

CCHS

ALUMNI STORIES



what people think success
looks like

Students are often bombarded with messages indicating that the path to success as an adult is linear, and there is only one path to reach success.

CCHS, a Challenge Success partner school, wants every student to find the path that is right for them and to leave high school empowered to embrace the inevitable joys and setbacks that are part of the journey of reaching adulthood.

CCHS alumni from all over the world offered to share their journeys to help us illustrate what “success” could look like post-CCHS. We asked about their experiences, their setbacks and triumphs, and for any advice they have for current students. These profiles tell their stories. What’s yours?



what success really
looks like

CCHS is grateful to The Concord Education Fund for their generous support of the Challenge Success program.

Adam Koski

CLASS OF 2011

Sales Manager, Allagash Brewing Company

I went to Loyola Maryland for my first semester of college but quickly realized this was not the place for me. I decided to transfer to a smaller school, Roanoke College, and take a semester break from school.

During this time I was a substitute teacher at my elementary and middle school in Carlisle. After the semester break, I felt a lot more confident in giving college another shot. I started up again in Roanoke with a fresh start and had a great experience. While at Roanoke, I was able to spend three weeks in India, studying religion, Gandhi's philosophies, and environmental practices. I'm still close with my professors and the students I met while in this program. After college I got a seasonal job as a tap room associate at Allagash Brewing Company in Portland, Maine. After about six months in this role I transitioned into a sales rep position covering the Maine market, and now I am a sales manager for the Carolinas, based out of Charlotte, NC and am currently obtaining my MBA from Syracuse University.



What was something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

No one has ever asked me about my CCHS GPA since graduating from high school.

Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience? If yes, please describe how this impacted you.

I took a semester off from college after Loyola before transferring to Roanoke College. During this time I lived at home and worked as a substitute teacher. It gave me some perspective on what life is like after college and reminded me what I was working towards.

What advice (if any) do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

The college years are as much about learning to live on your own, be an adult, and take care of yourself as they are getting an education and working towards a career.

Andrew Della Volpe

CLASS OF 2013

Stand-up Comedian

I graduated from Colby College in 2017. I majored in Government, with a minor in Creative Writing and I was the captain of the Baseball team. Today I am a standup comedian and writer. I have been at it for two years. During the day I work a lunch shift as a server and at night I perform all over Boston and New England. This past spring I opened for Theo Von at the Wilbur Theatre. Every couple of months I am proud to be busier and busier and closer to dropping my day job.

What is something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

If you told me when I was at CCHS that I would be a standup comedian one day I would never have believed you. I would have said "no, I'm going into politics or marketing or something like that, I guess." But, now I am happier than ever, pursuing my dream, and beginning to have many small successes.



When I was at CCHS I felt pressure to know what I was going to do with the rest of my life. I felt like my peers all knew what they wanted to do, and I felt like my parents and teachers expected me to know what I wanted to do. More than that, I felt like if I didn't declare the path that I was going to take to my big career by junior year of high school, then I would be too late and wouldn't be able to do anything. At CCHS I felt like I had to be something from the approved list of professions or else I would be considered a failure.

What advice (if any) do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

At Colby I learned that it was okay to not know what you wanted to do. In fact, being open to many different things is advantageous. I was able to try different classes, internships, and experiences. I learned I liked to write. I learned marketing was okay but not my favorite. I learned I love working at a production company, and I learned I hated working at a bank.

Most importantly, I learned that it's okay to not know what you want to do, and even though it feels like there is pressure to decide right now, there is a lot of time. So, try everything. Find the things you like and the things you don't like. I didn't like most things! But, when you find the thing you like, don't let it go!

Campbell Hart

CLASS OF 2011

Educator, Berkshire Outdoor Center

Following CCHS, I attended Bates College and studied sociology and education. My first job was a teaching fellowship at Pine Cobble School in Williamstown, Ma, where I was able to experience almost every aspect of a school. Towards the end of that year, I felt an increasing need to move out of my comfort zone; I felt the imperative to live in a part of the country where people had vastly different beliefs than my own. I chose the dead center of the country and moved to Oklahoma to teach seventh-grade history. During my summers, I have also had the opportunity to lead travel programs for teens; these programs have allowed me to apply my love of working with kids to new and rewarding environments. This spring I left my position in Oklahoma and will soon start a position in outdoor education at the Berkshire Outdoor Center, while also applying to graduate school to pursue a degree in social justice education.

What is something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

I played just about every sport under the sun, but senior year is when I settled on the three that would be lifetime passions. I remember freshman year spending hours studying with my math and science teachers and not getting the results I wanted on tests, but by the end of high school I learned how to study effectively and was also able to sign up for more of the classes in which I was invested. The process of trial and error was incredibly valuable to me. Having setbacks, whether academic or athletic, I gained not only a sense of resiliency but also a stronger sense of self.



Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience? If yes, please describe how this impacted you.

When I first left my fellowship, I was expecting to stay in classroom teaching for the foreseeable future. I had been fortunate enough to have always been in supportive and affirming environments, but at my new school, not only did people have wildly different political beliefs than I did, but also conflicting beliefs about what should or should not be taught in classrooms. I received pushback for the work I was doing in my classroom. This did not change my love of teaching, but it did open my eyes to the need to create resources and support systems for teachers committed to similar work within their own schools. I also discovered that I am happiest when I get to do my work outside, so I am trying to find ways to blend my love of education and social justice with the outdoors.

What is something you appreciate now about something you learned or experienced while at CCHS?

Having taught in several different types of schools now, I have come to appreciate the incredible caliber of teacher at CCHS. Both in terms of their subject expertise and their investment in students; this is sadly not common everywhere. Build relationships with your teachers and seek extra help.

What advice (if any) do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

Take healthy risks and seek supportive communities. Moving to Oklahoma where I didn't know a soul was one of the greatest risks I've ever taken, and while I certainly had my struggles I am incredibly grateful for the experience and the growth from that risk. However, I would not have been able to make it through my time there without support. Community is everywhere, and for me, finding people who not only support me but push me in my growth and risk taking has made all the difference.

Charlie Abend

CLASS OF 2012

Audio Engineer/Producer

After graduating I enrolled in the gap year program “Dynamy” in Worcester, MA. My goal was to get into some sort of recording/music environment, but I had almost zero hopes. The day before leaving I actually asked my parents to let me stay at home and work and not go to Dynamy cause I was so sure it had nothing for me. As you can imagine, I couldn’t have been more wrong. It turned out that one of the teachers at Dynamy lived with a recording engineer who used half their house to build a studio. He set up a time for me to come meet his roommate. We hit it off, I went by for a session later that week, with a band I listened to almost daily. It was quite an experience. I spent a year working at Chris’s studio and learning recording basics and how to deal with the recording environment. After Dynamy I moved to Lowell and spent the next few years focusing on my band, and on finding artists to record. In the living room of my apartment I learned exactly what not to do while recording day after day by continually running into walls and messing things up beyond salvation. In 2015 I moved to a new home in Lowell that had a proper room for my studio, and a basement to use as a Live Room. I also discovered a lot of online resources and courses to learn more about my craft every day. Through these resources I’ve made lots of friends in the online audio community, and have even turned some of those friends into clients.

What was something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

Nothing is more important than being good at interacting with other people. Whatever field you go into, your skill is expected. If you say you can build a house, people will expect you to be able to build them a good house. But they’ll only hire someone who is nice, friendly, easy to talk with, and good to be around.



Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience? If yes, please describe how this impacted you.

Setbacks are a part of working for yourself, and just working in general, so yes I have experienced many and still do every day. Everything from sending out 300+ emails to promoters around the country trying to book my band’s tour and receiving only 6 replies to letting clients walk over me and dictate how a project should run, when in fact it’s my job to run the project. Setbacks and sudden upsets are around every turn and all you can do is be ready to adapt to them. Once you tell yourself something is in your way it’s extremely hard to get around it. They all becoming learning experiences so that in the future you’re better prepared for every scenario.

What advice (if any) do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

This is going to sound overly cheesy, but find something that excites you, and surround yourself with it. If you find it isn’t for you, that’s great and you can take what you’ve learned with your dedication and apply it to something else. Being young is about being able to spend 16 hours a day doing the same thing and waking up the next day to repeat it, and that’s what the next decade of your life should be, whatever your interests. Become an expert in whatever you think you could spend 100 hours a week doing.

Charlotte Clarke

CLASS OF 2012

Deputy Director, lowernine.org

After graduating from CCHS, I studied Environmental Engineering at Tufts University, working a variety of jobs along the way that ranged from serving ice cream to conducting community water quality monitoring. I worked at Stantec Consulting briefly after graduating, contributing to the development of water infrastructure projects. In 2017, I moved to New Orleans and began working at lowernine.org, a nonprofit organization that completes residential construction projects for pre-Katrina residents of the Lower Ninth Ward of the city. I have greatly enjoyed the interdisciplinary nature of our work, being part of a small team, and doing work that directly relates to social justice.

What was something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

I wish I had realized that there is so much room for growth outside of academic and professional settings: learn from organizers, books, workshops, YouTube videos, friends and neighbors and parents, service, the outdoors, anything that inspires. Learning in these ways can also greatly benefit what happens inside classrooms and work spaces -- teachers want you to be excited by what you're learning, and it helps to bring your many interests into the classroom and see how they intersect with curriculum.



Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience? If yes, please describe how this impacted you.

Of course! I changed my major, had knee surgery, failed differential equations, took an extra semester to graduate, experienced deaths and break ups, enrolled in a program that was cancelled, had a house fire... I experienced anxiety and pain during these periods of change in which reality deviated from my expectations, but I was capable of adapting and moving beyond these challenges — nearly every challenge we face is broadly survivable.

What is something you appreciate now about something you learned or experienced while at CCHS?

I appreciate the community we had at CCHS: there are many wonderful things about branching out to new adventures, but it is incredibly grounding to share time and space with each other on a daily basis and know each others' families, histories, and lexicon.

What advice (if any) do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

Life continues to be full of choices after senior year of high school, so learn to check in with yourself on an ongoing basis. Pay attention to which studies, activities, people, jobs, and habits actually make, you feel healthy and fulfilled and pursue them, even as they may change!

Christian Gudmand

CLASS OF 2007

CEO, Hardwick Post & Beam

After graduating CCHS I started at Western New England College as a student in their mechanical engineering program. After an internship my sophomore and junior summers, I graduated from WNEC in 2011 with a mechanical engineering degree. My internship at a small contract engineering company helped me to land a full time job with them after graduation. This job had a focus on R&D engineering for new wind and water turbine concepts. It was a great mix of design, analytics and fabrication. After two years there, I was put on a new project where I worked on the design of cooling systems for the military. Though interesting, this didn't get me jumping out of bed in the morning. My lifelong interest in wood-working and building pointed me to an opportunity at Hardwick Post and Beam as a Timber Framer. A few conversations later and I was working there building timber framers. After 8 months of doing that and a odd turn of events that were fully unexpected to me, I became the manager of this company. Four years later and I am still managing this small business, working to bring custom built hand-crafted timber frames to all types of clients, a job that has become a strong passion of mine.



What was something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

What you end up doing in your life is not always related to what you go to school for. Both college and the trades are great options but the best thing you can do is give yourself flexibility.

Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience? If yes, please describe how this impacted you.

My current career has been entirely unexpected. Change isn't a roadblock as long as you are willing to work with it and learn from it.

What is something you appreciate now about something you learned or experienced while at CCHS

CCHS gave me a great opportunity to be in leadership roles while participating in extra-curriculars. That has helped me tremendously with my current role.

What advice (if any) do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

The more you can try now the better off you will be. Who knows where life will take you so learn as much as you can about everything that interests you.

Dan Loutrel

CLASS OF 1998

UIAGM Mountain Guide, Switzerland

After graduating, I took a year off from studying; I barely graduated because I often skipped school to go climbing. My grades were not the problem but the unexcused absences were! In my year off I worked some odd jobs and I also traveled, climbing and mountaineering in the Rockies and Sierra. That's when I discovered my passion for the mountains! It was expected that I would attend college, so I started studying Aeronautical Engineering at Clarkson University. The school work was alright, but I spent all my time dreaming of climbing in the mountains. I quickly realised that's no way to go through life, so after one semester I left. I spent the next years working whatever jobs I could find, spending winters skiing and summers climbing. I had no plan actually, until one winter when I decided to build a pair of super fat skis for skiing powder. I was really inspired by the new style of big mountain skiing but the equipment was way behind the concept. I had a lot of experience working with wood and composites, so it was not hard for me to build some pretty good skis. I headed to the Alps with my homemade skis and a backpack on my back. The skiing was great, and people were seriously impressed with my skis. The idea was to start a business building skis and live from that. Things went quite well; it was a hard way to learn business, but somehow we always made it work. A lot of skiing, hard work, and almost no money. After I got married and had a child, I could see that the ski business was not going to support a family, at least not with me running it, so I decided to start the Swiss Mountain Guide Education. It's a very selective and challenging certification. About 60 of the best alpinists in Switzerland start it each year, and 20 to 30 graduate three or four years later. I trained and studied like I never had in my life. After three wild years I graduated the course, and started my mountain guide office. My job is now mostly guiding: in the summer climbing high peaks on rock ice and snow, and in the winter ski mountaineering and off piste skiing. It's an intense job, constant risk management, but a lot of fun.



What was something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

There are so many different paths in life. At CCHS there is a huge emphasis on college, advanced placement, careers; it felt like the only option. Now when I see the world from a different perspective, I see that what's really important is to follow your passions, work hard, be creative, and find a way to make your life your own. There are endless possibilities, for some college is super, for others not so much, but that is also good.

Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience? If yes, please describe how this impacted you.

My life is nothing but one unexpected event after another! Some positive, some negative. I just learned to be a bit more relaxed about things and take it as it comes with a smile on your face!

What is something you appreciate now about something you learned or experienced while at CCHS?

CCHS gave me a solid high school education from some really great teachers. I learned a lot there. On the other hand, I did not fit into the USA high school model at all, I was an outsider, definitely not cool! So what I learned most of all was to be independent, to have the courage to somehow find my own path.

What advice (if any) do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

Think hard about your interests and passions, and how that can shape the path you take in life. Get as much experience as you can, work some odd jobs, get out of the bubble of CCHS and see what else is out there. There are endless options in life. Don't be afraid to take your own path in life even if it's not the traditional one!

David Corbie

CLASS OF 2011

Greenovate Boston Outreach Manager

Upon graduation, I enrolled at Boston College, where I initially entered with a major in Biology. As time went on and I took more classes, I ended up finding Sociology, which ended up being my major. I paired that with a minor in Faith, Peace, and Justice because I was deeply impacted by Social Justice and wanted to use my life to uplift others. I immediately put this desire into action after I graduated by co-founding an initiative to help an Environmental Justice community close a waste-to-energy plant. Following that, I joined a social justice nonprofit as a community organizer, working to uplift the voices of the communities of color in Boston. I eventually joined the City of Boston as the Greenovate Boston Outreach Manager. Greenovate Boston is Mayor Walsh's initiative to get all Bostonians engaged in Boston's climate work and to take direct, communal-level action against climate change. I oversee the Leaders program, which organizes residents to take those direct actions, develop leadership, lead education efforts, and organize community actions, such as Greenovate's Streets and Urban Wild Clean-ups. I am working to make sure that all Bostonians are leading the way in preparing their communities for the current and coming impacts of climate change.



What was something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

I wish I had known that every experience contributes to the person you will become. Persevering through instances that make you uncomfortable will make you stronger and create future opportunities that will help you progress.

Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience?

I experienced a major setback when I entered college certain on a major in Biology. This greatly affected my first year, which is a pivotal year academically. I'd recommend being open to exploring the possibilities of other areas of interest. Find what you're interested in and good at.

What advice do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

Use high school to figure out who you are and what you are passionate about. When you know what it is, move honestly and passionately in that direction. There may be prevailing darkness affecting how you see the world at this stage in your life, but going slowly through the tunnel and making friends along the way will allow you to build confidence in yourself, and eventually, you'll move powerfully into a future that is brighter and happier.

Griffin Bishop

CLASS OF 2015

Graduate Student, Computer Science

After graduating from CCHS in 2015, I went to WPI as a computer science major. The summer after freshman year, I taught groups of 8-16 year olds to code at iD Tech Camps. The following summer, I completed a software engineering internship at Datto, which builds data backup technology. At Datto, I developed a great relationship with my boss and mentor, and we still talk to this day. My junior year, I lived in Venice, Italy for seven weeks while developing an interactive data visualization platform showcasing historical features of the city. I'd highly recommend WPI if you want to study abroad as an engineering or science major. The summer after junior year, I interned at Wayfair, the largest online furniture retailer. The following year, I found a project I was interested in doing machine learning in Zürich, Switzerland through a professor of mine, which ended up being my Bachelor's thesis. After graduating this spring, I did a second summer internship at Wayfair, and have been offered a full-time job there after I complete my Master's in Computer Science at WPI this year.



What was something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

The value of taking risks. In high school, I think I was afraid to try new things or try too hard at one thing in case it didn't work out, as a sort of ego protection strategy. In college, I turned this around and tried as many organizations and activities as possible, and I stuck with a few of them: I joined the rowing team, became a TA, and joined a social fraternity. I've met so many more people and had many more opportunities open up to me as a result.

What is something you appreciate now about something you learned or experienced while at CCHS?

I now have a much greater appreciation for the Rhetoric class I took junior year of high school. Going to a school where not many students focused on writing in high school, this was a major head start.

What advice do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

Do interesting projects outside of school. This is admittedly easier for people going into software (all you need is a computer), but having something that you can point to and say, "I did that 100% from idea to completion, and no one told me to do it," is tremendously valuable; even if it's simple, it shows a high level of autonomy, which is increasingly rare.

Joe Valle Hoag

CLASS OF 2014

Actor and Singer



After graduating from CCHS in 2014, I attended NYU Steinhardt and earned a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance. Immediately after graduation, I booked a concert called “Broadway Rising Stars”. At the same time, I was doing background work for Empire Casting, and it was from them that I was offered a role on The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel. I have also booked a job as a professional Christmas caroler, and around the same time I booked my upcoming role on Mr. Robot. Through all of this, I was a staff musician at The Church of the Blessed Sacrament. My most recent job (summer 2019) at The Finger Lakes Music Theatre Festival, I booked from an open call way back in February. I see my voice teacher every now and then for a “tune up” or when I have a particularly difficult song to prepare, and I take dance classes as often as I can.

What was something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

People like to tell students interested in performance that “there are no jobs” and “make sure you have a backup career.” There are plenty of jobs for those who work hard enough, and people who tell you not to follow your dreams should be ignored.

Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience? If yes, please describe how this impacted you.

Theater classes were cut from the curriculum at CCHS while I was a student. This was a major setback for me as a developing artist. I was forced to seek training elsewhere. I’ve had a strong belief since then that Theater is important for children to make them into empathetic adults capable of understanding rather than replicating.

What is something you appreciate now about something you learned or experienced while at CCHS?

Going to a school with academic classes as rigorous as CCHS was a huge leg up. Being smart, knowing how to learn, and being able to understand the material given to you is essential to being a good actor.

What advice (if any) do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

Whatever you do, make sure you’re not stepping on someone below you in order to get where you want to be. Graduating from CCHS is a privilege. Use that privilege to lift others up, not to lift yourself higher.

Jonah Lovy

CLASS OF 2012

Marketing Manager, Fusion Growth Partners

I briefly attended a four-year college in up-state New York before dropping out and joining the US Marine Corps. I served for 5 years as a public affairs specialist and now live in Sacramento CA. I work for a real estate marketing company utilizing the skills I learned in the military.

What was something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

I wish I had known more about more career and education options and the honest pros and cons they come with. Attending college right out of high school is not for everyone. There are so many paths to success and right now is the best time to seek them out. One size does not fit all.

Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience? If yes, please describe how this impacted you.

Too many to count. My journey out of high school was a rocky one and once I joined the military I was in a world of constant challenge. But, along with all this uncertainty, the Marine Corps gave me the opportunity to be part of something much larger than myself and grow my own skills. The hardest things to face are often the most worthwhile.



What is something you appreciate now about something you learned or experienced while at CCHS?

In high school I got the chance to explore my interests in a positive way. I was heavily involved in the WIQH radio station and it grew into a real interest in communications/broadcasting. I highly doubt I would have gone in this direction as career if I did not have this opportunity.

What advice (if any) do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

The most important piece of advice I have is to be honest with yourself about your direction. There's a whole world of experiences out there and it might take time to figure out where you belong. MAKE MISTAKES! It's the only way to learn and grow into who you are. Go search for that thing that makes your heart beat and pursue it with everything you have.

Lauren Shear Zinner

CLASS OF 1999

International Public Health Consultant

After CCHS, I attended James Madison University in Virginia, where I received a B.S. in Integrated Science and Technology and competed as a gymnast. Upon graduation, I worked in IT Project Management for the Department of Defense. Four years later, at the age of 25, I had a quarter-life crisis - realizing I was quickly moving up a career track with DoD but feeling that I wasn't ready to commit to work there long-term. I applied to graduate school, but then deferred admission for a year and, in the meantime, decided to try something really different. I signed up to teach for one year at an International School in Shanghai, China. In 2008, I obtained my Master's of Engineering in Supply Chain Management at MIT. After a year of consulting, I made a big leap into the world of international development non-profit work by joining the Clinton Health Access Initiative. I took a significant pay cut and uprooted my life to lead a program focused on driving more sustainable financing systems for HIV treatment in Malawi. What I had planned to be a one-year commitment began an entirely new chapter, both professionally and personally. I had never loved or felt more passionately about my work, or worked with such like-minded and hard-working people. In 2013, we relocated to Liberia, where I served as Deputy Country Director for CHAI; at the onset of the deadly Ebola outbreak in the summer of 2014, I was seconded to the Ministry of Health to coordinate logistics operations for all emergency medical supplies utilized in the national Ebola response. In 2016, we moved to Myanmar, where I again took on the role of Deputy Country Director for CHAI.



What was something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

Changing careers several times during your lifetime presents the opportunity to reinvent yourself every so often. If you're not quite happy with what you're doing, you can take the best part of your experiences and shape it into a unique and marketable skill set. I also wish I had understood that it's possible to take different paths to the same place, and that choosing a major in college doesn't lock you into doing that forever.

Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience?

Yes, more than I can even mention - and some of which felt like insurmountable roadblocks at the time! I've switched industries and sectors and took significant pay cuts and lower-level positions to pursue work I was more passionate about. The sum total is an impactful career that I'm proud of. I could never have predicted this is where I'd be right now - but if I think back, I can actually see how each one of the bumps in the road led to my next step, which is only something you can appreciate after that fact. As a result, I just trust that all of the blips along the way will make me stronger, better, more agile and that they happen for a reason that may not be abundantly clear in the present.

What advice do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

Right now, you may be feeling a lot of pressure to know what you want to do with the rest of your life (I did when I was in high school). Don't be afraid to commit to something fully; if you do commit and later realize it's not what you wanted or anticipated, it'll never be too late to redirect and pursue something different. You can change the world if you're willing to put in the work, even if you're not yet sure how.

Liam Moya

CLASS OF 2015

Pilot, Landcare Aviation, Inc.

I graduated from Rocky Mountain College in May of 2019 with a Bachelors of Science Degree, majoring in Aeronautical Science with a minor in Business Management. While I was at college and during the summers between school years, I worked a number of jobs trying to make money and pay for college and other expenses. I was a landscaper, a ramp agent at an airport, a hotel front desk representative, and the sports photographer for the college. After college I was hired as a pilot at Landcare Aviation, Inc., which specializes in providing aircraft and pilots for aerial survey/mapping companies.

Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience? If yes, please describe how this impacted you.

I almost transferred schools after my first semester because I was not as studious as I should have been, and I really let go of many responsibilities because I was very focused on trying to have fun being in college. It was a brand new experience, and I wanted to have the most fun that I could. I did not master balancing fun with academics, so my grades were slipping. Do not let that happen; time management is very important.



What is something you appreciate now about something you learned or experienced while at CCHS?

I appreciated being on the ski team at CC because it required me to associate with peers I otherwise would not have. At college that came really in handy because in high school, I really clung to my very tight group of friends. I rarely ventured beyond that. Being on the ski team and socializing with different kids allowed me to go beyond my comfort zone, and that followed through in college to be able to become involved with people you don't think you otherwise would—and you make new friends that way.

What advice (if any) do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

You do not need to go to the most prestigious school. While it is absolutely important to get good grades and test scores to receive a quality education, go with the university or institution that provides the education you want, while at the same time making you happy. This may be common sense to many people, but it is not worth it to bust your tail off in high school trying to get into the fanciest university if you will not have a good time in the end run, either for high school or college or both.

Sean Snook

CLASS OF 2003

Management Consultant, McKinsey & Company

I was a Junior sitting in US History when two planes crashed into the World Trade Center. I was a senior lacing up my cleats for lacrosse practice when the United States invaded Iraq. After graduating from West Point, I deployed to Afghanistan during ‘the surge’ in 2009, trying to come to terms with the fact that I might not return. I did return but many of my friends didn’t. I carried that with me for a while. I met my wife, tried out for Special Forces, and deployed as a Green Beret to Afghanistan. I found out my wife was pregnant one hour before a commando raid. When I lost a friend on that raid, I decided I needed a change. I left the Army and attended Harvard Business School. Now I’m a management consultant. I travel the world, conduct a lot of mathematical research (math is incredibly important!) and advise companies. But that’s less important; it’s just my job. Who I am is a husband and a dad. I have more purpose and love in my life than I’ve ever had before.

What was something you know now but wish you had known when at CCHS?

Happiness isn’t the goal – purpose is. Every heartache, rejection, loss and challenge isn’t here to derail us. It’s here to carry us to the next opening and expansion. Every hardship is here to teach us how to dance with this life.

Did you experience any unexpected setbacks, turns or moves in your life, career or educational experience? How did this impact you?

Plenty! Failure is life’s gateway to growth and development; it’s up to you to open the door. Several colleges and universities denied me. During the West Point applications process, before I was accepted, the admissions rep said, “I’m not really sure he’s West Point material”. At West Point, there is no shortage of opportunities to fail. I failed my fitness test and was put into a remediation program for out of shape cadets. I tried out and was cut as a cadet



for leadership positions; Sapper School; Sandhurst; Combat Weapons Team; and for the JV Lacrosse Team. I was the worst squad leader in my summer training company. I was a terrible manager during another summer training course and my team walked all over me. I went the other direction and was insubordinate my senior year, almost failing out. I was told I would never cut it in the Army Infantry. Even after overcoming all of the above, I thought I was a hotshot Green Beret with an HBS degree but several companies denied me an interview because I lacked any tangible business experience. I’m so grateful because these were opportunities to learn to be better! They were not failures. You have two options: be resentful and blame others, or be honest and learn about why you failed.

What is something you appreciate now about something you learned or experienced while at CCHS?

More than anything I appreciate the compassionate culture of CCHS. The clearest way that CCHS demonstrated compassion was how they took care of my epileptic late sister, Jessica Snook, who blended special and non-special needs classes. She felt loved every minute she spent there – by all students.

What advice do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

Life is not a marathon. It’s a series of sprints. Don’t have a five-year plan. Have a today plan. Challenge yourself in the here and now instead of in a theoretical future setting. You will be disappointed if you are banking your self-worth on a future destination at the cost of what is in front of you today. Don’t ever do something you hate doing because you think you’ll like the outcome in a couple of years. Habits and actions today build a life well-lived. If you decide to make your bed today and you usually haven’t, if you decide to eat one healthy thing today and you usually don’t, those are wins to be proud of.

Shreya Batra

CLASS OF 2009

Human Resources Manager, Marriott

My journey with Concord Carlisle High School was short but great. I joined CCHS my junior year after transferring from a high school in California. The teachers and guidance counselors at CCHS gave me the tools and resources I needed to succeed in a new environment and helped me realize the journey I wanted to pursue. After graduating, I went to Framingham State University where I majored in Psychology and minored in Business Administration. While at FSU, I took a general Human Resources course as part of my Business minor and realized that I actually wanted to pursue a career in Human Resources. In 2013, I graduated and moved to Toronto, ON Canada, where I attended George Brown College to further my education in Human Resources. While at George Brown, I joined the Westin Harbour Castle, a Marriott Hotel, as Human Resources Coordinator. While at the Westin, I was promoted to Human Resources Generalist, and from there I had the opportunity to transfer to Calgary, AB, Canada with another Marriott Hotel, as Human Resources Manager for the flagship Marriott Hotel for Calgary. Though I didn't end up with a career in Psychology, I am very thankful for CCHS for giving me exposure to the subject and leading me to take Psychology in university. I do use what I learned from Psychology in my day to day life, whether that is working with different personalities or understanding different behaviours.



What is something you appreciate now about something you learned or experienced while at CCHS?

One of the greatest things about CCHS is how diverse the courses are. Not all high schools offer courses like Metrology, Forensics and General Psychology. Taking Psychology my senior year was when I realized that Psychology was a subject that I wanted to pursue.

The best thing about CCHS is having resources at your fingertips. The teachers truly care about the students in their classes. As students you have so many opportunities to learn and explore different paths to guide you in your future careers.

What advice (if any) do you have for current CCHS students as they think about their future after high school?

My best advice to you as students, is to ask questions, try new things and be a sponge - absorb as much as you can in your four years at CCHS. You are at a great school with faculty that want you to succeed.