

EuGene Park

I have recently completed my freshman year of college as a music education major at New York University. College life was nothing like I had expected, but overall it was a pleasant experience.

One of the best parts of my freshman year was living in the world's biggest city. I got to watch performances at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall for less than twenty dollars per ticket as well as see street performers at Washington Square Park. I also had the joy of visiting Museum of Modern Arts and a couple of small exhibitions in Brooklyn. It is important as a musician to support the arts and New York City was a fabulous place to experience and support all forms of arts.

I had chosen to attend a university rather than a conservatory to receive a well-rounded education, but I did not expect the mandatory writing class to take up most of my time. For a literature class I took first semester, the professor expected each student to do about twelve hours of reading each week, and these hours do not include hours spent writing papers. It felt like a nightmare at times, but in the end I could see improvement in my reading and writing skills.

However, I found it difficult to find time to practice despite being a music major. To top off the time issue, I lived in a dorm with two roommates and the practice room in the dorm was not easily accessible. I often had to use a practice room in another building ten minutes away, and sometimes had to come back to my room late at night. I cannot stress enough for the future college students how important time management is. We have all heard it numerous times from parents and guidance counselors and the man at the bagel shop, but they are wickedly right. What you get out of a college education is what you make of it, and no one will push you to do your best except yourself.

Learning to teach was very different from what I have seen or practiced. Many of my previous assumptions were challenged; I learned that a lesson plan is a must, yet it will almost never contain everything that may happen in a classroom. I also had to learn the basics of various instruments and how to teach them to students.

If there is one thing that has been engraved in my brain from my freshman year as a music educator, it is advocacy. I have been repeatedly told that music class is not mandatory in many public schools and music educators always need to fight for our right to include music in the core curriculum. Often on Wednesdays, during program meeting, a guest speaker from various organizations, such as NYSSMA and VH1 Save the Music, or alumni from the school's program visited to talk about various opportunities and their personal experiences as music educators. Most people, if not all, stressed being an active member in the music and non-music communities by befriending non-musician colleagues, collaborate on projects, etc.

Speakers also stressed the importance of outside funding other than the school. Unfortunately, when a school is low on funds, the art programs are one of the first to get cut. Teachers spoke of applying for outside grants at organizations such as VH1 Save the Music. On that note, I cannot thank Sharon Holmes Scholarship program enough for supporting my education to becoming a music teacher.