

Alex Aull

Alex Aull graduated from Saluda High School in 2016. He was an active member of Student Council, serving as the 2015-2016 Student Body President. He was also involved in the SHS chapter of HOSA and even went on to become the SC State HOSA President. He now attends Clemson University and is majoring in Biology with an emphasis in prerehabilitation sciences.

We were excited to catch up with him recently and to hear about the success he is now enjoying as a college freshman. Specifically, we asked him questions about what lessons he has learned since being in college and which high school experiences helped him the most. Here's what he told us...



Q1: Alex, which specific teacher(s)/class(es) prepared you the most for college? And how so?

Alex: First, AP Literature with Mrs. Kelly Minick; it was the only AP class that was offered at the time and was the most challenging. This class taught me how to take a college-level multiple choice test; application-based questions ARE the college standard. It also taught me how to read, analyze, and write reports in a timely manner. I have to say that this class is what saved me in college Biology - being able to write a 3-5 page essay exam in an hour. Second, Paul Johnson's Biology 2 Honors; this was the highest level Biology course offered during my time at SHS. The first Biology course I took at Clemson was taught very similar to Mr. Johnson's class, his teaching style, tests that were 70+ questions, and READING, LOTS OF READING. Out of any other teacher, Mr. Johnson most accurately demonstrated college-level coursework, workload, and expectations. Third, Mrs. Deborah Minick's Anatomy and Physiology - Mrs. Minick presented information logically and thoroughly, and she taught us acronyms of which I found useful in Biology and Chemistry. I really wish I would have taken her Chemistry 2 class.

Q2: What was the best decision you made as a high school student?

Alex: To take AP English. I found AP to be valuable. At Clemson there are no excuses, calculators, or extra credit. AP English Literature was actually my favorite course, and I am not even an avid reader. It was a great combination of written and multiple-choice questions that required me to really think. My dumbest decision was to not take Calculus and Chemistry 2 during my senior year.

Q3: What other regrets do you have? What do you wish you had done differently while in high school?

Alex: I wish I would have taken more classes at SHS that I knew would be tough. Seniors need to quit worrying about how high their GPA is. I know it's important, but what they really need to do is focus on getting *into* college and also gaining the skills necessary to be successful *in* college, which does not include early release and skipping Calculus...HUGE MISTAKE THAT I MADE! It is good to be competitive, but ponder this... It is implied that you *earn* a high GPA - not that you take easy

classes to *keep* a high GPA. When you are a college freshman, you are just another number like everyone else. No one cares what rank, GPA, or any other number you were in high school. What matters now is different. What's important now is that you have the skills you need to be successful in college, not what number you were in your graduating class.

Q4: Are there any specific classes/programs you wish SHS had offered? What would you have taken advantage of, had we offered it?

Alex: More AP across the board. These classes, in addition to IB, ARE the college standard. More workload and application-based testing are key.

Q5: What advice would you give to a 9th grader?

Alex: Take honors classes, and when the honors run out, take AP. Do your research and know what you are getting yourself into. Contemplate what is asked of you in your own scenario and make a graduating SHS student out of yourself. Please enjoy yourself; time management is something well-learned and necessary. But study hard, and I mean hard, because your future depends on what you retain.

Q6: What advice would you give to a 12th grader?

Alex: First of all, congratulations on making it to your senior year! You're probably thinking, "I've made it this far and now I have the privilege to reward myself with late arrival, early release, and other senior things." Well, here's your choice... enjoy yourself now or struggle later when no one (except the ones rooting for you back at home) cares if you pass. Stop worrying about a perfect 4.0 and do what your gut feels queezy over... Calculus, AP this, and AP that. Yea, that feeling you get when you're up for a challenge, well, get used to it.

Q7: What advice would you give to the parent of a high schooler?

Alex: Not only should you see that your child gets through high school, but that they are also challenged by it. Please push your child and remind him or her that what may seem like a mountain in high school is really only a molehill in college, and that it's going to be okay. A poor grade is a chance to learn. Character is key to success, just as much as smarts. Teach your kids to expand their borders and to gain leadership experience because that leads to an endless supply of skills which are necessary in the next chapter of life.

Q8: How did AP prepare you for college?

Alex: Professors will say AP is the college standard. From what I've experienced and seen from my fellow Clemson peers from across the nation/world, AP courses lend a greater chance of academic success in college. AP taught me how to write at the college-level.