

ACS Scholarship Essay

a. Goals:

Growing up, I always thought of myself as a humanities person. But as clichéd as it sounds, since being diagnosed with cancer, I've found myself more drawn to the sciences, biomedical research in particular. Part of the reason for this shift is the confidence that this experience has given to me. Chemistry and biology were never my forte, so I automatically ruled out a career in the sciences. Being diagnosed forced me to wade through PubMed abstracts and my oncologist's clinical jargon, and I realized that not only could I understand the mechanisms of angiogenesis and the chemical reactivity of doxorubicin, but that these things genuinely interested me. I want to major in Molecular Cell Biology and English, and to that end, I plan on taking the organic chemistry series next semester. Chemistry is difficult for me—it doesn't come as easily as English—but it means much more. The reason I want to work toward medical school and a graduate degree in biochemistry is the urgency encompassing biomedical research. Despite my interest, pure science is not the only thing drawing me to research. In the past two years, too many people that I've known have suffered because of cancer and too many people that I've met have passed away. The urgent, desperate need to find a cure is what makes research—in any medical field—so compelling. I feel incredibly compelled by that desperation, and I want to do something with my life to make that suffering go away.

b. Life Experience:

Courage is something that I've learned is vastly overblown by the movies and books of our society. It's not saving the world from nuclear threat or being able to face haunted houses a la Hollywood blockbusters. It's not measured by a warrior's prowess in battle or his fearlessness in encountering the enemy if you're drawing from more mythic examples. Courage, from what I've learned watching true heroes—like the ones who sit with me in clinic waiting rooms—relies both simply and intangibly your grasp of hope. It's being able to drag yourself out of bed in the mornings, even if you look outside the window and see that it's raining. There's been a little too much rain in my world for the past couple of years, and there are some mornings when I pull the covers over my head and can't make myself get up class. The days when I lose sight of hope, I remember the strength of those around me, and I'm inspired to get up again. I've met so many people who don't just deal but actually *live* with catastrophic illness. They live, not just for today, but for tomorrow as well. I'm learning slowly from them that although some mornings will glow and others will hang with clouds, waking up to face the world rain or shine is the most courageous thing that I can ever hope to do, and as long as I can do that, little else will stand in my way.

c. Community Service:

In high school, I found Interact, a community service club. I was secretary through my sophomore and junior years and served as president as well as District Newsletter Coordinator my senior year. I won the Rotary Youth Leadership Award, a District Service Award, and also a Rotary-Interact scholarship. But I'd like to think I took away more from my experience than awards. I grew up very sheltered, and Interact broke the bubble for me. Our major projects were always international, like the Wheelchair Project, a fundraiser to buy wheelchairs for those who couldn't afford them. The Wheelchair Project was a sobering experience. I felt proud to have raised \$3000 for 30 wheelchairs—only to learn that over 100 million people around the world lack mobility. It made me realize that beautifying my corner of the garden is a good start, but not enough, and that we can never stop working to help others. I'm still looking for my community service niche in college. I volunteered for the Relay for Life on the Logistics and Sponsorship Committees. It was great from beginning to end, from asking for donations, to setting up, to finally seeing how much Relay means to all who participate. I'd like to chair a committee next year. Next year, I'm also volunteering at Oakland Children's Hospital. From Interact is the motto "service above self." In my future, I want to carry that over, from more than just an extracurricular activity to part of my life's career.