

If you asked me what I wanted to do with my life in high school my answer would have been one of two things, a professional ballet dancer or a Broadway performer. My high school experience was different than most students because as a freshman I attended my home high school for half of the day and then rode a bus to Governor's Schoole for the Arts for dance, where I received a grade as I trained to become a professional dancer. A lot happened between my freshman and sophomore year of high school: I lost a favorite dance teacher, my grandma became very sick, and I became responsible for my own transportation and meals to and from ballet. In the spring of sophomore year I was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa. That summer I became committed to recovery and to regaining the life I had lost due to this psychological illness. The whole recovery process opened my eyes to the possibilities life had in store for me, I began attending my home high school full time and was able to reunite with old friends from middle school that I had stopped talking to because I was always dancing. And I discovered how much I loved to learn. After about a year, I was healthy enough both mentally and physically to return to dancing, but as I began attending evening ballet classes again I realized I was no longer dreaming of the day I would perform Swan Lake or Giselle at Lincoln Center, instead I was eager to get back home and do my homework so I could go to school the next day. This was confusing to me because I didn't know what I wanted anymore, dance had been such a huge part of my life for so long I was unsure how to stop. Slowly I gave up my dream of becoming a dancer as I went on college tours with my parents and realized that Virginia Tech was where I was supposed to be after I graduated high school.

When I came to college I was a Human Development major, and then an English major. I thought I wanted to be an elementary school teacher, until I met my best friend and current roommate Kailey. Kailey was in Human Nutrition, Foods and Exercise with a concentration in Dietetics and we shared the same passion for trying new foods and talking about nutrition, an interest I gained through my recovery. When Kailey spoke about her classes, both present and future, I was jealous I would not get to take those classes and I began to wonder if perhaps dietetics was the right path for me as well. My confirmation came from a question I constantly asked other dietetic students, "What do you want to do?" and none of them responded with, "treat eating disorders." I realized that I wanted to be on the other side of eating disorders, the treatment. My dietitian is who I attribute my love of trying new foods without the fear I once would have had, and that is what I want to help others recovering from eating disorders to do.

My journey is a long and complicated one, but because I had a couple detours along the way I am a better student. My experiences have and will continue to shape me, and it is those experiences that will make me a better professional.