

Marnique Basto returns to BSC

2001 BSC graduate Marni recently returned to our school to kindly speak to our Year 9 students about her career path. The Year 9s are starting to plan for their 2014 Work Experience and enjoyed hearing what Marni had to say...

1. What is your fondest memory of High School at BSC?

There isn't one particular memory that stands out but a number of relationships with teachers and friends that made my experience really special. I was also heavily involved in sport and representing the school at district and state level for athletics and cross-country. Sport was a great balance to the academic side.

2. What subjects did you enjoy?

My passion was always in the science subjects from Miss Loro (Mrs Clarkson)'s Year 8 Science class to Mr Hill's Year 11 Chem and Mr Ivory's Year 12 Biology class. Although I lost interest in English during middle school and didn't do particularly well in Year 11, Year 12 with Ms. Angelidis was a whole different kettle of fish. She was very inspirational and I loved every class. Year 12 English turned out to be my best subject.

3. Did you always know you wanted to be a doctor?

I remember as a 5 year old dressing up as a nurse with a stethoscope and loved putting bandaids on anyone that would let me. It seemed like a logical progression in the early years of high school to become a doctor but in all honesty I thought going to a public school would preclude it and that I wouldn't get the marks. I loved science so set my sights on the highest level science course possible which was Biomedical Science at Monash Uni and didn't even attempt to get into medicine from school. I was accepted into Biomed and loved every moment. It wasn't until I started this course however I realised most of the students were the ones who'd tried to get into medicine unsuccessfully and all were planning to do graduate medicine. This got me thinking.

I majored in Anatomy and absolutely loved dissection of cadavers. It was early in second year uni that I decided medicine was absolutely without a doubt for me. From here I set my sights on achieving the highest marks possible and sat the GAMSAT - A grueling and unforgiving 8 hour exam that tests your comprehension, writing and science ability. A reasonable GAMSAT score with strong course marks and a good interview got me over the line, and I was considered for a place at Melbourne Uni. In hindsight I'm glad I did Biomed first as I felt I had 3 years to have a little more of a life, and mature, but then was ready for the slog of medicine ahead.

4. How many years will it take you to be a specialist, a Urologist?

I am a huge believer that life is what you make of it and that no matter how demanding your work is, you make it work for you. I suspect as a female in a male dominated field this is all the more important.

I graduated from Brighton Secondary College in 2001, Biomedical Science in 2004 and Medicine in 2009. From there I did my internship at St Vincent's Hospital. However after 8 years at Uni and being able to afford only one trip to Thailand on graduating from med, I decided it was my time to see the world. All the books and degrees in the universe would not teach me worldliness and a bigger perspective of life.

So, I saved in my intern year and in 2011 was to take off backpacking around the world for 11 months - 4 months in South America, 6 months in Europe and 1 month in China. However just before I left towards the end of 2010 I became unwell and needed a kidney removed, but recovered well. This was my first exposure to what a Urologist did, as it didn't seem to be one of the 'popular' specialties we learnt about in medical school. A Urologist is a surgeon of the urinary tract which includes the kidneys, bladder, prostate and penis. Against

the advice of my supervisors and peers who said it was important to do a second year of work before taking time off, I decided I'd still make it count while I was travelling. I visited some hospitals internationally and went to overseas conferences to network and make important contacts.

The most memorable of these experiences was travelling to Christchurch, New Zealand for the Australian Urology conference in February 2011 when the larger of the Christchurch earthquakes happened. I became involved in rescue and resuscitation efforts around the city where nearly 200 people died. This is an experience that haunts me however if there's any positive to take from it, I met some phenomenal Urologists who have since become mentors.

On returning from my trip I did a year as a junior surgical doctor in 2012 and no doubt fate played a hand here but I was lucky enough to be accepted onto the Urology training program. I decided to defer the start of my training to undertake a Masters of Surgery in Prostate Cancer research at Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. One of my mentors, Associate Professor Declan Murphy, who I met in the earthquake offered me the role evaluating the use of robotic surgery in prostate cancer. This is what I'm doing now.

As of February 2014 I begin my Urology training for 6 years which will undoubtedly be the most grueling years of my life. However I've made the most of every opportunity and will make it work for me. I challenge any person that says you can't. I will finish training to be a fully trained Urologist in 2020.

5. What do you enjoy most about your job?

I absolutely love my job. I love that I go to work every day and make a difference to patients' lives, I love the camaraderie with my colleagues, that everyone is working towards the same common goal of helping people, that I come home proud that I made the most of my day, that everyday I'm challenged and learning something new and that some day I will cure my patients of cancer. There is nothing more rewarding and it was Brighton Secondary that gave me this amazing opportunity to make the most of my life. I'll be forever grateful to all the teachers for this.

6. Do you have any advice to our students as we head closer to exams?

If I think back to my formative years in secondary school, the thing that frustrated me most about some students was that every year, every exam or every assignment they'd say they would try harder the next time. In year 8 "It doesn't matter, middle school is more important", in year 9 "Next year is more important preparing for VCE", in year 10 "I should enjoy myself, it's the last year before VCE", in year 11 "Only my year 12 subject really counts this year, next year I'll try more". But what they didn't realise was that every bit of research for an assignment and every bit of study for that next test were building blocks for the end result. It's like expecting you could perform surgery without learning anatomy or knowing how to hold a scalpel. It takes years to culminate knowledge and skills. High school is no different.

My advice is not to wish the time away, and take every assignment and exam along the way seriously. High school goes fast and although Year 12 is not necessarily the be all and end all, doing well will certainly set the foundations for the rest of your life and can make your life much easier. Think about what you want to do after year 12 from early on, at least determine what subjects you're good at and then set realistic expectations and goals for yourself. No one expects you to be an aeronautical engineer, but what you should always strive for is your potential.

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