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Senior Column: College is where you find your voice

If you know what's right for you, pursue it

By [MELANIE GULBAS](#) - APRIL 27, 2020



I've never been the best at speaking in front of an audience. The amount of presentations I've given can be counted on one hand — somehow I managed to get away with so few. During my freshman year, a professor mentioned the word “presentation” and I immediately dropped the course. When speaking, I watch what I say — don't stumble, don't stutter, don't forget the next word. With writing, it's different. Through writing, especially stories that I put my heart into and truly believe in, I've found my voice.

When I write, it all fades away. There's no uncomfortable pausing or voice cracks. I turn on my Jack Johnson playlist (as I'm doing now) and let the words flow onto the page, without the utter worry of what others will think. After completing my first undergraduate presentation, I smiled the rest of class, not even worrying about how quickly I spoke or the sentences I forgot to say. I didn't care what others thought anymore. Despite my anxiety, I began news reporting — speaking live on camera without a teleprompter to guide me. Although my first time on television wasn't the best, I was proud.

Finding my voice wasn't this grand epiphany, but instead a puzzle of small moments fitting into place. It's learning when to say something positive instead of trying to fit in with everyone's negative chattering. It's not letting others speak over you. It's learning to not always agree for

the sake of avoiding confrontation. It's learning to say "no." It's knowing that your opinions, thoughts and words are valid. It's keeping true to what you value and hold dear to heart.

For me, writing about mental health has been my motivator and strength. If you take anything away from your college experience, it's that everyone struggles; some are just better at masking it. Everyone handles their mental health differently and everyone wants to feel understood. If my personal experience, kindness and writing can reach even just one person and help them realize they aren't alone, then that means everything.

Pipe Dream opened an outlet of writing that I am forever grateful for. Connecting with the community and giving others a voice, as well as speaking my own, is empowering. When I was trying to declare my concentration, I was told not to choose rhetoric since there weren't many journalism courses being offered and there was a chance the department may cease to exist before I graduated — it didn't — and I declared rhetoric my concentration anyway. Pipe Dream helped guide my writing and make up for the classes BU lacked.

Academically, I wanted to learn everything. I was lucky to have room in my schedule to overload on courses that I wanted to take for pure enjoyment. These classes ignited my passion for writing, introduced me to new literature and taught me the most.

Reflecting back on my time at BU, I can't help but feel robbed by this pandemic. Purposefully fulfilling my graduation requirements early on and putting in strenuous hours of studying, I was waiting to be rewarded my senior year. I've always gotten A's, yet I would trade all of them for a rewind and a few more nights with my friends. For another night winning trivia, laughing while running through the snow in heels, spontaneous nights out and even being a sophomore crammed in a dorm room just talking about the depths of life with my roommate.

If I've learned anything in my years here, it would be that life and time are both precious, especially during this pandemic. Cherish the parties, the entertaining and intellectual class lectures, the warm walks on the Spine — because those moments will one day become a memory (maybe even abruptly and when you least expect it). You really don't know the best moments until they're a memory. Hold your loved ones close and know that even if times seem tough, the good ones are far from being over.

Don't be afraid to reach out for help if you need it and if you can, lend a hand to help others. But at times, the only person you can help is yourself. Sometimes, all you really need is self-love, a little help from friends and family and a lot of heart.

Now, for those who have helped me along the way:

To my incredible parents — Thank you for silently giving me the world without asking for anything in return. Thank you for all the little things you have done throughout my life and for helping me grow to the person I am today. I see everything you have done for me and I want to return that one day.

To Josh — Thank you for always being my Panera date and for keeping me company at parties, because I wouldn't have gone to them without you. Not many siblings get the opportunity to go to college together and I'm grateful I had that with you.

To Tobit — Thank you for holding my hand through these years, for always believing in me, even when I didn't and for accepting me for who I am. Also, a big thank you for always reading my story and paper drafts, no matter how small the detail changed.

To my beautiful friends — Thank you for constantly bringing belly laughter that turned to tears and then a shoulder to cry on when the tears turned real.

To Jack Shear — Thank you for truly the best lectures I've ever heard and for reinstating my love of reading. Thank you for inspiring me, showing me the terrifying beauty in gothic and Victorian literature, introducing me to the uncanny and for bringing me to another world during each class.

To all the professors I've had from the English department — Thank you for expressing your love of writing, reading and all things literature. I've never met a more passionate department of professors, especially ones that truly care about their students and believe in them. Thank you to the professors who are understanding right now during this pandemic and asking students if we need someone to talk to (Alexi Zentner, Jessie Reeder, Jack Shear).

Melanie Gulbas is a senior double-majoring in English and psychology.