

PACERs in the Real World

Graduates of the Program in America and California
Explorations Program at John F. Kennedy High School



Kevin Leong, Ben Gevercer, Sho Takatori

*Where are
they now?*

Ruben Dominguez, Class of 2010

Something that surprised me about the real world was the amount of responsibility you undertake as you get older.

I attended the University of the Pacific.

I work as a writer/producer for FOX40, communications intern for the San Juan Unified School District, and press intern for the Speaker of the California Assembly.

Yes it was challenging in PACE because the classes were (as I found out in college) truly comparable to college classes.

Mostly, I miss traveling to many tremendous locations and learning from the experiences.

My fondest memory of PACE is the field trips.

PACE prepared me for the rigors of studying, preparation, and writing for college classes.

The advice I have for graduating seniors is to take advantage of the great opportunities and exposure to many diverse areas of life, because they won't be around forever.

The single experience that transformed me the most was getting to cover UFC as a member of the student newspaper.

My philosophy of life is simple, my philosophy is kindness.

Education, assistance, **and** community **describe PACE.**

My biggest role models are my parents.

The measure of success is finding happiness, not only in your profession, but in all aspects of life.

I am passionate about family, friends, sports, writing, and good television.

Three things on my bucket list are to climb a mountain, travel all 50 states, and to attend a World Cup.

In five years I hope to be working in a top communications related position with a sports team.

Before I die, I want to live a fulfilling life.

The biggest change in myself from high school is mental maturity.

What drains me the most is constantly working for (sometimes) money.

Something new and exciting (and my favorite sports teams winning) **is what recharges me the most.**

I am inspired by challenges and impossibilities.

PACE taught me how to prepare and be organized for my next few years of life, as well as several handy writing tips you need to know for college.

When I was in college I was the Editor-in-chief of the school newspaper, *The Pacifican*.

I'd like to get to know you.

I hate not having the answer to how to get a full-time job.

Ben Geuercer, Class of 2008

I attended the University of California Santa Cruz.

I work as a Budget Analyst for the California Department of Finance (fun stuff!).

Yes, it was challenging in PACE because we read some great books in Ms. Reynaga's class!

The great teachers, fun field trips, and my friends in PACE is what **I mostly miss about PACE.**

My fondest memory of PACE is sitting in Mr. Andrew classroom at lunch and talking about life.

The advice I have for graduating seniors is study hard, find what your passion/interests are, and take chances and try new things.

My biggest role models are my parents.

The measure of success is how hard you work at what you do and what you do to make the world better.

Coffee **is what recharges me the most.**

I am inspired by what my friends and I have accomplished since we graduated high school in 2008.

Evan Gillogley, Class of 2010

Something that surprised me about the real world was there's little time for learning and not enough time for work.

I attended the University of California Santa Barbara.

I work as a Communications Specialist for the Better Business Bureau serving northeast California. I manage the Public Relations and Communications Department, including the website, digital marketing strategies, and the press.

Yes it was challenging in PACE because the classes were more challenging than most of my college classes.

The academic challenge and small community of PACE is what **I mostly miss about PACE.**

My fondest memory of PACE is grad night and when teachers take time out of their day to talk to me.

PACE prepared me for the fast-paced work environment.

The advice I have for graduating seniors is some of the hardest work you do may be in high school. In college it does get better.

The single experience that transformed me the most was when a teacher counseled me and gave me some advice and perspective when I struggled with personal issues.

Live it loud, but always listen **is my philosophy of life.**

Challenging, supportive, **and** family **describe PACE.**

My biggest role model is my sister Ellyse, who also went through PACE.

How happy you feel **is the measure of success.**

I am passionate about getting the most out of life and seeing the world.

Three things on my bucket list are to travel to Asia, always be there for my partner, and make a change in the web industry.

In five years I hope to be a manager in the field of Digital Marketing.

Before I die, I want to know that I had a life full of love, happiness, and drive.

The biggest change in myself from high school is maturity. College taught me how to work with people and how to adapt to the real world.

A full work week **drains me the most.**

A great conversation **is what recharges me the most.**

My peers and their commitment to their work **inspire me.**

PACE taught me to keep trying and take a different perspective in each attempt.

When I was in college I realized how well PACE prepared me for life.

I'd like to see where other PACE alumni are and what they are doing.

I hate not having the answer to my next project at work or where to meet like-minded people.



Lyndsie Harris, Class of 2007

Something that surprised me about the real world was having an income is awesome, but being an adult is hard! Don't take for granted how much your parents do for you today!

I attended the University of California Berkeley.

I work as a Senior Warehouse Manager, Tier 2 Logistics with Anheuser-Busch.

Mostly, I miss the cultural trips and experiences **about PACE.** They were awesome.

Yes, it was challenging in PACE because the excellent teachers pushed us out of our comfort zones and demanded a lot of us, **but** made the environment so fun that it didn't always feel like a task, it was exciting to learn.

My fondest member of PACE is the friendships I made in PACE. They are long-lasting and are with people who still, to this day, push me to be a better person and to strive for me.

PACE prepared me for a rigorous college experience and the ability to balance many different activities and still succeed.

Take college by force **is the advice I have for graduating seniors.** There are so many opportunities to find who you are and test your abilities. The sky is the limit!

Getting into the GMT program with Anheuser-Busch is **the single most experience that transformed me the most.** My life took a turn that I did not expect. It has been quite a ride and a complete departure from what I thought I would do after college, but I wouldn't trade it for anything.

My philosophy of life is plan for the future but live for the moment.

Engaging, challenging, **and** enriching **describe PACE.**

Sheryl Sandberg **is my biggest role model.**

The measure of success is self-satisfaction. I thrive on setting goals and beating them!

I am passionate about making processes stronger, faster, and better.

Three things on my bucket list are travel to all 50 states (I've been to 34), work as a senior leader for a top company, and go to as many world cups as possible.

In five years I hope to be working as a director or higher for a cpg company and thinking about starting a family.

I want to lead a group that works toward human equality before I die.

The biggest change in myself from high school is I am much more confident and sure of who I am and who I want to be.

Trying to do too much **is what drains me the most.** I have to learn to set my limits.

What recharges me the most is a competitive soccer game and an afternoon with my dogs and boyfriend.

My boyfriend and friends who continue to strive for excellence in everything they do **inspire me.**

PACE taught me to explore a wide range of topics and to always strive to grow my world view.

When I was in college I studied civil engineering, joined a sorority, worked part time at a clothing store, played on several intramural soccer teams, and had an amazing time.

I'd like to get my MBA in a few years.

I hate not having the answer to everything.



Laura-Alexis Harvey, Class of 2007

How much pain, suffering, and sadness are out there **surprised me about the real world.** But, we all have tools to care for each other.

I attended California State University Sacramento.

I work as a child welfare social worker.

Mostly, I miss seeing my closest friends every day and having required reading that was actually enriching **about PACE.**

Yes, it was challenging in PACE because there was a lot of pressure to do well **but** it ultimately prepared me for college and then graduate school.

My fondest memory of PACE is really all four years, especially the field trips. PACE summer program is where we get to meet each other. Each field trip allowed us to learn more about our state and further strengthen the bonds we'd made with each other.

PACE prepared me for being a public servant as my career. As a county-level child welfare social worker I am honored to serve communities in this capacity.

The advice I have for graduating seniors is let your best be enough. You have busted your butt for years to get to this point and if you're going to college, graduate school, law school, and so on, it's only going to get harder. Learn to celebrate yourself and your efforts now and take the summer to be young and prepare for what's coming next. You'll have your whole life to work hard.

The single experience that transformed me the most was meeting the most amazing people because although we are not all together like we once were we do still keep in touch. I even married one of them!

My philosophy of life is "Action indeed is the sole medium of expression for ethics" as said by Jane Addams, the mother of social work. We can all want good things to happen but action is how we make them come to be!

Challenging, enriching, **and** providing **describe PACE.** The field trip funding allowed me to have experiences, such as Yosemite, I otherwise would not have been able to enjoy.

My biggest role mode is my mother. She spent a large portion of her life working incredibly hard just to provide for others.

The measure of success is the amount of good you can bring into the lives of others.

I am passionate about humanity.

In five years I hope to be a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in an educational or medical setting.

Before I die, I want to leave a positive impact on the world.

The biggest change in myself from high school is a sense of calm. In high school, everything seems immediate.

What drains me the most is work in general. I love my job as a child welfare social worker, but it can certainly be a tiring career. The reward for outweighs the cost though.

Spending quality time with my husband, particularly when we go for walks and catch up on each other's day **is what recharges me the most.**

I am inspired by people who put others first while still maintaining a healthy sense of self. It is a fine balance to strike.

PACE taught me if the chance to apply for a special program in school can be incredibly beneficial. For my master's program I was a Title IV-E Child Welfare Stipend Program participant.

When I was in college I worked (outside of school) way too much. If I had the option to focus on school and not work during college I would have taken it. I am thankful, though, for the opportunities working during school provided me.

I'd like to eventually be a school social worker. I got to spend one of my internship years at Kennedy as a social worker for SCUSD Foster Youth Services and it was an amazing experience. It was a little weird though, running into my old teachers in the staff lounge.

I hate not having the answer to how I can help someone. I strive to care for those around me, be they family, friends, or clients, and wish I always knew how to do this.



Sarah (Penrose) Haven, Class of 2007

Something that surprised me about the real world was learning that I cannot plan everything and that no matter how hard I work sometimes things do not go as planned. After I graduated from college, I had a difficult time finding a job as a Registered Nurse. All the plans I had about what would happen after I graduated college were stalled because of this which was very frustrating and disappointing. I finally found a job in another state and went into a nursing specialty I had never imagined I would go into. I now am thankful that I could not find a job initially, because I love working in the operating room and I am having a lot of fun exploring a state that I had never even

been to until I interviewed for my current job.

I attended California State University Sacramento.

I work as a Registered Nurse in the operating room.

Mostly, I miss the field trips **about PACE.** We went amazing places like Yosemite, Stanford, Berkeley, and San Francisco. During these trips I was able to see and learn about places I have never been to. I have so many great memories of trekking all over Yosemite and exploring different college campuses.

Yes, it was challenging in PACE, but transitioning from high school to college was difficult at first because it was such a big change, but I quickly adapted to my college classes and course work because PACE had helped prepare me.

The PACE summer program before freshman year is **my fondest memory of PACE.** I have great memories of being at Sac State, meeting fellow PACERs, and going on amazing field trips.

PACE prepared me for for college. When I started college, I already had good study habits and was used to rigorous course work because PACE helped build me up to college level curriculum during my four years in the program.

The advice I have for graduating seniors is don't let senioritis get the best of you. Keep working hard and finish high school strong. I also recommend visiting all the colleges you are considering. Get a feel for the campus, the students, and the overall culture of the campus. You want to go to a college that fits your personality as well as your academic goals. The college that is perfect for your friend might not be perfect for you.

Moving to a different state for an amazing job was **the single experience that transformed me the most.** It is a terrifying and exciting experience. It has really helped me learn to depend on myself and be more adventurous. I am so thankful for this experience even though it is not at all what I expected to happen after I graduated from college.

A professor from nursing school **is my biggest role model**. She helped guide me as a Pre-Nursing student and her advice and support helped me succeed in the nursing program. After I graduated from college, I struggled to find a job as a Registered Nurse. She was always willing to look over my resume and help with my job search in any way possible. I continue to use her as my role model in my daily practice as a Registered Nurse.

The biggest change in myself from high school is I try not to let my fears hold me back. I was absolutely terrified of going through nursing school and becoming a nurse, but it was my dream so I pushed myself and succeeded. I had no idea what would happen when I moved to Texas for a job. I didn't have any family there and I had never seen Texas until I interviewed for the position, but I accepted the position because it would finally allow me to start my career as a nurse and I was excited for the adventure of moving and living somewhere new. In high school, I might have let the fear of the unknown hold me back.

For me **the measure of success is** happiness. I want to strive to always do my best, love what I do, and have a good balance between work and home. It doesn't matter how other people measure success. Ultimately, everyone has to decide for themselves how they will measure success.



Danny Healow, Class of 2009

Something that surprised me about the real world was effort in itself does not always equal a step forward. Keep your end goal in mind to guide tomorrow's steps.

I attended the University of California Berkeley.

I work as a legal assistant at Google, Inc.

Mostly, I miss the teachers, who were always willing to offer help when you need it.

Yes, it was challenging at PACE because you are surrounded by some of the best and brightest students of the Sacramento area and the instructors set high goals.

My fondest memory of PACE is the trip to Yosemite.

PACE prepared me for a strong academic performance my freshman year of college and beyond.

The advice I have for graduating seniors is start using a calendar and work on developing good time management skills. You will need them.

Studying at UC Berkeley **was the single experience that transformed.** Encountering some of the smartest students in the world pushed me to challenge myself more than ever, set higher goals, and find success even in failure.

My philosophy of life is find something you love and you will never work a day in your life.

Accessible teachers, inquisitive students, **and** beneficial coursework **describe PACE.**

My grandfather **was my biggest role model.**

The measure of success is having time to spend with friends and family balanced with a career that allows you to help others.

I am passionate about not letting good ideas go to waste.

Sailing a boat through the Caribbean, writing a book, and flying in a helicopter **are three things on my bucket list.**

In five years I hope to be a practicing attorney.

Before I die, I aspire to own a home in the Bay Area.

Openness to accepting uncertainty/setting higher goals **is the biggest change in me from high school.**

What drains me most is bureaucracy or red tape standing in the way of innovation.

Spending time with my family and friends **recharges me the most.**

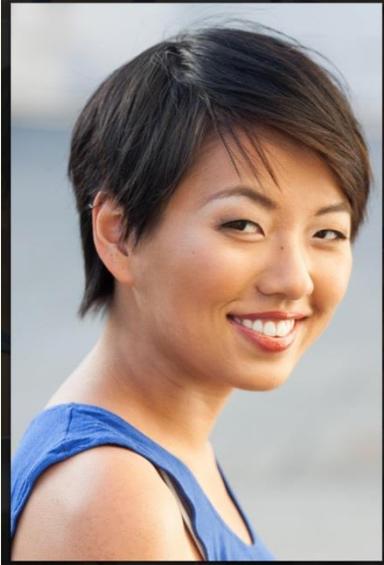
I am inspired by those who overcome major obstacles to help others and find happiness and success.

PACE taught me to work hard and actively search out community activities to expand my horizons.

When I was in college I worked hard for many student groups to aid causes I care about. You should too, but don't overextend yourself. Never forget about the bigger picture.

I'd like to encourage PACE students to volunteer in the community for groups dealing with issues related to their potential careers. In Sacramento there is always an interest group or non-profit thrilled to have the help of motivated and dedicated students.

I hate not having the answer to crossword puzzles.



Terry Li, Class of 2009

Something that surprised me about the real world was how scary it could be in terms of the possibilities – but also how liberating that can be.

I attended the University of California Santa Barbara.

I work as a managing director of a non-profit theatre company that focuses on bringing professional-quality theatre to under-served communities on topics relevant to the Santa Barbara community. I also perform in both regional theatre and film, and I freelance costume and makeup design in the local area. I plan on going to graduate school, probably in Feminist Studies or Education.

Mostly, I miss the sense of community that comes from sharing all of the core classes together **about PACE.**

Yes, it was challenging in PACE because it was difficult courses and materials with high expectation, **but**, I appreciated the challenges for what they were – they prepared me for the difficult texts I would read in college.

Being exposed to the intense literature we read in the English classes and being encouraged to explore them is **my fondest memory of PACE.**

PACE prepared me for the intense workloads of college and for thinking critically at a college level.

The advice I have for graduating seniors is to understand that you yourself have something special to share with others and a passion for knowledge is timeless.

The single experience that transformed me the most was honestly, reading Macbeth out loud in class. Shakespeare makes way more sense once you try to adapt it as your own language.

My philosophy of life is to always keep learning, especially from others' experiences. And don't accept what society presents as norms – keep challenging, critiquing, and engaging.

Difficult, rewarding, **and** crucial **describe PACE.**

Mr. Andrews was **my biggest role model.** His passion for what he did was so inspiring, and he made everything so relatable. That is a huge skill.

Passion and happiness is **the measure of success.** Your path won't lead you to happiness if you only think of "success" in terms of monetary gain or status.

I am passionate about performing, activism, theatre, acting, singing, creating progressive activist theatre (I know that is a bit repetitive) that inspires and challenges audiences ... working to dismantle preconceived notions of racial and gender representations in the media, especially in terms of theatre, film, and TV. I am also passionate about advocacy for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, and about feminist narratives in pop culture.

Three things on my bucket list are 1. To be the first Asian-American woman of color companion to Doctor Who. 2. Star in an official cast recording of a musical. 3. Write a fiction novel that is somehow feminist-oriented, possible sci-fi.

In five years I hope to be working in a larger progressive feminist non-profit, and acting professionally.

Before I die I want to leave the world substantially better than it is now. And I want to help create new representations of Asian-Americans in mainstream media, beyond the problematic tropes we see today.

The biggest change in myself from high school is my passion for more knowledge. It just keeps growing.

What drains me the most is working. I also get pretty hard or down on myself sometimes.

What recharges me most is taking care of myself – that can get lost in the madness of it all sometimes.

PACE taught me that a cultivation of literature and history knowledge is the key to shaping a young person.

When I was in college I veered towards classes that offered works that really challenged everything I believed in, or felt a strong connection to. That happened in PACE too. Those moments of connection and passion are so important in what you study!

I'd like to keep pursuing whatever passions I discover along the way.

I hate not having the answer to what happens if I choose this career over that one? Or this opportunity over another one? I went through the entire application process for Teach for America last year, and turned down their teaching offer because it didn't feel right. I don't necessarily regret it, but I do wonder who I would be, or what I would be like, if I had decided to go with it.



Andy Nevis, Class of 2008

Something that surprised me about the real world was how much it is like school. I still have homework, projects, tests and even recess – just in different forms.

I attended the University of California Berkeley.

I work as a public affairs consultant.

Mostly, I miss the great mentorship from the teachers and staff that make up the PACE program.

Yes, it was challenging in PACE because of the many different demands on your time, but it will make your college life so much more manageable.

The white water rafting trip my freshman year **is my fondest memory of PACE.**

The advice I have for graduating seniors is to do other things in college besides school. My current job has much more to do with what I did outside of the classroom in extracurricular activities than what I did in the classroom.

Being accepted to Berkeley **was the single experience that transformed me the most.**

My philosophy of life is to not waste a minute – life's too short for that.

Enlightening, challenging, **and** transformative **describe PACE.**

My dad **is my biggest role model.**

The measure of success is at the end of the day, year or your life, feeling like you lived up to your potential and didn't waste time or effort.

I am passionate about volunteering and making life better for other people in my life.

World travel, owning my own business, and buying a cabin in the mountains **are three things on my bucket list.**

In five years I hope to be either the owner of my own business or working in a senior level communications position.

Before I die, I want to give back to those that helped me find success.

The biggest change in myself from high school is I am far more outgoing.

What drains me the most is pointless projects.

A nice hike or walk **is what recharges me the most.**

I am inspired by our military men and women.

PACE taught me how to communicate effectively and build lifelong relationships.

When I was in college I made the most of every minute. It goes by fast!

I'd like to make dreams come true for those that have given up on them.

I hate not having the answer to what is in store for my future – though I'm sure it will be an exciting ride.

Sho Takatori, Class of 2008

Something that surprised me about the real world was how quickly time goes by.

I attended the University of California Berkeley.

I work as a PhD student in chemical engineering at Caltech. I teach and do research all day.

Mostly, I miss interacting with fellow PACERs **about PACE.**

Yes, it was challenging in PACE because your classmates are brilliant but the teachers in PACE are really supportive and personable.

My fondest memory of PACE is all the cool field trips that we went on!

PACE prepared me for the rigors of college.

The advice I have for graduating seniors is keep in touch with your friends.

Recognizing how to live a healthy lifestyle **was the single experience that transformed me the most.**

My philosophy of life is to just do it!

Fun and rigor **describe PACE.**

My biggest role model was Walt Disney. Dream big!

The measure of success is how happy you are.

I am passionate about being happy.

I hope to be done with graduate school **in five years.** Maybe 17 more years?!

I want to finish my PhD **before I die.**

What drains me most is the hot weather of Pasadena.

What recharges me most is thinking about nothing; achieving the state of "nothingness."

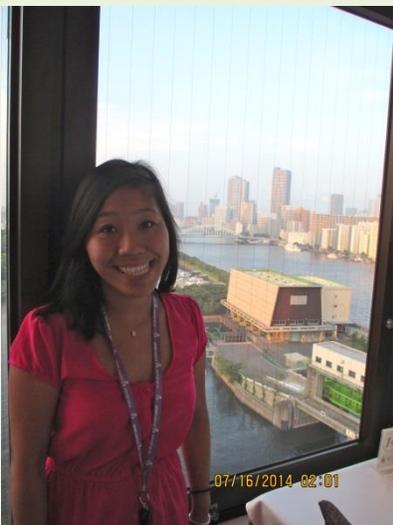
I am inspired by my past and current supervisors.

PACE taught me the skills necessary to succeed.

When I was in college I studied way too much. I should have gone out more.

I'd like to keep laughing and smiling.

I hate not having the answer to my research thesis!



Beth Uno, Class of 2007

I attended the University of California Los Angeles. I am just completing my teaching credential and master's at the University of California Davis.

I work as a kindergarten teacher in the Los Altos School District.

Mostly, I miss the feeling of community that was created by the teachers and students **about PACE.**

Yes, it was challenging in PACE because of Ms. Reynaga's senior AP English class!!! It was almost impossible to get a perfect score on any of our essays we had to write for her class.

My fondest memory of PACE is going on field trips with my friends, especially our senior class field trip to Disneyland grad night and the Museum of Tolerance.

PACE prepared me for writing papers and critically thinking at UCLA.

The advice I have for graduating seniors is enjoy the last hurrah with your friends! There will never be time like this again with your high school friends.

The best teachers **and** the best students **describe PACE.**

My grandpa, a former elementary school principal **is my biggest role model.**

I am passionate about making a difference in the lives of future students.

Riding in a hot air balloon, meeting the President, and traveling throughout Europe are **three things on my bucket list.**

In five years I hope to be happily teaching elementary school and transitioning into a leadership role at my school.

Negativity **is what drains me the most.**

What recharges me the most is seeing the progress my students make over the course of a year.

I am inspired by the resilience of people who have faced insurmountable challenges and overcame them.

PACE taught me to think and write critically about history and literature.

I interned in Washington D.C. for a subcommittee of the House of Representatives Committee on Ways and Means **when I was in college.**

I'd like to teach and live in another country for a summer!

Jordan Yee, Class of 2009

Something that surprised me about the real world was it is unforgiving, but as long as you are motivated and surround yourself with the right people, it makes getting through it rewarding.

I attended the Academy of Art University, San Francisco.

I work as graphic designer.

Mostly, I miss the tight-knit community **about PACE.**

Yes, it was challenging in PACE but the career path I chose didn't always make it completely applicable at times, but it still taught valuable lessons nonetheless.

The field trips **are my fondest memory of PACE.**

PACE prepared me by giving me problem solving skills and a solid work ethic.

The advice I have for graduating seniors is enjoy it while you can, the stakes get higher later.

The single experience that transformed me the most was community service. It taught me to learn to enjoy making others happy.

Do what you enjoy, that's it **is my philosophy of life.**

Integrity, responsibility, **and** growth **describe PACE.**

My dad **is my biggest role model.**

The measure of success is defined by each individual. There should never be one singular measure.

I am passionate about the usual, family, friends, but also design beer/coffee, and cycling.

Three things on my bucket list are ride a bike in as many different places as possible, watch Manchester United play at home, and eat everything.

In five years I hope to be doing one of those things on my bucket list.

Before I die, I want to have created work that is memorable and people can enjoy it.

The biggest change in myself from high school is I stopped caring what other people are doing/thinking.

Design work and riding bikes **drains me the most.**

What recharges me most is design work and riding bikes.

I am inspired by too many things, usually things not on the internet.

PACE taught me to embrace the working world.

When I was in college I learned to get things done on my own, think for myself, and network.

Phoebe (Cheng) Yip, Class of 2006

Something that surprised me the most about the real world was work isn't as fun and glamorous as it seemed. Being in school is one of life's luxuries.

I attended the University of California Los Angeles.

I work as an assistant to my husband running our music teaching business.

Mostly, I miss the discussions and laughs in Ms. Reynaga's class **about PACE.** Boy, do I miss those times.

Yes, it was challenging in PACE because there's a lot of busy work. I know, I know, it was for our own good.

My fondest memory of PACE is making those lifelong friends.

PACE prepared me for the rigorous college workload.

Get a career book and explore careers **is the advice I have for graduating seniors.** Major in something practical, it will save you lots of time and money.

The single experience that transformed me the most was getting married. It's the best thing that happened to me.

Keep it simple **is my philosophy of life.**

Dedicated teachers, well-rounded curriculum, **and** field trips **describe PACE.**

My biggest role models are my parents. They gave everything up for me and my brother.

The measure of success is being confident in who you are and what you do.

I am passionate about living a balanced, healthy lifestyle.

Three things on my bucket list are backpack in Europe, read the entire Bible, and overcome my fear of water and become a better swimmer.

In five years I hope to be a little more wiser.

I hope to have made a difference in the world **before I die.**

The biggest change in myself from high school is I commit to less so I have more free time.

Driving in traffic **drains me the most.**

What recharges me the most is biking and walks around my neighborhood.

I am inspired by people who have ideas and do something with them.

When I was in college I used a dishwasher and dryer for the first time. Life changing.

I'd like to have kids someday.

I hate not having the answer to why things don't work out.



Mai Nhia Vang, Class of 2009

I attended the University of California Berkeley.

I work as a Research Assistant for the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in Washington D.C. I work on two projects that focus on promoting child wellness and mental health care, as well as preventing youth violence in schools.

PACE prepared me for college. Through the rigorous courses and mentorship that I received in PACE, I was able to navigate through the college application process and prepare for academics at UC Berkeley. Much of my academic and professional growth has been possible because of the support that I received from PACE. I grew up in a low-income and refugee family where it was difficult for my parents to prepare me

for college because, truthfully, they didn't know how to help me. My parents didn't have the chance to go through four years of high school or experience college, so they couldn't advise me on what courses I needed to take to get into college, what college-entrance exams were required for a 4-year university, or what college life would be like.

My biggest role model was my teachers in PACE. They have played a significant role in shaping who I am today because they cared about my education and most importantly, my opportunities in life as a low-income student.

I am passionate about empowering underserved students to become agents for change in their community.

PACE taught me that I can change the world and make it a better place for families impacted by poverty. The PACE program transformed my life and gave me the tools to go to college so that I can better provide for my family and play it forward to the many young students who come from similar socioeconomic backgrounds like mine.