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**Brian’s story**

Brian would be described as a high achiever, a trait evident in both his high school and university studies. Early on in his schooling Brian’s high school math teachers identified his academic capabilities and provided support and encouragement towards Brian continuing on into higher education. It is however Brian’s father, to whom he credits as his primary influence to enrol in university:

**I think the main reason I wanted to come to university is because my dad always talked about the fact that he missed the opportunity to come to university and he always talked about regretting it ... So from an early age I had this idea that university is not the same as school, it opens up opportunities.**

As a result of positive influences in Brian’s life he subsequently completed a Bachelor of Mathematics, with his hard work and persistence resulting in a scholarship to complete a Masters, and is now considering further post graduate studies in the form of a PhD. Qualifications which he hopes will contribute towards his ambition to conduct future agricultural research to assist farmers, an aspiration that reflects his rural background. Yet this highly successful student reveals a transition period into university as a more difficult process than his academic achievements portray, describing the first month as “hell”:

**On the first night I got here I was crying in my room because I was just so scared and worried … if you’re feeling upset on your first night, or if you’re feeling overwhelmed, it’s really easy to forget the fact that most people go through that…when a friend of mine came to Adelaide the following year, she was also crying a lot in her first week because she was just completely overwhelmed and I said to her “Don’t feel bad, I did the same thing”, sometimes it’s good to just know that someone else understands it’s a difficult experience to go through.**

Brian attributes what he describes as a “massive transition” to university, as partly being a result of the requirement to relocate from a small rural town to a major capital city and partly due to being a first in family student. Two support factors that Brian identified as assisting him navigate the transition, include living at the university residential college which provided valuable peer support, and involvement in a program targeted at first year students to assist them navigate university life. He acknowledges that if he had been able to talk with someone who had recently experienced university transition, this would have provided invaluable support:

**Because from where I sit now everything I went through was all relatively easy, it was relatively simple, but at the time it can be completely overwhelming. You’ve got to apply, you’ve got to be accepted, you’ve got to move and it just seems like there is so much to do, but looking back it was all relatively easy.**

Brian’s dedication to study and the pressure that he felt during the first year of university resulted in him having minimal involvement in activities external to his course work. His social life consisted of peers at the residential college, primarily due to his of lack of social networks within his university course. Brian reported that as a result of the course work increasing in difficulty, second year saw him focusing on networking and establishing friendships within his university course. This emphasis on social networking was identified by Brian as contributing significantly to the transformation and development of him as a person, resulting in what he perceives as a more confident and outgoing persona. In considering his delay in establishing course friends, Brian reflected that not signing up for some of the university clubs may have contributed, indicating that he partially regrets not being involved more in social events during his first year.

Alongside the pressure of first year course work were financial pressures. For Brian it was being conscious that his parents were spending a lot of money investing in him attending university, resulting in pressure to win scholarships and prizes in order to help with finances. In addition to a scholarship Brian supplements his income through tutoring, initially at the residential college and now also within the university.

**In my first year I didn’t work because I think it’s probably good not work in your first year unless you absolutely have to as there is so much to learn including time management skills, learning how to organise yourself … perhaps this is why I didn’t even do sport or anything like that, as I had the idea of getting used to university first and then the other stuff comes later.**

Brian’s focus in first year also led to a number of his lecturers “investing” in him by offering the opportunity to work with them on a summer research scholarship. Despite the involvement of university lecturers, Brian acknowledges that it took a lot of personal initiative, seeking out opportunities and doing a lot for himself in order to get these types of outcomes. These personal contributions are evident throughout Brian’s story demonstrating that his commitment to learning and achieving career ambitions has led to multiple rewarding outcomes.

On reflecting on his achievements to date, Brian indicated a sense of contentment with his university experience.

**I’m absolutely happy with where I am. I’ve made most of the right choices or just been lucky with the choices. I don’t think there’s anything academically that I would regret all that much.**

Brian’s father was influential in his commencement of his journey into higher education, and he reveals that both his parents are proud of everything that he has done at university but in particular they are proud of the independence and the manner in which Brian has built his own life for himself in Adelaide.