

September 2009

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Golden,

I am writing to thank you for enabling me to attend the Adventures of the Mind conference. I had a truly incredible experience. Just being able to mingle, chat and hear from so many passionate and successful individuals in such a variety of fields was fabulous. I was able to learn all about graphic design through a lunch with book cover designer Chip Kidd, hear about international journalism over dinner with New York Times reporter Claudia Dreifus, discuss politics with former Clinton administration member Bruce Reed, and talk about the latest developments in string theory with leading theorist Juan Maldacena.

But the weekend was also inspiring, and I believe it ultimately had a profound effect on me. From hearing all these people talk, I realized how important it is to find something you're really passionate about and make that your life's work. And more importantly, I learned that despite my assumption that the Nobel Prize physicists had been physics geniuses since the age of three, most of the speakers hadn't figured out what they wanted to do with their lives until exploring a variety of different things. This has inspired me in my first year of college to try a wide variety of activities and classes. This next semester I plan on taking astrophysics, psychology, Greek and Roman history, and economics in the search to find an academic discipline in which my passion is comparable to that the speakers so clearly had for what they did.

Another extremely important message I took away from the conference was using this passion and talent to help the world. I found Naveen Jain's talk to be the most powerful. Jain, the founder of Intelius, came from an extremely poor background in India. He stressed the importance of honesty and integrity regardless of your circumstances. He spoke of success as how many lives you have touched and that we should use our talent to pay back our debt to society, all the while being humble. This message really altered my thinking on what I ultimately want to do with my life, and though I am far away from making that decision, I know that I want to make helping others a part of whatever career I do choose.

At this conference, I met interesting peers who I still keep in touch with, got to interact with adults who I am in awe of and left the conference inspired and driven to find my own meaningful passion. I can't thank you enough for providing me with this incredible opportunity.

Sincerely,

Jacob Effron