

Understanding the Perspective of an Almost College Graduate

I decided to interview my roommate, Jenna. I chose to conduct this interview with a focus on what's to come for life-after-graduation, and how a typical college student anticipates finding their place in the world while no longer being able to identify yourself as a "student". This interview aims to answer questions about how an almost-grad feels entering the "adult world," especially within the year of 2024. Jenna is a Forensic Science major who graduated in the winter of 2023, but still lives on campus doing their graduate degree.

Jenna, you will be graduating college in less than a month? In one word, how do you feel and why?

Jenna: I would say probably excited, even though it might sound cliché.

Megan: No, no that's not cliché. Why would you say that you are excited?

Jenna: I technically already graduated last semester, so it feels nice to finally be able to actually feel like it's official. And feel like I am moving on to something.

Megan: So, does this almost feel more like a celebration to you?

Jenna: Yes, exactly.

Do you feel as though you are ready to graduate, at least from your undergraduate degree in your case?

Jenna: I think so, yeah. I think that from the time I had here, I learned a lot and I was able to do so much that it was all worthwhile.

Megan: Did you like the school [University of New Haven] that you ultimately chose?

Jenna: I did like the school, yes. Especially for what I needed—I think that it did its job.

What did you prefer: attending High School or attending College?

Jenna: Definitely college. I mean, I remember more of my college experiences better because it's more recent, but I think I was able to do more to further my life in college than what I was doing in high school. I got to focus more on exactly what I want to do, and taking classes as a Forensic Science Major, you don't really find those in high school a lot. It was me doing more that I want to do with my future.

Megan: Do you think your high school prepared you for what college was going to be like, or do you think you have to find that out for yourself?

Jenna: I think that I was pretty prepared. From going to a public high school, I think they did a pretty good job of preparing me, considering all that's happened with Covid.

Most people say that college is a time to “find yourself”. Going into your undergraduate degree, was that a goal of yours, too? And if so, what did you find?

Jenna: A little bit. I was definitely hoping to find what I want to do with my life. Like I said, not having previous forensic science specific experiences previously, I did go into this hoping that I would find what I want to do. So, I would say that it accomplished that.

Megan: Now, thinking about this question in another way—like for your person and yourself—did you think that finding yourself was important to you going into college?

Jenna: I think that immediately going into college, it wasn't that important to me. But, it became more important as things in my life changed. So, I would say that now, looking back, the second half of my college experience has been more so about finding myself.

Megan: So did it become more so of an organic process?

Jenna: Yeah. I didn't really go into college knowing exactly what to expect, so I didn't have too many hopes, I guess. But once I was here I learned to expect things.

Megan: Going on from that, and this is a tough question, but what do you think you found about yourself, or what is different between the version of high school you versus now that you're a soon to be graduate?

Jenna: There probably isn't a huge difference. But, I also feel like I found my personality a little bit more. I feel like, and this might sound weird, but I think that I am funnier now, so I like that.

What does it mean to you to dedicate 16 years of your life to something as important as education? Was it important to you?

Jenna: I think that I was always expected to go through this much school, so it doesn't really feel like I am doing anything different than what I would have expected. I'm just happy that I found something that I could keep doing. Honestly, I do like the academic setting, so I wouldn't necessarily say that I wasted any time or anything.

Megan: Is academia something that you enjoy?

Jenna: I would say that now it is. In high school, I didn't really enjoy the process of a full day of seven classes starting at seven AM. But, I like learning new things and learning things that I like to learn about.

Was there anything that you think you missed out on in college?

Jenna: I think I missed out a little bit on playing softball, to be honest. That was like, my thing, in high school. I know my parents wanted me to play softball, but they also understood that being a student athlete is hard, especially if you want to go into a major that you actually also want to focus on. I kind of had to give that up, almost. But, also, I don't know. I'm not too upset that I didn't do it because it's not as important to my life right now.

Megan: Do you think that you found the same camaraderie one might have with teammates, but with other people on campus?

Jenna: Absolutely. My friend group, starring Megan, [Jenna laughs] has a very similar vibe to how much I connect with people on a team. It's really the physical spot part of the game that I think I missed the most.

What was your favorite thing to do on campus?

Jenna: I would say that it's probably a combination of hanging out with my friends, but also learning cool stuff in class, which makes me sound like a nerd. [Jenna laughs] Learning stuff in my class is stuff that interests me and is also very mentally rewarding.

What advice would you give your past self prior to attending college?

Jenna: Maybe also cliché, but probably “you’ll be fine” and I would tell my freshman self, “hey, there’s three really cool people that you’re going to be best friends with—so get out there girl!” [Jenna and Megan laugh]

What song will always remind you of this time in your life? Or any kind of media—a book, a movie, a show...?

Jenna: [Jenna laughs] I can certainly name a TV show that would be a reminder of now specially, as opposed to entire college, so probably “Supernatural” [Jenna laughs].

Megan: Do you associate certain years of your college career with specific pieces of media?

Jenna: When I came into college, I was probably still into my anime era, I won’t lie—I was still there. [Jenna and Megan laugh] Probably “Jujutsu Kaisen,” I was big into that. And going on, I have always talked about “Dead Poets Society,” but I think that sophomore year I was really into it, and the film carried me through the year. Now, I would say that media would be the show “Supernatural,” and listening to Taylor Swift as well. She’s probably been overarching though these years, but I think now she’s very present in my life. The artist, Chappell Roan, has also become popular recently in my life.

If you could change one thing about your college experience, what would it be and why?

Jenna: If I could change something, I would want to meet the people I am closest to earlier.

Megan: What a nice thing to say! [Megan and Jenna laugh]

Jenna: I would also wish that I was better at handling procrastination. I wish that I was more organized throughout college, and better with keeping time.

Megan: What do you think you wouldn’t change? Best decision you ever made?

Jenna: My best decision, coming into school, was my major. I'm really glad that I knew I wanted to go into this, and that I stayed with it. Also, and again, meeting all my friends. Those were some of the best decisions that I made.

What's your perspective on “reaching adulthood”? Do you think that now that you've graduated, you've officially entered the “adult period” of your life?

Jenna: I would say yes, in the form of, I need a job now. But, I also still feel like I am a student because ultimately I still will continue to be a student for (at least) my Masters. I don't think I'll ever grow out of “school” in that sense. I also think that will change, though, when it comes to not attending school and being in a professional setting—I think that will feel different, but it's something that needs to happen.

Do you feel the pressure to have a plan after graduation? If so, who is putting that pressure on you?

Jenna: Yes. I feel like we all in college have that feeling of, “oh, now I'm leaving. I have to get a job, now I have to figure out everything for myself”. So, it is a pressure, but, I also have expected to go down this course. Once I finish high school, then I go to college, and then I get a job, and so on. It's what I have expected to do, but it also will be a new experience.

Megan: Do you feel prepared for it?

Jenna: Not fully. I don't know—going to a real job is scary, but I also think that I have learned a lot. So, I don't think I'll be going into anything completely blank. I think it will take some figuring out for me at the same time.

Do you feel confident in yourself and your ability to create the path you want?

Jenna: I think so—I think I'll get what I want. [Jenna laughs] I like to keep that mindset. I know what I need to do, but I'm also still hoping that it will all work itself out.

Do you have any specific goals post graduation? This doesn't have to be job related—you've graduated college, what do you want to do?

Jenna: I hope to learn how not to be so anxious, especially with not having homework due every week. Learning how to be myself outside of a school setting. I am hoping to find a job [Jenna laughs], that being said. I would love to have a successful career. I also hope I still have time to do things that I find fun outside of school.

Megan: And what are some of those fun things that you want to do now that you have your first summer with nothing coming afterwards?

Jenna: Oh my gosh, I hope to go to the beach a lot. I'm excited to spend time with my dog—I do just enjoy being home, to a certain degree. But going back and not having to worry about coming back to an undergrad program is pretty nice.

Megan: That's wonderful! Thank you so much for letting me interview you today. I think we got a great perspective here on what an average college student feels, with a bit of personal touch from yours truly. [Megan and Jenna laugh]