

When I think of the day I checked my voicemail and got a message from Dr. Sat saying to stop by Sloan Kettering for an interview - I also think of the word anxiety. It's the best description of my feelings at that moment. There were just so many questions about myself and worries about the program, which I knew only the basics of. I knew we were paired with mentors. I knew there were weekly lectures. I knew there were also a couple hundred other kids vying for a spot in the program. This was the third time I was in such a position – the first being when I was about 10 and entering a program called Prep for Prep, the second being when I was 11 and applying for Horace Mann middle school. They were all very different points in my life, but they share in common the same fear that I may not be good enough and the knowledge that if I was, I'd experience a turning point in my life and education. I was anxious because there was just so much beyond my comprehension, like the ramifications of working in a scientific field.

It's normal, I hope to feel a sense of dread when it comes to being judged and interviewed. Too often we are assessed by our past and present accomplishments with potential for growth being overlooked and neglected. When it is duly noted however, you get a program like HCS.

I cannot stress just how cool, for lack of a better word, it was to work in an actual lab. It was like a rumor to me, a fairy tale. I've heard of kids entering contests like Intel but assumed they must be geniuses with their own little laboratories of the kind you would see in Pinky and the Brain or Dexter's Lab. It never occurred to me that someday I too would be researching transgenic animals and I wouldn't need to build a secret room in my apartment building. I got to see real science – no textbook models. Do you have any idea just how different a real kidney looks from those primary colored cartoons? I certainly didn't. One part of the brain knows that there is a clear distinction between illustration and reality but the other part believes wholly in the icon, unable to comprehend just what a 3D figure really looks like.

Working in a laboratory that addressed issues that came up during development and the role of microscopic structures such proteins also (finally!) showed me how to use the lessons learned in Biology and Chemistry class. I have such an immense advantage now over my peers thanks to Dr. Sat, Dr. Rivi (my mentor) and the Lacy Lab where I worked. I did not spend my summer idly, and though I did not travel or attend camp, I got to contribute to the scientific community. How many people can actually say that in their lifetime, they have done such a thing? The impact and future benefits of this program are simple incomparable.