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My name is Kyle Lawson and I am a sophomore in Civil Engineering at Iowa State University. I am from West Des Moines, Iowa, where I have lived my entire life. My father has spent nearly his entire life in Iowa. My mother was born in Colombia, but moved to the United States, where she has spent the last twenty years. It is amazing to think about how I ended up here as a successful college student. Then again, it might not be so surprising. After all, my father did attend Iowa State and both of my parents are intelligent, hard-working people who have instilled the same values in me. I have always been successful in school and I have always worked hard to get what I want. I have always liked Iowa State and I was attracted to civil engineering, so I guess it makes sense that I ended up where I am today.

In high school, I had no idea what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. Even in my senior year, when I was thinking about college, I had no idea what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to go to Iowa State, because it was the perfect school for me. I had always liked Iowa State and it was close to home. I applied to Iowa State the summer before my senior year of high school. I was immediately accepted, which made me very happy. However, I still had no idea what I wanted to study. I chose civil engineering out of a list of majors at Iowa State. It just seemed like something I would really like. I liked buildings, bridges and roads and I felt like I would enjoy working with these things. I was happy at this point of my life. I had been accepted to the college I wanted to go to and I had found something that I really wanted to study. Then, one day came that changed the rest of my life.

It was a normal weekday afternoon and I was at home. My mother came in and told me that I had received another letter from Iowa State, which was not surprising. I opened the envelope and read what was inside. It was a scholarship from Iowa State. I couldn't believe it, so I read the letter again. It was the George Washington Carver scholarship, which would pay for my tuition throughout college. I showed the letter to my mother and she was just as excited as I was. I had been wondering how I would pay for college and this scholarship would take care of this problem. I told my father and all of my friends about the scholarship and they were all very happy for me. I felt extremely fortunate to receive the scholarship. I immediately accepted the scholarship and I felt much better about my future. I would be able to go to college and pursue an engineering degree and I would not have to worry about paying for tuition. Life was good.

At this point, it was pretty much official that I would be going to Iowa State. However, my mother still wanted me to take a campus visit to see what the school was like. I agreed to go, just to see what the Iowa State campus was like. On a Saturday morning, my mother, my father and I all got in the car and drove up to Ames. It was a cold, snowy December day. Not only was it snowing, but it was snowing hard, making the drive up to Ames quite interesting. Once we got to Ames, the first thing I saw was Jack Trice Stadium. It looked so big and magnificent. We drove on and I saw Hilton Coliseum and some of the dorms. I really liked what I was seeing. We arrived at the Memorial Union, where we going to start our campus tour. On the tour, we walked around campus and went into some of the buildings. I got to see Parks Library and Lake Laverne and I walked around Central Campus for the first time. I learned more about Iowa State and I realized that it truly felt like a college. After the campus tour, my father drove us around Ames. I got to see places like Friley Hall and Campustown, places where I would eventually spend a lot

of time. I already liked Iowa State, but after the campus tour, I liked it even more and I was looking forward to going to college there.

The next few months went by and I was finishing up my high school career. I spent my time going to school, working and spending time with friends. As the months went by, I was becoming more and more anxious about going to college. There were so many things I was worried about. I didn't know if I would get good grades and I didn't know how much time I would have to put into school. I was also uneasy with leaving my family and friends behind. In May, I graduated and it was my final summer before going to college. I spent the summer working and hanging out with friends. We went to the beach, we went bowling and we had a party to celebrate my birthday. It was so difficult to think that I would be leaving this behind when I went to college. My last few weeks in Des Moines were pretty emotional. I was leaving the life I had always known and I was going to an unknown place full of unknown people. The thought of school also made me uneasy. It is safe to say that I was not looking forward to college at all. My friends told me it would be all right, and I knew I had to leave everything behind and do this. At the end of summer, I packed up all my stuff and put it into my car. I was about to start the next chapter of my life.

I left Des Moines on August 16, 2011. I woke up early and I made sure I had everything I needed packed up in my car. It was a rainy, Tuesday morning as we drove out of Des Moines into the unknown. My life was about to change. I wouldn't see my parents every day and I would be on my own. I would have to live around a bunch of people I didn't know and I would have to be responsible for myself. We arrived in Ames and we drove to my new home: Wilson Hall. We carried all of my stuff up to my new room, a small room on the ninth floor. Once everything was in the room, I said goodbye to my parents and I watched them drive off. So this was it, I was all

alone in a strange place. Most teenagers would be excited to have all this freedom, but I wasn't. I just wanted to be back at home with my friends. I spent the night in the room alone, watching TV and playing on my computer. There really wasn't much to do since I didn't feel like unpacking. The room had no air-conditioning, so I was stuck sweating in the summer heat. I wasn't looking forward to college before, but this was just terrible. I wanted it to get better.

The week before school started, I spent my time getting settled in the room, getting ready for school and hanging out with my roommate Josh. We walked around the building and met some new people and we went to Destination Iowa State later in the week. It was fun, but I still didn't know anyone and I was too shy to talk to anybody. I was still getting used to everything: the dining halls, the bus schedule, living in the dorms. I was feeling better about college, but I still didn't like it at all. For my first semester of college, I was enrolled in classes like Calculus I and Chemistry 177. The classes were held in large lecture halls, but that didn't surprise me. What did surprise me was that I had homework and a quiz during the first week. After a couple of weeks, I was doing well in Chemistry but I was doing terribly in Calculus. I still didn't have any friends in my building and I would eat dinner alone in my room every night. After a while, I decided to be more social and talk to the other people on my floor. Everybody would hang out in the middle of the floor, in an area by the elevators. We were really loud, but nobody seemed to complain. After hanging out with my floor for a week, I had made some new friends. It felt good to talk to other people and I found out they were going through the same things I was. Soon, we were all good friends and we would hang out all the time. We would go to football games and we would hang out in each other's rooms. I began to put off school, because I would rather hang out with other people from my floor. While the rest of my grades were fine, my Calculus grade was terrible. It was a difficult class and I did not work hard at it, so my grades suffered. As the

semester went on, I became closer to my new friends. We became so close that I didn't want to go home on the weekends anymore. I just hung out with my friends and avoided homework. By the time finals came around, I was doing horribly in Calculus. I had not yet learned how to handle college classes and it would be nearly impossible to get the C- or better required to move on. Not surprisingly, I didn't get a C- or better in the class. I was disappointed in myself and I realized that I would need to try harder to be successful in college. My GPA was good because I did well in all of my other classes, but I knew I had to make some changes.

After a refreshing Winter Break, it was time to get back into school. I was more confident in myself and I knew I would do much better this time around. After getting back to Ames, I was happy to see everybody on the floor again. We had a fun time catching up with each other and I felt great. This semester, I would be retaking Calculus I and moving on to Chemistry 178. I knew what to expect this time around and I started off very strongly. I continued to hang out with the floor, but I always put time and hard work in to do well in my classes. The days of my floor hanging out as one big group were over since we all formed our own little groups. Things were much more settled than they had been during first semester. I got into a comfortable rhythm and I was able to focus on school more easily. I also went home more frequently, because I still missed being there. During the semester, I attended basketball games and went to VEISHEA. I was having fun and doing well in school. By the end of the semester, I was still doing great in everything, including Calculus. I ended up getting a B in that class, which made me extremely happy. After my first year of college, I had a 3.45 GPA and I had made it through Calculus. There were some bumps in the road, but I was happy with my grades.

I was done with school in early May, so I headed back home for Summer Break. The best part about college is the breaks, and three-and-a-half months of summer were just what I needed.

I returned to my old job and I got back together with my old friends and everything felt perfect again. It felt nice not having to worry about school. Summer went by quickly and before I knew it, it was August again. I went back to Ames, more confident than ever before. This year, I would be living in Friley Hall and I would be living with my friend Matt. I quickly settled into my new room, feeling much better than I did the year before. I was taking Calculus II and Physics this semester, two of the hardest courses I would ever have to take. I was nervous about these classes and I told myself to just try my hardest. These classes would both prove to be extremely difficult, but I did fine since I worked hard. I spent my free time hanging out with Matt and my neighbor Kyle, a friend from high school. We would eat dinner together and we would find other friends to hang out with us on the weekends. We went to football games and movies and did fun activities on campus. I enjoyed living on campus, where I was closer to my classes and the dining hall. I continued to do well in Calculus II and Physics, though both were extremely difficult. Going into finals week, I am confident that I will do well in both classes.

It has been quite an interesting journey to get here. I have had some good times, some bad times and some times where I felt like giving up. This whole experience began with the day I received the George Washington Carver scholarship, and I am not sure where I would have ended up without the scholarship. I have come a long way since I first arrived in Ames. I was lost as a freshman, but I learned how to be successful in college. I know what I am doing is not easy, so I must work hard at it. While I must work hard, it is also important to have fun. I hang out with my friends and go to Iowa State games and movies. Sometimes, I go home for the weekend. I feel better now than I have at any time before in my college career. Now, I know what to do, what to expect and how to achieve my goals.