The Edge: Not your typical summer camp

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What do you usually do during summer time? My summer typically involves hanging out with friends and family, watching movies, going to the beach, playing sports, and enjoying no classes; it’s all about having a fun and relaxing time. However, the past two summers have changed my life in a very positive way.

As a high school junior at the American Military Academy located in San Juan, Puerto Rico, I never thought I would have the opportunity to kick-start my career-level experience at such a young age.

First, there was the Entrepreneurial Summer Camp (“Summer Camp”) held this past summer at weVENTURE, powered by the Florida Institute of Technology. The Summer Camp was about leadership and entrepreneurship. There were about 15 students enrolled. The Summer Camp taught me so many things that I will never forget. I also had the opportunity of meeting so many great people and made new friends along the way.

The Summer Camp consisted of (1) recognizing characteristics and practices of successful entrepreneurs; (2) interacting and networking with successful young professionals; (3) meeting with community leaders; and (4) developing skill sets necessary for future business careers. The
Summer Camp ended with a required presentation of a business plan in which we had to incorporate every technique taught to us, such as, public speaking, engaging the audience, dressing for the occasion, etc. Selected faculty from FIT assisted with the evaluation of the presentations. I had the honor to be selected the first place presenter, and was ultimately recognized by many professors from the university.

Another great summer experience took place two years ago. During my sophomore year in high school, I took the Pre-SAT test, which is mostly about testing your knowledge in areas such as cognitive comprehension, writing skills, etc. A few months later, upon receipt of my scores, I received a letter stating that I had been chosen to go to a two-week National Youth Leadership Forum on Medicine, a prestigious and advanced program of medicine for high school students held at Florida Nova Southeastern University.

The Forum was about providing high school students real-world medical experience, as well as exploring professional career opportunities in the fields of medicine and health care. There were eight cities across the U.S. that you could choose from to assist, each selected for their world-class credentials and reputation, including medical universities, hospitals, facilities, and research centers. While at the Forum, I had the opportunity to visit state-of-the-art medical simulation centers located at the University of Miami, where high school students could train like a professional and get hands-on experience in many medical procedures (e.g., practicing on lifelike mannequins, etc.). One of the best parts about the Forum was that I met amazing people who became very good friends. I also met graduate students who provided essential insight in how to navigate the medical school application process, and what you can expect throughout a typical first year in a medical school. Let me tell you… these were two weeks filled with great experiences and rich, necessary information for any high school student!

Thanks to the Forum experience, I learned what it is like to be in the field of medicine and how it can be a life-changing experience if it is something that you really want to do. I also learned what it is like to be independent for two weeks, and how exciting the college experience can be sharing a dorm with a roommate.

Overall, these last two summers have taught me so much in life, and allowed me the opportunity to meet and interact with great people from various cultures. Both, the Summer Camp and the medical Forum, have been key in providing additional necessary resources to continue performing well in school, as well as an exciting and much clearer path into my future.

From a high school student perspective, a key takeaway of the above is the importance of planning your summers to be not only amusing and relaxing, but also to include seminars, trainings, and/or summer camps related to your future college career. Parents continuous motivation to keep their children connected to the educational environment, even during summer times, is also critical. Such
connection can provide great benefits and responses to most of the questions high school students have about their upcoming college careers.

Elizabeth Otero is a high school student, entering her junior year, at the American Military Academy in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Elizabeth attended the weVENTURE Entrepreneurial Summer Camp and was awarded first-place in the business plan competition.

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