

When looking to put my thoughts on my first independent year into words, I found myself completely scatter-brained, with one idea bouncing to another, one memory overcasting another and absolutely NO WAY to clearly and coherently summarize my freshman year at Arizona State University. At first, I panicked and thought 'This is bad. How will I write my essay? Bill Facinelli is going to kill me!' But then I realized that this inability to express my first year was not due to a lack of subject matter, but rather the opposite! As memories crushed one another in a fight to be mentioned in my memoir, a plethora of physics equations, German vocabulary and post-freshman knowledge side swooped in and commanded my immediate attention, only to be assaulted by my hopes for the future, coming out from the back of mind to remind me of all the academic endeavors I have started and daily yearn not simply to complete, but to dominate and excel in! These things I cannot convey to you in a manner that would be as motivating to you, as it is to me. Save for one.

The one discovery that found me last year (and quite off guard, if I do say so myself) was also an old acquaintance. German came and surprised me. Although I thoroughly enjoy my science courses and am still very much in pursuit of a career in the medical field (I am currently interning for Dr. Checroun, an ophthalmologist who exposed me to my first case of keratoconus! Sweet!), I have expanded my interest to include this harsh, guttural, beautiful language. What did Phi Beta Kappa have to do with discovering German? To see this, we will have to rewind back to before freshman year. The summer of 2008, after having explored my options a bit with German in high school and after ecstatically learning I was a recipient of the Phi Beta Kappa Scholarship, I made the choice to CLEP test and continue my German studies. The test costs \$72. I was overjoyed to learn that I would be directly placed into the second semester of the second year of German! For a small class fee, of course. I was pleased to hear my professor's recommendations for German literature books. Not included in the course. And I was amazed to find out that ASU offers foreign exchange with a number of German universities. For an arm and a leg and your first born.

Now, I understand that there is no such thing as a free lunch and you can't get something for nothing. Education is expensive. Message received. But all of these additional costs and fees are enough for any mildly insolvent college student to be discouraged and abandon any hope of free-willed exploration! No, no testing the waters for students on a budget. This is where the Phi Beta Kappa Scholarship changed my circumstances. With eased financial strain, I entered my German courses with a positive feeling and genuine gladness. After a year of study, I felt compelled to continue my study in a native setting. Having been able to scratch up some money during the year (as opposed to taking large amounts of student loans out), I spent part of my summer in Germany learning, observing, exploring and testing the waters!

It's true: I didn't NEED this class. It is not essential to my education nor is it vital for my survival. My heart will continue beating with or without German words beating in my brain. But then again, one could say the same for our taste buds. The ability to taste seems a little too wonderful than strictly necessary. There is no real need to enjoying chocolate cake, no advantage to savoring ice cream. Humans could just as easily permeate without indulging themselves in strawberries, coffee, honey and other little pleasures. However, we humans do not simply measure life in terms of years, but also in terms of quality. These things that give us pleasure enrich our lives! German is a wonderful luxury that

perhaps I would've discovered on my own...but maybe not. Although I cannot reasonably give credit to the persons of the Phi Beta Kappa committee for this incredible realization, I can say that, without a doubt, this scholarship was an enormous factor in my ability to dedicate 100% to school. To put in ALL of my efforts to following every single one of my academic whims, one of which lead to German, my new subject of study! I am incredibly excited to thank the Phi Beta Kappa committee for enabling me to follow two of my loves: Biochemistry and German.