

August 24, 2013

Dear Mr. Wood,

I just wanted to send you a letter to tell you thank you for helping me become who I am today. Although high school seems like another lifetime ago, I still remember some of the unconventional ways you helped me learn. My freshman year we drew maps over and over and over. I hated every moment of it: especially when you handed us a blank piece of paper for the exam and expected perfection on the map in that region of the world. When I watch the news, or take care of a patient from Bosnia or Somalia or elsewhere, I know exactly where those place are in the world. I also was fortunate enough to go to Europe right in the middle of our exploring Europe project.. When does that ever happen? I think you were just as excited about me going as I was (if not more so). By the time we got to Paris, my parents let me, their fourteen year old daughter, lead them around the city for two days. They knew that I knew where I was going as far as the sights and knew far better than they did on how to navigate the metro. I actually planned out at least half, if not more, of our two week vacation.

Having you for US History my sophomore year was enough to make me want to become a history teacher myself. You made history come alive and made it fascinating. I thought that history itself was just that interesting until I took it at the collegiate level and realized that I couldn't sit through four years listening to professors drone on to the past. Something about jumping on top the desk during class could have been the difference. Or possibly having a teacher that cared more about engaging students than simply teaching facts and having them pass tests.

My junior year I was lucky enough to have you as a Close--Up advisor to Washington DC. All you were required to do was to travel with us and keep us safe. Instead you held several meetings, had us learn as much as we could about the city, and even gave us the opportunity to visit places that weren't part of the actual program. My favorite part of this trip was going to the National Mall at night. There is something spiritual about being at the memorials all lit up with very few people around.

I was ecstatic when I found out that I would be able to finish out high school with having you as a teacher once again. My senior year you developed a new and innovative class: Senior Current Issues. We not only learned about current world and national issues, we also gained valuable life skills that many people never master. We learned how to do our taxes, wrote letters to corporations, and wrote resumes. We also researched different careers and job shadowed someone in a career we were interested in. This is how you come up the most in my life. People ask me when I decided to become a nurse. I tell them, "I was trying to cop out of an assignment in high school." What I thought I wanted to be at the time was an actuary. Unfortunately I didn't know any actuaries, but I did know a nurse anesthetist: my sister. When I told you who I would be shadowing you tried not to let me, knowing that I really didn't want to become a nurse. Being the sassy teenager that I was at the time said, "You can't prove that."

I remember coming back from that job shadow and telling you that I thought that maybe I really did want to become a nurse. I think we were both a little surprised by that. Had I not been forced to do a job shadow, I never would have realized my true passion.

My life and identity have now been shaped around helping others as a nurse. I have saved lives, cared for the sick and helped newborns come into the world. All because one assignment made me realize that blood from other people didn't bother me nearly as much as the sight of my own blood.

Next week I start my path to becoming a Family Nurse Practitioner. I am excited to start my graduate studies, but even more excited to know that when I am done I can help others by providing increased access to primary care.

Mr. Wood, you will always hold a special place in my heart. As a student I always knew that you cared about me. You truly wanted me to succeed in life. To you, it wasn't about the grade you gave a student, but helping that student achieve their true potential. There were times you were disappointed in me because you knew that I wasn't reaching my potential. I got the A, but I could have done more. You taught me that life isn't about the grade it is about the journey. It is about the things that you learn along the way and the person that you become because of those things.

Thank you for all that you did and all that you continue to do. Sincerely

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