

### **A Beyond Borders Testimonial**

Thinking about the fact that the semester is quickly coming to a close is a thought that's really saddening and hard to think about. When I applied to Beyond Borders last year over the Christmas break, I couldn't have even imagined the impact it would have on my life, and would probably be baffled by the person I've become, in the best way possible. If I had to pick one word to describe my experience this semester it would be "rewarding". Rewarding in my relationships, rewarding in my growth as a business student and as a leader, and rewarding in my personal growth. The friends I've made in this program are friends I know will last a lifetime. I've made 45 best friends, and they are the kindest, funniest, most extraordinary and hard-working people I've ever had the pleasure to meet. The connections I've made with my Beyond Borders family surpass any connections I've made in my preceding three years of high school. On my best days, they push me to be better, and on my worst days they help me realize I'm stronger than I think I am. Not only do I have a family of 45, with whom I spend my school days, my weekends, my good days, and my bad days, but one of the most significant benefits of the program in my opinion- and some of the most crucial assets- are the incredible educators. With no criticism at all intended towards my home school, as a high school student it can sometimes feel like your voice as a student is insignificant or unheard. My teachers at Beyond Borders are learning with me every step of the way as I grow into the leader they're pushing me to be. The open environment that is fostered in the classroom allows me to feel comfortable asking questions, admit when I don't understand, and celebrate my academic successes. It's refreshing to have teachers that make their very high expectations crystal clear, and push me to achieve my goals. I know they recognize my strengths and weaknesses, and don't push me to change who I am, but foster those qualities so I'm able to be the best version of myself that I can be. Not only in my relationships am I rewarded with a wealth of care, support, and positivity, but in my experiences I'm

rewarded with tremendous growth. It's often subconsciously drilled into our brains that our success as students comes from knowing the textbook, and your grade average value at the end of the semester. At Beyond Borders I learned that our success as students goes hand in hand with achieving personal goals and celebrating little victories, like finally being able to do a presentation in front of the class without shaking, or learning to manage your work habits in a way that allows you to have some free time.

Working hard to learn the curriculum isn't the only aspect of the program where I'm learning constantly. When giving back to the community is a regular part of your school life, giving back and spending time doing good becomes normalized. As much as I was involved at my home school, being able to see your hard work tangibly pay off to benefit others is something that truly makes you want to pursue helping and working with others for the rest of your life. At least that's the impact it had on me personally. But as much as Beyond Borders has taught me to put others first in a lot of ways, it has also taught me to put myself first. To work hard to reach my goals, to keep my mind open and learn new things, to think critically and innovatively about the world around me, and to work positively with others. Through the curriculum as well as trips to places like Toronto and New York City, visiting firms and businesses, I've grown confident and passionate about entering the world of business as a hopeful student and leader. As I've been able to speak openly with my peers, teachers, alumni, local and corporate businesses, and many others, in addition to the abundance of skills I've developed and fostered, I've been able to realistically picture myself pursuing a career in a business path as a confident and able individual. I realize now that I'm never going to be able to plan and schedule my entire life, or predict my successes and shortcomings, as I want so badly. And I'm never going to be laid back, pretending like everything is out of my control. I've learned that that's not how we as people work. And that's not how life works- life falls somewhere and anywhere in between those sides, and I'll never be able to predict it. I've learned to roll with the punches, and be confident in my decisions. Being able to picture yourself in a career you love doesn't seem like a big deal, until you're making decisions about post-secondary that have the very real potential

to impact the entire rest of your life, and then being fearless and self-assured about your choices and goals is a tremendous, incredible relief and reward. I want nothing more than to see my peers experience the success they've worked so hard for, and to see the accomplishments and prosperity of Beyond Borders and the Beyond Borders students yet to come. To future BB students, you won't regret a thing. I promise this. To Beyond Borders 2016/2017, thank you. This experience means the world to me.

Sincerely,

Beyond Borders Alumni

Alicia Bowland