'm saying that it's impossible to get in there; it's just amazing how much your perspective changes over 4 years from knowing nothing about college to having a site called Collegeboard becoming one of your best friends. It's nice to know now there are so many options. I'll probably still apply to Stanford though.

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*"Education must provide the opportunities for self-fulfillment; it can at best provide a rich and challenging environment for the individual to explore, in his own way"*

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My brother is a smart guy, but my mom says he hung around the wrong crowd, and he is obsessed with things that he shouldn't be obsessing about. In eighth grade he had sleepovers with his friends coming over every weekend almost and I got to know them too, they're nice people, not the brightest, but what does that matter. Soon in high school, he was overwhelmed by the balance of his social life and studying, he dropped classes everywhere, and my mom, being *my mom* scolded him and blamed it on his friends, obsessions such as his car, and my dad for being nonexistent. She kept telling him how he is going no where and how she loves him so much but can't bear to watch him go in the wrong direction. Every dinner meal together would result in my mom yelling at my brother. By his senior year, he was advised by his counselor to go to De Anza for two years then transfer out. My mom could not stand the idea or thought of this. So now my brother is at De Anza, and my mom is still mad at him for all his shortcomings. Now that my brother is gone, she is doing everything possible to make sure I don't end up like him, sometimes saying it to my brother's face.

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I'm actually really excited for college, even though my junior year isn't over yet. The excitement of applying and finding out where you got in, it's like a game. Sometimes you get your happy prize, sometimes you get poo. But I think the chase is the best part, I mean, it all builds up to this moment. I've already saved the top 100 colleges link on my favorites list. It's college guys! The place that seemed so far away when you were a second grader laughing at that kid who secretly tries to pick his nose next to you. Well it's not so far away anymore, it's college and it's real. It's here and I'm ready.

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Here is a list of worries I have regarding college, arranged in increasing order of self-doubt:

What will my roommate be like? Will I burn out? What if I don't make friends with anyone? What if nobody "gets" me, nobody "clicks" with me? Will I regret studying business? What if the economy worsens, what if there are no jobs left on Wall Street and no hope for entrepreneurs? Is the \$200k worth it? Will I find my niche?

I thoroughly enjoyed my experience here at MVHS. Sure, there were aspects I wish I could go back and change, but on the whole, I'm not one of those kids who are bitter and jaded about their high school experience—it's something that I wish I could do twice. Now, I'm scared that I won't find the sense of belonging I have here ever again.

Mr. Sturgill once told me that the often it's the kids who are the most involved in their high schools, the one who are the most comfortable in their niche that have the toughest time transitioning. After a year of not understanding what he said, I finally get it.

For me, and for most of us, high school was a period marked by emotional and personal growth. Some of us had amazing teachers who turned mere lectures into legitimate classroom *learning* experiences. Some of us discovered confidence and interest and passion in a club or sport or organization we joined. Most of us found out what *real* friendship meant. We may not know for sure who we are and what we want to become, but we leave high school with some iota of what this is.

So my question is, how do we know we're going to keep on growing? We're ripping our roots out and replanting them in some random place, some random school.

But we have to have faith that it'll turn out okay. Because if we don't have faith in ourselves then there really is no point in bothering to stay alive. Alright okay, that was depressing, but let's take a look at the big picture. "In long-run, we're all dead anyway." So what's the point of staying alive? Well, so that we have true human experiences rich in emotion and meaning. We have faith in that, that our time spent here will be worth it (yes this is a bit morbid but bear with me). Branching off from this, we try new things in an attempt to gain some more of this meaning: to learn more about ourselves, to connect with other amazing individuals. Because at the end of the day, what do you have other than the person you are and the connections you have with others? The college experience, and those of our greater lives, is just another one of those new things that we must have faith in because it yields potential for perhaps even more meaningful and amazing moments in our lives.

So here is a list of things I am excited for in college, arranged in order of increasing anticipation:

Learning to be independent, taking charge of my own life. Laughter and tears. Discovering that "making a difference" isn't some ambiguous cliché that people just throw around for effect—doing something that matters for myself, the people in my life, and my community. Connecting with others. Forming lifelong friendships. Learning more about myself, about others. Living it, loving it.

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*"The highest result of education is tolerance."* - Helen Keller

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I've always been ambitious, and ever since I've really understood the meaning of college, which has been since I was in about seventh grade, I think, I've always wanted to go to Stanford. It was around eighth grade I think that I learned Harvard was prestigious also, and since then, I've been dreaming about getting into Harvard too (though I have to admit, Stanford is my first love, being in this state and all). Hearing this from an MV student though, you're probably thinking, "Oh, she(yes, I'm a she) just wants to get into Stanford/Harvard BECAUSE they're Stanford/Harvard. She doesn't actually CARE about the types of majors they offer, and the student life, the rooming, the overall environment, etc. She just wants it for the namesake." Which yes, I suppose is partly true. But I've always strived high. I don't want to get into Stanford and Harvard because it'll look nice on my Facebook profile (which, admittedly, it will), but because I want to prove that I'm good enough to get in. Juniors, seniors, and possibly underclassmen as well (actually, just about a lot of people) know how selective the Ivy League (and Stanford) is. They know how the admittance rate seems to shrink with every passing year, and what a prestige it is to really be accepted. (Congratulations to this year's class who did). It just really gets to me when my friends and classmates, when asked what college they want to get into, casually throw in, "Oh, Harvard, of course. I'd never consider anything else". It just, I don't know, really gets to me. It's a stupid thing to get annoyed over, but it does. I know for a fact they don't even know the Harvard motto. In fact, I doubt they even know its location. They just want to get in because it seems like the "smart" school to get into, which, of course it is, but that being the only reason to want to get in is really stupid. I'm only a freshman right now, and I have quite a way to go before I really start checking out colleges and figuring out what major I might want to consider, and what colleges tie in with that. Everyone can have a dream, and right now mine is Stanford and Harvard. Being the geeky overachiever that I am, even as a midget freshman, I've gone ahead and checked out the

admission websites for both of the schools and gotten to know a bit about their student life via student blogs. These information has really led me to want to go to either of those schools. But I don't know. My opinion might change over the four years. I might learn UCLA or UCSC or even De Anza is better suited to my needs. And then, by God, I will change my plan. I will still apply to Harvard/Stanford (you can't stop me by doing that), and should I get in, will FRAME my acceptance letter(s) on my wall. But for some crazy reason, if De Anza seems to attract me more, then by golly, I WILL turn down those Ivy League schools and GO. Which I know is a really stupid thing, and probably a situation that's really hard to be placed into, but hopefully, it gets my point through. What I'm really trying to say is go to a school because you really truly WANT to, really truly love that school! Don't go just because it's considered the "smart" school. That's all I'm saying.

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*"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." - Nelson Mandela*

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I always have admired the feeling of "I NEED to do well-cross that out and replace with- get an A! on this or I will fail" at Monta Vista. It's a good feeling sometimes; it pushes you farther than you think if your friends and peers are doing the same. It gets people to colleges and higher education.

But there is another feeling at Monta Vista that near everyone will go to college or a university. Just because of the crazy academic achievements, yes, you will go to a college/university if you apply for some. Sure, most people fear of getting into the university or not, if they make it or not. Many have high hopes, of Stanford, of UC Berkley, of UCLA. I, with my slightly less than perfect score, just doesn't have that kind of hope. It's not that I'm incompetent, it's just money-wise.

Everyone around me seems barely affected by the recession. It's as if the entire world got hit by a financial tsunami of the crisis and Monta Vista barely got wet. Yeah, I'm pretty sure most of you have friends that just seem to have limitless spending cash, when their headphones break they buy a new one, when they have a slightly slow computer then receive another just as soon, and the ever so common comment of "I got a new CELLPHONE!" just seem to resound everywhere in Monta Vista. Even after the bubble of the financial world popped, that rule holds true. Not for me. It has never held true.

You could say my family practically drowned in the wave. We live on the edge, not knowing if the next month will result in us losing the residential place or if we yet still are able to struggle for survival. So talking

about college, its not about how hard it is, its about if I'm going or not.

That thought of being excluded from many activities that required money still plagues my thoughts. I had friends that try to help me for some of the costs just so that I can go. but in the end, I know I have to pay them back so I just decline. It hurts to see everyone around me, enjoying times and such, and scared of college, barely glancing at the costs because they know they have enough money to pay for it. Sigh...

That's me. I go to school knowing that everyday is another battle to ward off the attraction to spend money on items and events just because I know my wallet is empty for most of the time and that I most likely will not go to my college. I hear every so often that people talk about the college they chose and I can't talk with them for long. Inside, my mind is reminding me that I might not even be at MV for much longer so why bother. It's how I go throughout everyday in school.

I write this with the hope that people around me can figure that not everyone is as fortunate as you are, ones that probably won't go to college and worry about more pressing matters. As one being to live in such an expensive community and might not be here the next day, month, or year.

College never really rests in my mind for much nowadays. A fleeting grasp here and there just permeates throughout the day. Everyone still tries to get the most out of High School so they can go to the college of their dreams. I just try to live from day to day, just watching how everyone else acts just hits me hard.

You might have that question resting on the tip of your tongue right now: "how does this person survive?" I'll tell. It's yet another thing about the atmosphere in Monta Vista: You don't need money to have fun. And I appreciate that. Keep it going because I am certainly not the only person at MV with this. Just keep with that and help a friend with a small something, say a dollar. They'll thank you for it even if you don't know it. And maybe, I and the others just might join the ranks of people sure of getting to college.

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-There was a drunk guy in my dorm at night and his roommate had friends over and he was going to go to sleep soon so he was just wearing boxers. He needed to go to the bathroom, which is outside in the hallway, so he just took his phone. When he came back, his roommate and his roommates friends left, so he was locked out of his room, drunk and half naked.

-My roommate tried to smoke a twix bar.

-There are a bunch of people in my dorm who decided to smoke salvia one day, which is a legal drug for people over 18. It is a hallucinogenic. One guy ended up seeing everything as mad out of legos, one guy felt as if he was constantly falling, one guy thought he saw a woman who was dragging him and taking him away, but in real life he was actually dragging one of his friends and almost ripped his arm out of the socket, and one guy saw a squirrel with a hoard of nuts and then the squirrel tried to attack him so he punched it and stole its nuts and then the guy hibernated.

-The night after halloween, my roommate had a total of 33 shots and ended up rolling around in a pool of his own vomit on the floor.

-I've stayed up many nights with no sleep at all studying for exams.

-During the first week of school at a party, my roommate got drunk, and by the end of the party he was wasted. I said to him "Man, that's pretty beast." He replied "Yeahhhh! I'm a beast! I AM GOD!"

-Once, I wrote a paper an hour before it was due. My teacher said it was the best in the class. Opposite fml.

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*"Nine tenths of education is encouragement." - Anatole France*

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For me, it was never really about getting into college. I knew I had the grades, the extracurriculars, and the determination. But the one thing that I lacked was the one thing that 17 year olds can't earn through studying or acing tests. All that I needed now was the money.

It really isn't fair. I'm not from one of those families with two story houses and a pool in their backyard. I'm not one of those teenagers that get a car on their sixteenth birthday, or go shopping with their friends every weekend. I've never in my life been able to afford to slack off, or spoil myself at the mall, or even buy a junior prom bid. Whenever I spend extra money on something, I feel guilty, like I am wasting the money that my parents work hard every day for, but if I keep my money tucked away and watch as my friends go to prom or senior ball, I feel sad, and at times pathetic. I love my parents, and I know they work hard to earn money to make me happy. According to Chinese culture and to my own mind, I owe it to them to become successful one day and take care of them like they have all my life. And for me, that goal involves going to a good college, but now as graduation nears, I wonder if that will ever happen. I know there's loans and financial aid, but it's still not enough for some of the colleges I've applied for and been accepted to. And it pisses me off because I feel like even though I've worked hard these four years in high school, I'm being

robbed from, or denied something that I know I deserve. There are scholarships too, but in the world of Monta Vista where everyone works hard like I do, do I even stand out? Do I even have a chance? I'm angry that some paths I could have taken have been cut off for me because of money, and that I'll most likely have to settle for a community college. But most of all I'm scared of disappointing my parents, and scared for a future where I realize I could have been capable of so much more.

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I never thought I would ever feel fear when the thought of college came up. After living for 16 years in a house full of arguments and fights, I always felt that I would be relieved when the day came for me to leave and create my own, happier life. But now, the one thing that I have always looked forward to has become something I am dreading.

I am afraid.

In my room, I have over a hundred pictures pasted on the wall, from birth to childhood, from elementary school to high school. I'm looking at them, and hundreds of faces stare back, some that I've forgotten, some that I've let go, some that I still love. At school when I'm laughing with my friends, a certain pain always surfaces. I see their smiles and I feel the love that all of us share for each other, and I fear how hard it will be when I have to let them go. It's the same pain I felt when I lost my grandfather, the pain of loss, because the day I leave I know that no matter how much we loved each other, many of us will drift apart. I hug them now and wonder if in a few years we won't even remember each other anymore. We always say that we'll never forget each other, but I know that's not true. Time will rob us of our memories, our inside jokes, our secrets, and in a few years only the pictures on my wall will bring back the past.

It hurts.

And it hurts more to know that that day is coming soon.

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*"At college age, you can tell who is best at taking tests and going to school, but you can't tell who the best people are. That worries the hell out of me." - Barnaby C. Keeney*

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The first two colleges to get back to me were negative, something which admittedly brought down my spirits. Granted, they were two of the longest shots, but having had no initial colleges "in my pocket" I felt pretty miserable. When Penn State got back to me it all got better, and as the UC's rolled in started to feel happy.

The problems started when the deadline for my college decision started looming nearer. My girlfriend

wanted me to go to the same college she is going to. She blamed me for wanting to part from her, and for not being as committed as I “should” be. Things got pretty bad, and I nearly went to the school she wanted me to, even though I knew I didn't.

I just know that no matter what, I need to pick where I want to go. If our relationship matters, then me going where I want should not be an issue. Heck, it's hard. I don't want to throw away what I have gained in being with her, but I can't throw away myself either.

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I've been hearing so much about college. What is college? A place where people go and do drugs? Or study? I've heard so many different stories. I don't even know where I wanna go, or what I want to do. I guess I should start figuring that out and seeing what college is. All I know is that those that are moving on to college will be missed.

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*“The way to learn to do things is to do things. The way to learn a trade is to work at it. Success teaches how to succeed. Begin with the determination to succeed, and the work is half done already.” -Unknown*

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it's been four years. Four long, tiresome, grueling, fun, and crazy years since I entered the doors of MV. And looking back at everything, I've gotta say: I think I like how everything panned out. I'm proud to say that I have no regrets as I go off to college.

True, there were lots of time where I hit roadblocks where things didn't go as intended. Stuff took 180-degree flips and led me in the opposite direction, somewhere I usually didn't expect to go or somewhere I didn't really want to go. There were so many moment where I felt that I just couldn't take it anymore. Too much stress... too much crap from one class of from somebody who kept creeping up on my nerves. Too much to do, and I knew there was no way that I was gonna get an A or raise my GPA no matter what I did.

But looking back at it all, I'd say that what don't kill or stop you, only makes you stronger. Sure, there was a lot of crap I had to deal with from myself and others.

But in the end, I came out a winner in my eyes. I didn't get a 4.0. I didn't set the curve in my classes. I didn't get into an Ivy League. And I didn't get into UC Berkeley, the most coveted school in the eyes of every single MV student I know. I'm glad I didn't fall victim to the curse that sadly affects many students. Stress or no stress, I see myself as a winner.

I did the best that I could, overcame my problems, and came out on top: at the end, I was a survivor. I survived

the MV inferno of GPAs and SATs and APs. I never once felt the need to compete with my friends or other classmates. Rather, I competed with myself and pushed myself to go beyond my own limits and capabilities.

And I'm damn happy that I didn't succumb to the "Cal curse," as I call it. I'm going to a place where I'll be able to live and enjoy my college experience to the fullest of my abilities. I'll be in a place I've loved since freshman year... in a place where I'll meet like-minded people who are not only focused on their academic goals, but also know how to let their hair down and just chill out.

Remember... these four years in MV determine the next four years of your life. Never mind what haters and others say, just ignore them till they fade away. It's YOUR life, so YOU should take the responsibility to MAKE IT YOUR OWN. Don't let others control or make you decide what to do... just live your life how you want to so that you don't have to look back 30 years from now and regret having done or not done something. To my fellow seniors... together, we made it; now let's celebrate and kick back. To the rest of you all still in MV, make these remaining years some of the best in your life. Grab life by the horns, and just make it yours.

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*“Traveling is not just seeing the new; it is also leaving behind. Not just opening doors; also closing them behind you, never to return. But the place you have left forever is always there for you to see whenever you shut your eyes.” -Unknown*

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I recently read a book that brought up an interesting topic. It spoke about during the time period when the average life span was roughly 30 years, people lived every day for the next. We were primitive animals and hunted, gathered, and enjoyed the moment. There was no future to think about because life was too short. But as the life span increased to 70 and 80 years, suddenly there was so much time. People had to plan to make sure they could support themselves later on in life; they had to think about the future constantly. Thus ever day became for this “future”. From elementary school, to middle school, to high school, to college, to grad school, to the initial entry level jobs, to moving up the ranks of the social ladder, to getting a family, and then supporting children. The main character in this story was simply so frustrated by this fact. She believed that no one lived outside of the future and didn't spend enough time in the present.

Though I find her theory somewhat interesting, I do disagree. Though we live every moment in planning for the next, and we may not be “living life to the fullest”, I do believe that we still enjoy ourselves. It is a common saying that the enjoyment is in the journey

or the process, not in the result. So perhaps we are doing it the right way, we enjoy preparing for the future and dreaming about what is possible, than in completely immersing ourselves in what is now.

In high school we enjoy to dream about the future. We enjoy speculating about where we will go and what we will do. College is the next step to enjoy those future options. And according to what others say about college, people do truly enjoy themselves. There are moments when everything in the world revolves around one moment, one happy, joyous moment, and then there are others that revolve around the future and what *could* be.

I am not really sure what my end point is. I think I am simply trying to say how college is another chapter of our life to reach the conclusion, but each chapter is so thrilling and so exciting, even if it *is* to reach the end of the story.

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*"A memory lasts forever, Never does it die. True friends stay together And never said goodbye" -Unknown*

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The disappointment my parents felt when they found out that I didn't get into any UC was not as painful as the disappointment that I felt at myself for not getting in. I felt like such a failure and that basically my high school "career" was a waste. All the APs that I took, the times I turned down hanging out with my friends or family. I basically went through a phase of not being good enough for anything; my SATS/ACTS weren't that high, APs were average, grades decent, etc etc. I was just so angry at everything for the longest time because it was always the question, "Why me?" I knew countless people who were "not as smart" as me or had the same grades, get into colleges that I wanted to go to. People around me also kept reinforcing this thought into my mind, "It's not you, it's the UC system", "It's the economy" blahblahblah. I get it. Times are hard, there are cuts, but what if I had just not taken enough APs, studied enough on that math test/bio test whatever. It was just that college was looming over me and that everyone else had gotten in whereas I had failed. It also bothered me when I would walk around and hear people (friends included) talking about college and putting down people that did or didn't get in—or just putting down Cal Poly SLO, the school that I was admitted to. However unintentional it was, it still showed how stuck-up everyone is about college here. I don't think anyone will ever get over this. They have the mentality that if they get into UC Davis or UCLA they have to go to UCLA because it's "better", or the same with Davis or Irvine. Blahblahblah, it's always the same.

I just feel that the basic neglect that I had for so

many things in my life during high school (looking back), I regret so much. They say, "You're not supposed to have regrets in life", but I feel like if I could do high school over again, I would in a heartbeat.

For me, transferring from De Anza after two years was not an option for me because I just couldn't stay here anymore. Certain other events made it just hard for me to be around a place where I had felt so low. I know going to Cal Poly SLO is just better for me as an individual. Although, I'm terrified about the prospects of what college will be (high school x2, more choices, awkwardness) I know that going to college in a new place with a few friends would let me start over. I won't make the same mistakes again because I can't go through everything that high school was for me. I guess I'm actually excited to get away from it all. Honestly, the end of high school and senior year shows you who you can trust in your life and who you want to surround yourself with.

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Living in Cupertino and being born in an Asian family, has engraved the importance of education into my mind. Although college is very important, I do not think that going to a private university or UC is all there is to life; such is the mindset for many teens and their families today. College is a necessary stepping-stone in your life, but in places such as Cupertino academics are stressed too much. In order to be successful, there needs to be a balance in life. Education is a vital part of your life, but that does not mean that other life lessons and experiences should be sacrificed at its expense. This is the approach that my parents took when raising me and I have now adopted a balanced mindset as well. At this point in my life as a junior at Monta Vista High School I regret things that I have done in the past regarding school and just with life in general. There have been times that I have just wanted to give up because I am not satisfied with the path I have taken with my educational career. Although I have faced many difficulties in life I still strive to do my best and no matter what college I attend, I realize that it is only a small step towards life as a whole in which there is much more awaiting ahead.

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Everyone always told me that I would be happy wherever I go to college. That it doesn't matter where you get in because you will find a fit for you wherever you end up. I believed them. I was hopeful, worked hard, and have always been an honest, truthful person. Then the rejection letters started to roll in. And they just kept coming. You know your fate is doomed when you get the little envelope... I got ten of them. But I don't get it. I'm not a bad student. I have decent grades. I am involved and do community service. My SAT scores

were not terrible. And I wrote amazing essays. But here I was. A decision between two schools I really did not want to attend. I was so confused. What did I do wrong? Should I have traded my high school experiences for better grades? And of course everyone around me was getting into schools they were very passionately excited about. It sucked. I felt like a waste of four years. So Spring Break rolls in, and I fly across the nation to visit one of the **two** schools I got into. I spent a few days visiting the town and a few days on campus... And I do not have words to express how deeply I fell in love with this school. I could not have found a better fit for me to spend the next four years of my life. And on top of it, they offered me a huge scholarship. This school is seriously perfect for me. It is a great school with a program I am really passionate about, and if I had gotten into "better" schools, I would not have been able to afford them anyway. In the end, the prophecy came true. Regardless of the fact I got into virtually no schools. I will be happy. And after the last couple months of college drama, this is very hard for me to believe. I plan to spend the rest of the year hanging out with my friends every day and every night. The rest of high school will be amazing. This summer will be unforgettable. And college will be the time of my life.

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*"I used to get quite upset that I'd make friends with a guy or a girl and then within the space of three years we'd move and go and live somewhere else, and you'd have to say goodbye to that person."*

*-Dominic Monaghan*

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It all comes down to the rankings of colleges. Everyone's always judging others on what college they go to but the one thing I don't understand is how the college you go to determines who you are. When colleges come up as a topic among my friends I feel like they always discriminate some college and prefer the brand named, or the cliched type of top colleges. Sometimes the thought of colleges scares me. I don't know where I'm going to end up and I know people are going to make judgments on what college I go to. Seeing everyone have so many accomplishments throughout high school discourages me and makes me realize that they'll probably get into a top college leaving me behind somewhere else. One of my friend always complains about not getting into an Ivy league or top private colleges, but what he/she doesn't realize is that it doesn't matter. Your life is not going to be ruined if you don't get into Harvard. I've seen seniors perfectly happy about going to a college that is not one of the brand named colleges and I wish everyone would just realize that and stop making such a big deal about top colleges.

ist aht long enough

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College. When I think about the word college, I feel a sense of excitement and a sense of sadness and anger. I'm excited for independence and new experiences, but what about the process of getting to those moments? When I first started high school I thought that it would be a breeze and that people were just exaggerating about the rigorous sophomore and junior years. But now that I'm a Junior, I understand what they mean by rigorous. I work as hard as I say I can just to get accepted into a "good" college. But really, I don't even know what college I want to go to or what I want to major in. I'm perceived at the "good" student among my friends, but what they don't know is that I'm not the best student and I do get C's as a semester grade. I try living up to my "good student" look but its just so hard. I don't even understand why I'm working so hard for college. I don't need to go to a top UC to get a good start in life. I'm beginning to fear senior year because I honestly feel that I'll be let down in March. That I'll be rejected from UCs and end up going to DeAnza or San Jose State. Even though I don't see what is wrong with going to DeAnza or SJS, the Monta Vista atmosphere will make me feel inferior. And I fear that I'll flunk out of college because I'm having trouble with my AP classes, whereas everyone else in my class is doing well. I'm just looking forward to when I'm actually in college, and all this crap about SAT scores and AP scores won't even matter.

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*"You were always there to help me  
You were always there to guide me  
You were always there to laugh with me  
You were always there to cry with me  
But most important you were always there to love me  
and I want to assure you that  
I am always here to love you"*

*-Susan Polis Schutz*

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Less than fifty percent of college age Americans attend college. That is very surprising to hear as a student at Monta Vista since it is assumed that pretty much all people at Monta Vista go to a college after high school, and if they don't, it is because of some better opportunity that they have going for them. In many places, it is a big accomplishment to actually go to a college, at Monta Vista, people are praised for getting into a good college. I find it somewhat humorous how much people take for granted how lucky they are to get into any college.

For example, by what I hear, my brother is considered to be very smart. My mom would always brag to people about him and how he is loved by so many teachers,

won the purple and gold award, constantly brought home 4.0s or higher, and doing this all while being a three sport athlete. It was not even a question whether or not he was to apply to all of the top schools. He had his interviews, which he said went very well, and all we had to do as a family was patiently waited for his acceptance letters. When they came in, he didn't get into any of the Ivy League schools that my mother really wanted him to go to. He "only" got into the UCs that he applied to, which included UCLA and UC Berkley. When I found out, I was so proud and excited for my brother, UCLA and Berkley are great schools. My mother on the other hand, was satisfied, but not ecstatic. She was so sure that he would get into an Ivy, that it hindered her from celebrating the success of him making it through high school and going to a great college.

When I think about this, it makes me kind of angry how at this school and environment, people take for granted how much of a privilege it really is to be able to go to college.

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College. There are so many connotations to that word. It means pressure to make a decision that will affect the rest of your life, the opportunity of a lifetime, or just that place your parents want you to go. It's a standard for seniors to ask each other where they applied, and who got into what school. Acceptances from big-name schools are shown off like expensive new clothing, and those who didn't get in or even apply anywhere but DeAnza just try to keep quiet during these discussions, and hope they don't get noticed. The truth is, colleges only accept the "best" to wear like medals as well, and it's all a competition to see who can best adapt to the education system that's in place. Is this necessarily a bad thing? Not necessarily. It prepares you for a competitive workplace, and it prepares you to assimilate into a working community, but is going to college and getting a "higher education" ruining our ability to think creatively? Yeah, it teaches us how to be "successful" as defined by today's leading experts, aka the media, but the constraints of the norms isn't giving people enough room to breathe and actually contribute beyond the 9 to 5 jobs. There are a few exceptions to this, but for the most part, colleges today are best at churning out people who are perfect at what they were trained to do, and those people were in turn fed to the colleges by high schools which trained them to get into college. So why do we worry so much about college? Because we were told to.

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*"I think all great innovations are built on rejections."*  
- Louis Ferdinand Celine

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College. It's the one thing my parents can somehow fit into every nook and cranny of every single conversation. If they were left with the ability to only be able to say one word, I believe this would find its way very close, if not at, the top of the list. Not that I shouldn't be worried about college, of course I should be, and I am, to my own extent. I understand the importance of college and acknowledge the extent of it determining your future, but I just don't find myself overstressing unnecessarily. Instead, I probably stress more about girls than I do about college. But I'm a guy, its in my DNA. In reality I'm unbelievably excited for college. The idea that I will be enough miles away from house for my parents to not be able to check on me strikes excitement in of itself. I don't hate them, or dislike them; they're just the type of parents who wouldn't know which "what if" to stop at if their life depended on it. And their pessimism can almost make every situation into a bad one. They're the type of worry warts you'd imagine when you think about a short Asian man on TV warning you about the potential health risks caused by every single type of food in the world, then presenting you with the ultimate solution by selling you a product of his own, perfect and free of all health defects. Life just doesn't work that way.

Anyways, I guess I just would enjoy being able to stretch my independence, or just live without the eyes of my parents looming over me like a hawk, it gets unbearable sometimes. But of course, being the cautious and authoritarian parents they are, they have a hand in determining the process and location of my higher education. Their ultimate solution? Undergrad at China of course! I would return to china after the graduation of my days at Monta Vista, where then their buddies on the Board of Education and my godfather, the dean of one of the top and the oldest university in China, will guarantee me a place at the top of the educational ladder. Sounds great right? Not necessarily. I don't see the point of returning to China for college after moving here. It just seems like a waste of time. Why come to the land of the free, the home of the brave, the father of a new level of higher education, just to go back? Don't get me wrong; China's educational system is sound and great. They pump out dedicated hardworking students like a supercharged copying machine, but I just wouldn't fit in. I'm thinking about going to a private school, and getting a degree in sociology. I took an introductory course over the summer at De Anza with my friends, and I've never enjoyed a subject more. I also had the most amazing teacher, so that probably added to the fun. So that's my college in a nutshell. I'm worried, I'm excited, I'm all those things Monta Vista students are about college, just down a notch. It's simpler this way.

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“We regret to inform you...”

“I am sorry that we are unable to offer you a spot...”

“Despite your excellent academic record...”

Well that’s just great. I didn’t get in anywhere I wanted to.

Okay sure, this was just a dream but a very reoccurring one. A stack of papers delivering rejection brought to me by my cheery mail man.

College is supposed to be a new beginning. A fresh start to a new part in your life. New places, new people, new experiences. It all seems so fresh and exciting . I’ll be learning new things, meeting new people, going new places. It’ll be an adventure from start to finish. But it seems as if that new start is impossible. My past affects my future, each choice affects the next in a small but significant way. Every day matters. College brings on pressures that everyone experiences. For me, it’s a fear of failure amongst other things. I couldn’t look myself in the eye if I didn’t work hard enough to get myself a good education. Maybe this is where all the stress comes from. Probably. Thought the stresses of high school for me have included making new friends, dealing with family issues and trying to keep my grades up, the hardest one of all comes at the end. Leaving. How can I leave my friends and my home where I’m sheltered from the real world? A place where I’m safe and there are exceptions and people to forgive you and mistakes to be learned from. When I leave, I won’t be treated as a child anymore. There will be consequences and hard decisions to make. Harder than any experience during high school is that of not coming back. It’s not just a change in location and surroundings, it’s a change in mindset and maturity. And once I leave, I can never come back. The real question is whether I’m ready. Is anyone ever ready to become an adult?

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*“You and I will meet again, When we’re least expecting it, One day in some far off place, I will recognize your face, I won’t say goodbye my friend, For you and I will meet again” -Unknown*

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College has always been a part of my life, lurking in the scenery. I didn’t really care much about it until about the 8th grade. Up until then it was mentioned in passing, my parents would always speak about Harvard and Yale with a sort of lilting tone and their faces held a perfect vision of one who had reached nirvana. I had always assumed that if I worked hard in high school that I would end up in the Ivy League. I never even considered an alternative. It was either Columbia, or De Anza. Then, in the 8th grade when I first entered into the Cupertino school district and started going to Kennedy, I got a big shock. This school was so much

harder than my old one. The classes, the tests, the teachers, I had once been a straight A student and now I was floundering and drowning in homework and studying. My first report card came, and I had some B’s. I had tried as hard as I could, but my mother did not consider this to be enough. I never again got a 4.0 during the 8th grade, which resulted in a lot of nights spent listening to how I would end up working the drive-thru at McDonalds. Did I really want to end up going to a community college? Why would you do this to yourself? There is no other way to have a good life, you must get all A’s! These messages were endlessly pummeled into me and until I felt like there must be something wrong with me. How was it that all these other people got what seemed unattainable, but I didn’t? I decided that I was stupid for a long time. I eventually stopped caring about my grades and focused more on being social and on my friends. At the end of the year though, I made sure that I would work harder when it came to high school. I did. I spend night after night working, working, working. I cried, a lot. My parents still yelled at me. I started having breathing troubles that the doctor said was stress-related. I almost forgot about the goal, about why I had bags under my eyes and why I would be depressed when I failed a quiz. I forgot about college. All I could think was to get good grades, good grades, good grades.

Now, I look back on this experience and I wonder if it’s really worth it to berate your child until they are machines focused on a goal that is nearly impossible to reach. I have only been in high school for about six months and it has already taken its toll. I don’t think that high school should be treated as a stepping stone to college, but it should be appreciated on its own merits. We should learn to understand the merits of college, but not necessarily at the cost of a high school student’s emotional and physical state.

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Aside from getting a good job and supporting a family, college is basically the thing that our lives have been leading up to for most of us students. Its kind of scary. How right now, you basically have your future in your hands--if you bomb that next test, that makes your grade go down, which makes your GPA go down, which in turn results in you going to a non top 10 college, and then you won’t get a good job...so your life is screwed. A part of me wishes i was a senior, about to head off to college and start my own life--but, another part just wants to stay a kid forever, and not grow up, not have responsibilities. Its kind of frustrating, seeing little kids walk by me, thinking im some dumb scary teenager, when im are thinking: I used to BE you! I was once your age! but then, you feel like some old grandma talking about 'back in the day'. Part of the reason why i want to stay young is, i have NO clue what i want to do.

none whatsoever. So, i try to put college in the back of my mind. try to avoid the fact that i'm nearing adulthood...Im not going to lie, i'm pretty scared.

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*"Don't be dismayed at goodbyes, a farewell is necessary before you can meet again and meeting again, after moments or lifetimes, is certain for those who are friend."*  
-Unknown

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I think I was in Chemistry when I first thought about what would happen if I didn't go to college. Isn't that crazy? After fifteen years, none of which I can remember not thinking about college, this oddball of a thought pops into my head. After fifteen years, I feel as though I can relate everything I have done in my life to getting into college. It has been as much of a constant in my life as family.

Looking back on it now, that seems rather pathetic. College is my number one priority? There must be more important things in my life. But in a school where every student, every teacher, and every parent knows that college is an important factor in most of our lives, I feel as though not thinking about college is impossible. One of my teachers last year did an impromptu voting in our class. She asked us how long we have thought about college. "Since last year?" All our hands were up. "Since 8th grade?" And on it went until we were down to our toddler years. You guessed it. There was still one hand raised.

There really isn't any harm in this. I mean, good for us. Teenagers want to pursue a higher education. I just wish we had a little more freedom in our choices. Sorry, "choices." Like I said, for me, college has been a constant in my life. I have no say in whether or not I get to attend because... because.

It's great that kids have plans for the future. It's great that our little society has groomed us to want to achieve more. But truthfully, it would be even greater if our little society can relax just enough so that thoughts of "What would happen if I didn't go to college?" wouldn't be so crazy.

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What do you think of yourself? What are some things that make you a leader? Why do you want to go to this university? What makes you different from others?

When my cousin first opened her "introduction to college" manila envelope during autumn, she started to panic. "Ahhhhhh! What do I write about? I don't have anything special about me!" And so begun my frequent trips to her house to help her on her self-image report.

Berkeley, UCLA, Stanford, and MIT. Those are the names I've heard of when I was just in first grade.

"Guess what? My daughter got into UCLA! I'm so proud," exclaimed a loud Chinese woman, yelling it

loud enough so that all of Marina Foods could hear. My cousin, on the other hand, was not too please. "Geez. Great! Now I have to get into Berkeley to up her," sighed my cousin, Melody. Just last week, my cousin got accepted into Berkeley. Now I have to up her. Great.

The truth? I'm worried! I know I'm just a freshman right now...but in three years, I'll be a senior. And seniors have to fill out college applications. The pressure of getting into a better school than my friends is HUGE. So huge that sometimes, I don't even know why I'm friends with them(my friends are major nerds, but in a good way). But it doesn't stop there. Everyone at MV is smart. All the competition can really freak people out. After all, I'm already freaked out. The thing is, I'm just about average. I'm not exactly a genius. I'm not super athletic either. And I don't have any super out-there hobbies. So what do people like me do about college? I honestly don't know, and I don't want to know yet. But one thing's for sure; my college nightmare have just begun.

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*America's future walks through the doors of our schools every day.*  
- Mary Jean LeTendre

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College. I haven't given college much thought until now. It had always seemed far away, but now students all over the school are comparing what colleges they got into or didn't get into. Getting into an Ivy League school is like a ticket to success. Getting into a top school earns many people's respect but I think getting into a school like Harvard is overrated because it's not a true measure of talent or knowledge. It's not fair to judge someone by what college they got into, but some people still do it. I don't ever want to be judged like that.

I know that soon I will also be one of those people, waiting to hear the news of whether or not I was accepted into my dream college. The point of working hard in high school is to get into a good college. Sometimes I wonder if I'll succeed in getting in my top choice. It seems like a long shot. A really long shot. On top of everything else, I also have to worry about whether or not I'll receive financial aid. My family isn't rich. It's not fair that I have to worry about so much more stuff than everyone else. College seems looming in the near future for me and I'm not ready to take that giant step. Right now I just want to push the thought of college to the back of my mind. Right now I just want to enjoy high school. Right now I just want to be myself.

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College. It's such a simple, clean word standing on its own. Just seven letters, two syllables. But at the same time, the world of college and everything associated with it is mind-blowingly complicated.

At least, that's what it seems like to me, a freshman. Hopefully by the time I reach second-semester senior status, I'll be much more relaxed about the entire deal. But I don't even want to try to understand college – college applications, college essays, college majors, college clubs, college sororities, college parties, college sports, college graduation... it just seems like such a huge concept to take in.

Of course, there's a ton of people out there (seniors, college students, adults...) that say not to worry about, because college is just a far-off concept that a freshman shouldn't have to bother with yet. But considering how everyone says college apps should be started by summer after junior year, the load of decisions to make, essays to write, and information to gather must be enormous, and therefore necessitate tons of time. So I'm definitely scared.

On top of this, it seems like the school courses we choose now affect us in the paths we choose to take later on in life. While choosing between Precalc and Math Analysis, I found myself tracing out every detail of the math sequences and conferring with my counselor, parents, and peers over the pros and cons of each class. Chem or Chem Honors? Well, what am I going to do for a job? Is it going to be science-related? Chemistry-related?

What else scares me? For one thing, I don't even know what a college essay is. I don't know how financial aid works. I don't know what the big difference between majors and minors are. I don't know how I'm supposed to decide my major. I don't know how I'm supposed to choose a college that will affect my career path and the rest of my life. This list just goes on and on and on, from the petty questionings to the gnawing fears that are being pushed to the back of my mind.

Maybe I'm just being paranoid because I don't know much about college. Maybe I'm really just making a huge, overdramatic deal about this. But so far, all these factors are building up and building up and that huge mound of college dealings is imposing and scary to me.

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One of my brothers went to UCSD. The other one? MIT. Oh boy, do I have expectations.

The only thing that I am excited about more than college is having the right to vote. They both seem so out in the distant. I told my parents that even if there is the slightest chance that I was accepted to Stanford (and my parents still lived here), I wouldn't go. The

definition of college is to get away. Not twenty minutes away. How could I call myself independent when my mother comes over every Sunday to cook me some fajitas?

I think sometimes I forget that college will actually be work. When someone says the word college to me, I think of: parties, driving, friends, dorms, independence and everything else along those lines. I don't once think of classes. I hope my expectations aren't too high because right now, they are soaring. I just can't wait. I'll be in a new place with new people and new things. It will be a change and I am ready for it.

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Whenever I think about college, my reaction seems to differ from that of most kids I've come across. Most everyone perceives college, whether the application process or going itself, as something painful and rather stressful. Maybe I'm strange, or maybe I can't quite bring myself to stress out in general about things, but I look towards college with an anxious eye.

One experience during sophomore year before that brought me even closer to the world of higher education. Throughout the year, I had felt inadequate, and felt as if my contribution towards society was somehow not enough. I wasn't earning my keep; I was a waste of space and but a taker of resources. In my anxious pursuit of higher educational research, I turned to the military. What better a way to serve your country and pay back for your life (as well as resolve feelings of inadequacy)? Feeling especially patriotic, I had signed up to speak with the Air Force rep one night in the Career Center. Oddly enough, I was the only kid there. That night was very special, and one I wouldn't easily forget. Shaking hands with the friendly man, buzz-cut and welcoming smile, I soon got into my comfort zone. I also found that the Air Force would be quite an adventure, and physically as well as mentally I wouldn't fit in. The physical requirements would tax my weak body, and the militaristic way of operation was rather different from my cooperative and discussion-based dreams of a dream college. Always the odd one, I wanted to be the square peg in a round hole. Thus, ever since last summer, I have been forming a college list.

But I didn't give up. I learned that night how to ask questions and change former opinions, even take the other side of things at times. Instead of being content, I challenged my former thought, I learned to critically analyze, and I began to insert myself into the picture. From that night and the ones to follow, I learned that college wasn't just about a diploma. It wasn't just about AP credit, examinations (I'll refrain from listing them all), stress, parties, and drugs. College was your life for the next two or more years, especially on a residential campus, where I intend to live. You have to fit into a college, and it has to fit for you. That is why people get

rejected, or choose to turn away independently, from an institution. You're just not the right fit. At least, such is true for the majority of colleges and universities.

For me I soon turned from the military, not because it was the military but because it simply was not the 'right fit'. Really, what's the point of going somewhere if you're going to be miserable the whole time? Yearning for college, I wanted a place of open discussion and freedom. I wanted to talk and be talked with, to challenge ideas and go for the next big obstacle. I wanted change and upheaval, but I still loved tradition at its finest. Strangely enough, in my adventures and escapades of online and personal research I uncovered some of the best and brightest institutions in the country. And I couldn't wait to visit.

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*The purpose of the university is to make students safe for ideas -- not ideas safe for students.*  
- Clark Kerr

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Leaving – it may not be such a bad thing. Well, maybe now it isn't. But as colleges began to dish out their acceptance letters, I thought leaving was the worse possible thing that has and will have ever happened to me. As my boyfriend slowly received acceptance letters for the colleges he applied to, I was furious. I would think to myself, why the heck are all these colleges sending him letters? Why does he have to leave? Why are the colleges being so selfish and taking the one I love away from me? The day he got an acceptance letter to the school he might attend, I walked into 4th period, took my quiz, and just left. I flat out told the teacher I couldn't stay through the lecture that followed. [okay my friend – you know who you are – took me outside of the room after the quiz]. Well, for the 30 odd some minutes after wards, we sat outside I just poured my heart out – not literally but I told her all the feelings that were boiling up inside me. I told her about the fear of losing my boyfriend to the real world. I told her about the times that I would miss and how college is destroying my life.

Now that I think of it, I was stupid. I was an idiot for thinking college had the ability to take away the one I love. I know now, after letting reality sink in a bit, that college will never be able to ruin my life and rid me of the one person that has been able to move mountains for me. [I know many people have helped me through my struggles but this one person, well he has shown me the light.] College, now that I think of it, is only an obstacle. Leaving won't be as bad as I made it out to be. Of course I will be devastated the day I have to say goodbye to him for, oh I don't know, 2 months? But I know that he will always come back. Even if he doesn't, I know that he will always be with me where ever I go. College may have been that lurking monster

in my closet, but now it is just another 'thing' that is getting in my way. I will miss him, no doubt about it, but somehow I think that being apart will only bring us closer.

I never thought I would say this but, thank you for accepting him into college. By doing so, I have learned yet another valuable lesson – taught to me by those around me who care about me and love me: no matter where a person is in the world, never assume the worse because if they truly love you, they can be in outer space but will always be right next to your heart. Thank you for all that you have done for me the past school year. I will never forget the way you look at me and smile and soothe me after a stressful day. College, you may have taken him from me but you will never be able to truly take him from me. College, you are only taking him physically from me but emotionally, he will always be with me. Try as hard as you will, but you will never be able to break that connection between us. Super glue is awful hard to undo. Once stuck together, always stuck together. Try as you might, but you will never be able to take away the one I love.

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*"A college education is not a quantitative body of knowledge salted away in a card file. It is a taste for knowledge, a taste for philosophy, if you will; a capacity to explore, to question, to perceive relationships, between fields of knowledge and experience."*  
- A. Whitney Griswold

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College. It is a time in everyone's life that calls for change. It is a time when people leave their safe havens and go forth into the world--setting foot into a world of the unknown. College marks the beginning of a new chapter in the books of each and every one of us.

Leaving is hard for some. Others it is a time of joy and relief from the restrains of childhood. Some see college as an escape from parents and the cliques and drama of high school. But other people see college as a time of fear, of entering into the world of competition, of reality striking. I see it as a time of goodbyes, a time of leaving your loved ones and letting go. Summer is fast approaching. It is a time to get out and enjoy life. But how do you enjoy life when you know that at the end of the road, in a couple of months, when school resumes again you have to say bye to the ones that guided you and helped you through your struggles??? I have never had to say goodbye before. Maybe to a family friend or a teacher for the weekend but I have never felt so sacred in my life about saying goodbye. College seems as if it should be something you would want a person to go to because it marks the beginning of a new life. But somehow, I can't allow myself to let go. I know that my friends will be back to come visit but can I trust them? I don't know what to make of the situation

thrown at me. This past year, I have gotten so close to so many of my friends that well when they leave, I will feel incomplete. Yes I have friends who will be staying behind, who will be walking at graduation with me in the near future but its not the same. The relationship I have developed with my friends who are parting from their old life – and consequently me – just seems so different. These friends are older and wiser. They know more than my other friends know. They have guided me through the dark tunnel of the past year.

They have been there for me. [Not to say my other friends have not.] But it is just something different.

College should be a time of happiness. But I see it as a time of sorrow. Saying goodbye never seemed so hard.

But I guess when September rolls around and each one of my friends that have helped me through the past year slowly leave one by one, I will feel once again lost in the world of uncertainty. They will leave me and they might not come back. College does things to people.

But somehow even if college is a place for change, I can always trust that my close friends will come back.

For now, I will have my other friends with me, the ones that will walk with me, alongside me. I know I will have to venture into the world of unknown sometime too in the near future but now, when September rolls around, it just won't be the same. Saying goodbye has never been so hard. College is taking my friends from me. It is robbing me of the people that have cared for me and helped me through the rough patches in the lawn. Why does college have to permeate the lives of all those that care for me? I guess it will happen to me...sometime...sometime. But for now, it is the evil monster lurking in the closet at night, waiting to pounce on you and wake you from your fantasy. This past year has been my fantasy, a dream that I have dreamed but finally gotten to live. And college – the lurking September – is coming in and waking me from my sleep and bringing me back to reality.

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I'm going to go to a small private college and say that's where I wanted to go so that people can't say that I didn't get into Berkeley or Stanford or whatnot because I've seen the pressure and the talk kill my friends from the inside and it's not going to happen to me.

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*"The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet."*  
~Aristotle

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Some families train their children from the day they are born to be the best at everything they do. Little kids are told stories of how people who don't go to good colleges end up on the streets, or even worse, as an hourly worker in McDonald's. It is as if not getting into Yale or MIT means the end of all life on this planet.

My cousins grew up listening to the horrors people who went to bad colleges had to experience every time they failed to get that "A" on their test. My eldest cousin didn't excel at math/science related subject like her father had wanted. She didn't get accepted to that top-notch college like everyone had hoped for. They still love her all right, but whenever the children in our family are being compared, she always falls to the bottom of the ladder.

By luck or by design, my parents live far away from the rest of our extended family. Perhaps it's culture, or maybe my parents are just different, but I grew up without the pressure of a large family breathing down my neck forcing me to succeed. I have received the speech about the importance of education, but never has there been a time when I couldn't tell my parents about the "B"s I've gotten. I can go to my parents for comfort or help without fear of a full-time tutor showing up at my doorstep the next day.

Sometimes, the need to do well comes not from my family but my peers and me. I don't need anyone to tell me to get "A"s when I can see everyone else doing it.

At Monta Vista, that's what feels natural. That's what we've all learned to default to. A UC is the norm and no proper "Asian" kid should end up in De Anza.

Sometimes I wish the thinking of my parents could be transferred to other parents, even though I know those over-zealous parents aren't without reason. I'm always sad when I see my friends cry because of a poor grade, because I know they aren't really working for themselves but for what their parents' think they should do to be happy.

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College scares me. Not the application process as of yet (even though I know I'll have massive panic attacks when they get here) but more the thought of being independent. I rely on my parents so much. I know I'll be able to handle meals, shopping, laundry, all that, but the little things, like killing spiders, or not going checking my email or IMing every twenty minutes. I know that I'll love college for the experience, but I hope that it doesn't turn out like my feeling about MVHS, where I love the experience but I hate the studying. Because life doesn't work that way and I shouldn't work that way and college might not work my way.

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College sounds great, and I can't wait to go. But getting there in the first place has been such a pain in the butt. First of all grades are a pain to maintain and the difference between an A and B is staggering for my classes. Then there are the SATs, which I've found take up a lot of time as well, studying and studying... AP tests stress me out too. Heck I still need to study and they're in a week. College

applications will be painful too. Essays and teacher recommendations. And even though I'm trying my hardest, I doubt I will go anywhere fancy, as we are too poor to. I just wanna get out of high school and finally be done with all this stress.

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*"How did it get so late so soon?  
It's night before it's afternoon.  
December is here before it's June.  
My goodness how the time has flown.  
How did it get so late so soon?"*  
~Dr. Seuss

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Its not too early, or too late to start thinking about the next four years of your life; college. Well, that's what everyone says. You bulk up on extra-curriculars to make yourself the most impressive out of your class. We've all seen it before; the kids who do everything they can possibly fit Monta Vista has to offer in 24 hours.

But I am thoroughly convinced people do not do this for colleges. Awake at 4:00am doing Calc homework because all day you were stuck making your DECA business plan after a four hour soccer practice. Do you really love Stanford that much?  
I don't think so.

You do it for bragging rights. You do it because you want to be better than the rest, but not really because you love it. So you can graduate with acceptance into the best of colleges, but mostly, so you can rub it in everyone's face.

Okay, that may sound a bit harsh. But inside, I think everyone has that feeling. Everyone has boasted their courses for next year, their recent A on that ridiculous

math test, to the kid they knew didn't so hot. I do it too. It's human nature. Except I think it goes too far when passion and interest in something take a backseat.

Its unfair how humans were made in different capacities of intelligence and abilities, and how we are all stuck in the same school taking the same classes. It's unfair how we weren't given any instruction manual on how we're supposed to live our lives being so different from one another. But that's just how the world goes. You have to learn to live with yourself and love who you are, and people will love to live around you too. I think college should be about the people you meet and the things you learn, not how much faster you can get there.

I used to be a really insecure person, and sometimes I still am. I realized though, my problem was trying to balance everything into the perfect person; be brilliant like everyone else but still be happy and have time to have fun. I still don't know what I'm supposed to do; learn from others or just be whoever I am regardless. It's hard to decide when everyone says different things, and even harder when your not at the top of your class. But I think I've reached a point of realization to which I've stopped comparing myself, my grades, my life, to everyone. Sometimes it overwhelms me to the breaking point, and sometimes I couldn't care less. But I just take a few deep breaths and keep on going.

I do my best, set goals and try to exceed them. I'm pretty sure we will all end up in a good place as long as you give it 110%. I'm not going to say that I'm totally sure of everything, but all I know is that there isn't any point pretending to be something I'm not. When you're in your mid-30s with a whole new life, those snooty colleges don't really make a difference in the way everything turns out. It's important, but really, what's more important than enjoying life?

# College

Lisa Fairchild of Family on the Edge Coaching

Let me start by saying what an honor it is to be asked to write for the College issue of Verdadera. I applaud the purpose and mission of the publication- “instigating communication concerning the ‘real world’ of high school within the community”. It not only serves to give voice to the thoughts, ideas, angst and challenges that students face on a daily basis, but it gives parents and other community members a chance to see where our “work” is as those chartered with laying the foundation for our next generation. It’s a chance to see and bear witness to the fact that what we offer our children in the way of guidance and support is not always received the way we intend. It’s an opportunity for us to shift gears, take a look at what it **really** is that we want to leave our kids with as they get ready to jump into their adulthood. And for the students, it’s a chance to see and hear that while you’re all in the same environment and at some level exposed to the same things, everyone has their unique response or reaction to what lies ahead of them.

Still stuck in terms of what direction, perspective or angle I would share regarding my response to this month’s topic of “college”, I wondered both literally and figuratively, what does college mean? So I looked it up in the dictionary and was surprised (in an awakening sort of way) the definitions I found. They ranged from the obvious, *an institution of higher learning* to the provocative where college is British slang for *prison*. I noticed the definitions in some ways mirrored the range of perspectives that were in the articles. My next step was to look at the definition of University. Again, the expected definition was *an institution of learning of the highest level* and a second definition of *all together, the whole, the universe, a number of persons associated into one body, a society*. Aha... okay, there it is, a direction I can take that is fitting with my “professional” submission as a coach.

One of the tenets of coaching is to focus on the **who** someone is... rather than the **what**. The what, in this case, is college. It is clear and well documented in the submitted articles that Monta Vista has high academic standards. But the response to the expectation of high academic standards varies. There are students who feel pressured by it, some who feel oppressed by it and others who are challenged and inspired by it. There are some who are ready to take it on and others who are angry and resentful feeling that they are or have been forced or pressured into doing or behaving in ways that don’t feel true for them. It occurs to me when I see the depth and breadth of these thoughts, it’s all about choice and perspective.

There are a few threads of thought expressed in the articles that I want to highlight, particularly directed to students:

**High School as a Stepping Stone to College:** At some level, every stage in our lives is a stepping stone for the next but this place (the one you’re in now) is worth planting both your feet firmly on while you’re passing over. Whether you are a freshman looking down the road at the idea of college or a senior who is already beginning to taste and feel the changes ahead, there is value in being here and higher learning available to you now. *That learning is far more than what class you’re in, what you need to do to get the grades you want or what clubs or activities you are in. There is learning about your relationships and how you interact in the world around you.* And let’s be clear about this... while we may at times feel isolated as our paths, perspectives and experiences set us apart, we don’t do life alone. Grab this opportunity to expose and explore who you are. Do this by looking both inside yourself and outside to your peers and your community. I encourage you to notice when you feel conflicted or drawn to someone or something. Look outside yourself not for approval but for expansion. Seek out opportunities to challenge or solidify your perspective by being willing to hold them up to scrutiny. Become aware of what assumptions you make or what biases you hold about perspectives and paths that

are different than your own. In short... do the discovery work on yourself to find what's right for you.

**The Norm:** One of the submissions has a series of comments that begins, "*something's not normal about .....*" So what is normal? Is it what everyone else seems to be doing? Is it what your parents expect of you? Or is it what works for you? I say... while holding the highest expression of yourself, define your own normal, and be okay with that possibly being abnormal.

**Prepare for the college application process:** At the read through of the student submissions, I asked the seniors in attendance, what they wish they had known or done differently about preparing for college. Here are some of the tips they shared:

- 1) Start keeping track of your activities so when it comes time to fill in your application you don't have to try and remember what you did several years ago. Great idea and one that can be expanded upon. Keep a file of ideas that interest you or really turn you off... whether that is specific colleges, areas of study, the size or focus of a college, the social environment, or the location.
- 2) Visit a variety of colleges. While most have an official open house in the spring, almost all colleges have tours available any time of the school year. Visit campus at a time where you can see and interact with students. Ask current students what they like or dislike about the college.
- 3) Take advantage of the resources at Monta Vista- the Career Center, the counselors, and your peers.
- 4) Get an early start and check out financial aid and scholarship opportunities available through colleges and community groups. Your Career Center is a perfect place to research these and ask for guidance.
- 5) And if I may add one... don't forget to DO high school, as in experience it at it's best and fullest as you prepare for college. You only pass this way once! And as one student said so well... "This is the time of my life!"

Some thoughts for parents... I hope these articles have provided you with some powerful and provocative insights that our students are feeling. These candid expressions of what college means to them provide much food for thought. Are students and parents preoccupied too much on the WHAT in terms of college? And as a result, is this taking away from focusing on the WHO? Shouldn't we continually guide our kids to look at him or herself completely in terms of the whole person they are, and will become? And through this kind of guidance we can help them to use college or any other future non-academic endeavor they pursue as another stepping stone in order to assimilate all those wonderful and unique parts of themselves so they can and will contribute to our society and to our world. As one student so eloquently writes, allowing our children the freedom of choice, having mutual respect for one another and teaching them to take responsibility for their own futures prepares them for life in the real world, no matter where they go to college. What could be better than that?

Congratulations to all the seniors! May all your stepping stones lead you to becoming your very best!

### **About the Writer**

Lisa Fairchild is a Family and Relationship Coach with Family on the Edge. Together with her business partner, Carol Satterlee, (a Monta Vista parent and advisor for Verdadera staff) Lisa provides individual and group coaching in all areas pertaining to families and relationships as well as presentations and workshops to schools and community groups in the Bay Area. The mission of Family on the Edge is to bring connection to families regarding their values and instill confidence to guide them through difficult and challenging times. More information can be found at [www.familyontheedge.com](http://www.familyontheedge.com).

## Resources from the Verdadera Staff

### **Colleges That Change Lives: 40 Schools You Should Know About Even If You're Not a Straight-A Student** by Loren Pope

*The title says it all! 40 unique colleges that could change your life.*

### **Your First Year of College: 25 Tips to Help You Survive and Thrive Your Freshman Year and Beyond**

[http://www.quintcareers.com/first-year\\_success.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/first-year_success.html)

*An article about what to expect in the beginning of college and how to be very efficient in freshman year.*

### **College Freshman Tips**

<http://www.college-freshman.com/>

*Tips for college freshmen about freshman year, being a freshman, and college life.*

### **Tips for Parents of College Students**

[http://gsep.pepperdine.edu/family/youngadults/tips\\_for\\_parents.htm](http://gsep.pepperdine.edu/family/youngadults/tips_for_parents.htm)

*Eighteen tips for parents about keeping in touch with their children and letting go.*

### **Ways in Which College is Different From High School**

<http://www.mycollegesuccessstory.com/academic-success-tools/high-school-vs-college.html>

*What to expect in college that may differentiate from your current high school life.*

## Upcoming Summer Issue and Submission Deadline

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
Tradition and Culture	Saturday, August 1 <sup>st</sup>

### *Ways to Submit*

1. Visit us at [www.verdadera.org](http://www.verdadera.org). You can submit stories here, learn more about Verdadera, read previous issues, and meet staff members.
2. Stories can be turned in to **any staff member** – hardcopies or emails (available on our website), anything is welcomed. Staff members are also there to help answer your questions about issues, topics, anything.
3. Email it to [verdadera.entries@gmail.com](mailto:verdadera.entries@gmail.com).



## College June 2009

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