



Ark Burlington Danes Academy

Alumni Focus: Marcella

I attended sixth form at BDA from September 2012 to 2014. I studied Maths, Economics, Geography and English Literature. Physical Geography was always most appealing to me, especially modules related to Earthquakes and Volcanoes. I completed my degree in Geology and Physical Geography at the University of Birmingham, with the excellent teaching and a lively campus making it a very enjoyable experience. Prior to attending university, I received a £4000 Learning and Leading scholarship from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) to fund a gap year. I managed to seek out a 6 month internship with the USGS undertaking Geophysics research in California throughout this time. I returned to the USGS the following summer to complete my research, which eventually led to my first scientific publication whilst in my second year of university.



Thereafter, I decided to venture out and pursue other personal interests through internships related to engineering geology, investment banking and private equity. My internships with the USGS have opened up opportunities across many parts of the world, with recent travels to Indonesia, Spain, Israel, Switzerland, and others. I am currently working on a scientific paper investigating the spatial distribution of damage from the September 28, magnitude 7.5 earthquake and tsunami in Palu, Indonesia.

My sixth form experience at BDA was a bit of an emotional rollercoaster, but I was provided with great mentorship through my Head of Year and Geography teacher in particular. They were both extremely encouraging and supportive of my goals. My love of learning continued to thrive, and I gained a much clearer understanding of the importance of each of my chosen subjects, as well as how the skills that I acquired can be applied to a variety of career paths. It was often difficult to see the bigger picture of things, and sometimes things didn't go as planned, but a defining moment completely changed my perspective. I'll never forget sitting in one of my mentor meetings feeling discontented and very much a failure, to which I was told as my mock grade sheet was waved in front of me, "this is just a piece of paper. It doesn't mean anything at the moment. You can easily turn this around. Grades are important but they don't define you.' And now just over 5 years later, this still holds true, and I continue to manifest everything I dreamed of since that day.

"I have come that you may have life and have it in all its fullness" John 10:10

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