



Alan Brantley

2018 Stanford Additional Information Statement

Status: Accepted

Additional Information: Do you wish to provide details or circumstances or qualifications not reflected in the application?

I'm not your typical math major. Many people may assume a math major to be naturally gifted with mathematical thinking and computation. Not so with me. I admit it.

My path to this point was atypical. As a youngster, we moved often. I rarely attended the same school for more than two consecutive years, and by 10th grade I had attended ten public schools. With no firm guidance at home, I stopped going. The life consequences, predictably, would be significant. Through most of my twenty's I worked in service. I did everything from dishwasher to Food and Beverage Director. But, instability was the one constant in my life. Like my childhood, I lived under many roofs. I had never lived anywhere long enough to call a place home, much less consider myself a part of a community.

By thirty my life had spiraled out of control. A lifetime of instability, addiction, depression, and perpetual anxiety was beginning to take its toll. If one were to have taken a snapshot of the trajectory of my life in 2010, my current position would have seemed impossible. I wasn't just sinking, I was sunk. I was 30 years old. I had no education, no job, no dreams, no hope, and no future. I had no life to live, and had lost my will to survive.

Thankfully, I eventually discovered a deep passion for mathematics, geometry, and physics. These passions would ultimately lead me to enroll at Fullerton College, where my life would change forever. I am very proud of what I have achieved here academically, and equally as proud of my membership in the Fullerton College community. When I'm not studying, I'm likely working to help others be successful.

When I got here, it was for the sole purpose of learning math. I quickly learned that this was not going to be as easy as I expected. From the beginning, in every STEM course, I struggled. Looking at my transcripts, one might be surprised by this statement. I've finished at or near the top of every math class I've taken. In reality, my grades disguise the nature of the struggle it took to earn them. Hiding underneath my transcripts are long weekends at home and frequent frustration bordering on panic induced desires to just quit. Often, people see my performance and think it's because I'm really smart, or I'm a "math person." The truth? My performance is a direct result of relentless effort, a continual evolution of strategies that allow me to learn in the face of challenges, and the complete support of the Fullerton College community.

From these struggles, however, has come success, and the opportunity to share my strategies with others. It is without question that these experiences are the ones that have most defined my time at Fullerton College.

I don't run from my experiences, or even regret them. I embrace them, because they were the critical steps along the path that brought me to this moment. This is why I am the school's biggest student advocate of Growth Mindset. I am that struggling math student. I am that poor kid who dropped out of high school. I am that kid who almost didn't make it. As little as six years ago, the idea that I could have an opportunity to learn and earn an education at a world class institution, or a Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship semi-finalist (decision in April), was unthinkable. Yet, here I am, on the doorstep. Now it's simply a matter of walking through the doors I have been working so hard over the past four years to open.

I know this means I have to move again, and to join yet another community. But this time, it's in pursuit of something bigger than keeping a roof over my head. This time it's about entering into the global community. This time, I'm prepared for it.