

Tipok (Timmy) Sakoolnamarka

Back in 2011, it was probably the biggest decision for a 14 year old boy to make, leaving my parents and going to study in a foreign country. It all started from my lack of motivation and lack of interest in studying at school back in Thailand. Motivation was a driving force to how I do things, at the same time, I did not understand why in Thailand I had to study a huge variety of subjects that I didn't like! I wanted to be able to choose subjects I liked and subjects that I'm determined to do well in. Furthermore, I saw no particular purpose in doing extra classes after school and not being able to fully enjoy my school life because I didn't have time to do the extracurricular activities offered. It's not that Thailand education or my school in Bangkok is bad, it is just different.

I have to admit that before all this happened, I was like most others, never thought of leaving their country to go abroad. It all happened so quickly, when I got the opportunity to move abroad, I took it as a challenge to explore this brand new country and motivated myself to explore a new part of my life.

April 2012, the first few months were the toughest. Finding new friends was hard enough but adding to that it was only the second time I had been away from home for a long period of time. I had to overcome being homesick! It was not easy for me to adapt to a new home arranged by the school with a bunch of strangers I did not know before. However, although it was probably the toughest time in my life, I always look at it in a positive way. I like taking on challenges because everything I go through is a very good experience for me and it would give me strength in the future. I also believe that the only thing no one could ever take from me is my experience and my knowledge. This is part of the reason why I'm willing to change and am not afraid of it.

I was able to overcome those tough times through the support of staff at Wellington College, especially from Mrs Mary Madren who was my ESOL teacher and Mr Michael Palin who was the International director at the time. They made sure I was always comfortable in the new environment and kept track of my progress. I always felt that through difficult times not only my parents were there supporting me, but also the staff at Wellington College. I very much appreciate the support I received.

It wasn't until my Year 12 that I found a group of friends that really got me going socially. I enjoy spending time with them before school, at breaks and after school. Football was a major part of it, I found close friends mostly through sports, sharing the same passion in football, playing together at lunch time and in weekends. It was good to have a good bunch of friends to share things with when I felt that I needed support from someone who can understand me. In particular, Robert, Chris and Suraj were the ones I can always go to when I'm not feeling well and offer me much needed support.

Wellington College not only gave me an opportunity to meet good friends that I will have forever, but it has also given me a wide variety of options to discover my true passion and support for my future career options. There are many different subjects that students can choose to do and staff are always there to support all the options.

I discovered my true passion in Materials Technology ! Since I started at Wellington College, I was determined and was willing to put a lot of effort in even working after school to make a fine outcome in every project I made. For me, I was always so determined to make whatever project I was working as good as to my ability. It was not that I wanted a good grade but it was for my own self- esteem to create the best finish I could . It was what I enjoyed doing and wanting to be the best at it. I would like to thank Mr Karl White for the award that was given to me as Top Of Materials Technology for both my Year 12 and Year 13. I very much enjoyed getting taught by him, he not only allowed me to work to my passion but he was so good at keeping me motivated to work. He was the best at making his students work to their full potential and he really helped me with this. He taught me to learn from my mistakes and find solutions to problems, by myself, but always gave precise suggestions along the way, making sure that I was on track. I would not be able to create nor achieve what I have in this subject, in making the gears device stand, without his feedback and his expectation of me.

This picture was my first design and this was my finished product.

All the staff I met at Wellington College are incredibly passionate about their work and were always willing to help the students to achieve at their best. Especially in Year 13. Ms Joti Lea was always on her email

late at night helping students for their tests and assignments. It shows the commitment and effort the staff put in to work extra hours so that the students can learn as best as they can. This is extraordinary and I don't think I can get these support anywhere else other than Wellington College.

Finally, what makes us international students different from others is what they had been through at a very young age and how we had to move from a different country that doesn't speak English. We all had to adapt to this completely new culture, no wonder why some of us occasionally made mistakes. But what I can say from my heart is that I'm incredibly proud to have been part of this amazing school and made the best decision of my life to move to Wellington College. This school has made me feel included and it made me who I really am today. I enjoyed every minute of it and I never felt that I made a wrong decision coming to this school even in those tough times. WC was the best place for me to grow and it is the best time of my life.

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