

Dear Junior,

Hello, underclassman! Your last year is most likely going to be a wild ride. Try to make the most of it, and stick with each other for as long as you can. Keep up with what you have to do-don't falter just because it's your last year. You'll be out doing what you want to do soon, so take the end of your high school career with pride. At St. John's, time management is everything. Don't delay if you don't have to. Your assignments may seem pointless, but they are the only things that stand between you and the best grade you can get. Also, stand up for what you know is right. Justice, morals, and unity should trump all fear of authority when in pursuit of something right. Make sure you take in all the lessons you learn at college, too. Not just the ones on the board, but the ones that you learn throughout the journey. Those lessons will help shape you and strengthen your life skills. Take everything as a learning experience that will guide you when you get to your actual college and will guide you in life in general. I wish I had more knowledge of how things should go beforehand, but now I can lend that advice to you. Advocate for yourself please, you'll need to. For me, distress tolerance was the key DBT skill this year. Just keeping the end goal in mind and pushing through the work is what got me to the other side. As for you, good luck in college, it's going to be hard for you, no sugar coating that. I hope you have a smooth journey.

From Your Student Body President,

Shayla.

Dear Junior,

There were some challenges that I faced and overcame throughout the SJU/Nicotra program. For example, managing to complete my assignments from Nicotra

and the SJU program together on a similar date. However, as time went on, I was able to manage completing my assignments and study for my exams in a timely manner.

Additionally, in order to attain that goal I created an academic study calendar to keep track of my school and college work. Overall, as time went on I was able to organize when and where was the right time to study for academics and have time for myself.

Furthermore, I learned many positive things from my challenges that I experienced throughout the SJU/Nicotra program. Some of the positives that I took into account were that my friends were always there for me. They always supported me and helped me in tough times. All of us were there together as a team knowing that all of us came here together and we all will leave here together. Where all our classmates helped each other in completing assignments, helping each other study, checking up on others to see if they all caught up, etc. Just the fact that we were all there to be with each other when things got a little to a lot difficult was really pleasant knowing that we had each other's backs.

Moreover, I wish I had made my experience easier throughout the SJU/Nicotra program was that all the professors would update their assignments on the SJU Canvas daily. Making me anticipate what my grades were after each assessment. When I couldn't see my grades updated, it made me a little anxious. Since I would have liked to see if I was on the correct path to completing the course. Otherwise, just a quick check in via email or in person helped but being consistent with grades is an effort I like to put in occasionally.

Withal, mindfulness has been most valuable to me this past year. Since being in the present moment helped me get through my highschool career. Where I'm taking the next step in my academic life going to college. Preparing for the next chapter in life but also being mindful of who and what are around in my current aspect of life. Overall, being aware of what's going on around me helped a lot to the point where what decision I make will have an effect on me in the future which I am looking forward to.

Sincerely,  
Sana Ahmed

Dear Junior,

These last couple of years have been very challenging but in the end it will be very rewarding. I can't speak for those who are doing internships but for those in the St. John's program you will need to be on top of your game and realize that this opportunity you are given is a privilege. Being a high schooler on a college campus comes with great responsibility and maturity. I would tell you to get a planner or write down all of your assignments on the notes app so you don't forget. I would also tell you that it is going to be stressful trying to juggle all of these classes at once and although you may not like that senior seminar class or any of the high school classes in Nicotra it's going to pass by fast.

No matter what, make sure you prioritize your college classes over the high school classes but make sure you're doing what you need to do in order to pass. St. John's ends in early May so that will give you some time to relax and enjoy your senior year and you get to look forward to all the other senior activities. If there is a teacher accompanying you on the college campus make sure that you ask as many questions as you need and confide in them when you need to. Get started on your college essays in the summertime and make sure to start the applying to college process before November otherwise it'll be stressful and apply to as many as you want even if you think you might not get in because you never know. This is going to be very stressful as it is very new to you so make sure you are taking care of yourself and your mental health along with practicing mindfulness. Cherish the time you have now and try not to stress too much. That's all and I wish you the best of luck!

Sincerely,  
Sophia Batista Co '22

Dear Junior,

There were some challenges I faced during the SJU/Nicotra program in maintaining the balance of completing the assignments and study strategies as well as my social life. It is important for me to excel in my education since it is very important to both myself and my parents. However, we also think it's important for me to have a social life with my friends too. I was allowed to spend time after school with my friends as long as my school work was completed. It was also difficult learning the importance of time management when I was invited to hangout with my friends knowing I had to study for an upcoming test or complete an assignment due that night. I had to learn how to make sacrifices understanding that I couldn't be involved in every fun activity and still complete my school work.

Luckily, there were some positive things that I learned from the challenges from what I experienced during the SJU/Nicotra program. The professors were able to see that I completed very detailed and well thought out work. It made me very happy to hear they enjoyed reading my papers and writing assignments. When they provided feedback for me, I used it to improve my content to possibly receive a higher grade. By the grades and conversations I've had with my professors, I can tell that I follow the tasks properly and put a lot of thought into my writing.

What I wish that would have made my experience easier would probably be being able to have better study strategies with my friends and peers, not only myself. It's important to have effective independent study strategies by reviewing notes, rewriting different phrases to memorize, reading the chapters in a textbook, or creating index cards. However, students should also be able to study with their friends and peers who will be taking the exam as well. My friends and I created flash cards on an online study website called quizlet to complete together independently and in groups. It was fun to do them during our lunch periods but it wasn't the most effective way to study in a group of people.

One distress tolerance activity that I utilized that helped me cope during the SJU/Nicotra program would be going to an event. This really helped me because I was able to do something not related to my education where I could see and interact with other people. Having conversations with people really helps me get away from doing any academic activities and assignments. Even if the conversation is about school, just talking to someone relieves my stress and makes me feel much more positive. I hope to use this distress tolerance activity a lot during my college career.

I wish you best wishes coming into your senior year and I hope it is a very memorable experience for you.

Sincerely,

Lilyanne Boyland

Dear Junior,

I hope this letter finds you well. College can seem scary and overwhelming but it is very helpful. Throughout the school year, my peers and I have been taking college classes through the SJU/Nicotra program. The program is extremely helpful because it helps you gain college credits and lets you know what college will be like. These classes helped my classmates and me learn so much and helped us grow not only as students but as individuals. The classes helped us tremendously and we all tried our best.

With that being said there were a couple of challenges we faced during our time in the SJU/Nicotra program. Some challenges I faced while being a high school student and a college student was the workload and time management. Since we had to take both high school classes and college classes it was double the work in the same amount of time. We

would have to figure out how to organize our time so we could complete the work we were given. We also had to study for midterms and finals for college and we had to complete assignments for school. It was pretty overwhelming and at times it seemed like too much but our teachers were very understanding and would let us study in their classes when we finished our classwork.

On the other hand, we learned so many important things from the classes as well. For example, in one of the classes we took during the first semester, we learned how to properly write an email with an email signature. This may not seem like a big deal but knowing how to write a professional email will help you communicate with people throughout college and life. Additionally, we also learned about the law in our Business Law class. The class helped me become familiar with how the justice system works and what laws and rights exist. We also learned about the justice system in our Criminal justice class where our professor walked us through the history and the rules of the criminal justice system. The class helped us understand what law enforcement does and the law.

Though the classes had a harsher workload than the high school classes, our behavior also contributed to our experience in the SJU/Nicotra program. I wish I had been less lazy and procrastinated less. I completed my work on time and got good grades but I stressed a lot because I would leave things to the last minute. While everyone else was almost done with their work, I would be starting it, which would cause me to feel very stressed. If I did my work at a reasonable time, I would have enjoyed the SJU/Nicotra program way more. Doing your work on time makes things easier not only academically but also benefits you personally.

I was very stressed throughout the school year so I used different coping mechanisms to help me. One activity that I utilized that helped me cope with my senior year as a Nicotra/SJU student was texting my friends. Overall, I like texting more than calling

because you get to text wherever you are and whenever you want unlike calling. Texting is easier, more time-efficient, and in my opinion more expressive. I use texting as a coping mechanism because it reassures me. I feel reassured by texting because I know that even when my friends and I go to different colleges and do not see each other, we can still text each other. By texting, we can keep in touch and remain friends or at least acquaintances.

I sincerely hope you enjoy the SJU/Nicotra program as much as I did.

Best,

Saba Javed

Dear Future Seniors,

Although I am one for greetings and mannerism such as how do you do? Or I hope you are doing well while reading this. But let's get straight to the point, I would advise you to have balance. I know you want to focus on just those college classes, but you need to remember that you have highschool classes too. Balance is key and you have to acknowledge both sides of the spectrum, in addition to that you also may have extracurriculars (which I highly recommend for your college applications). Regarding college applications, start as early as possible. I mean that and you will have the most stress free senior year. Some other advice I would offer while on the topic of highschool life is first of all we have sports, but you need to play for Port Richmond highschool. And yes they have sports you think they won't have except for ping pong and fencing if that's your cup of tea. Second, don't procrastinate, don't be me during freshman year that does

homework while the teacher checks other homework. Third and final advice is that study smart and not hard. If you don't think you need to study then don't overload yourself nor your mind because you can forget.

St. John's colleges I don't know who your teachers are, but there is always that teacher that is not your favorite. Regardless if you like the teacher or not, I will tell you a list of things professors hate. Number one, don't be that know it all student, they need to teach the class too. Two is to not participate too much, just be interested enough to ask questions and put in some comments. Three go to their office hours, I had the mistake of only going to a few and this will allow you to have great recommendation letters. And last is that always try your best on assignments. The professors aren't dumb and they can tell if you only put just a bit of effort. Last lesson is that this is college and no one will babysit you for assignments or homework. The professors will make that up to you and no one else. It is up to you. Good luck with your classes and I hope you really take advantage of St. John's.

Mental health is also important. It has been said time and time again how important it is, but it really is. I especially am the type of person to keep to myself and don't like burdening others with my own problems. I have had many silent emotional outbursts. I am the type of person to deal with emotions and problems by myself. I feel as if I value emotional regulation more than interpersonal effectiveness. Although knowing how to distinguish certain characteristics of a relationship is important, I am a very emotional person. Being sensitive is not the ideal situation and I have cried a lot. I want to learn and know how to maintain my composure. Learning emotional regulation will help me through stressful times and how to deal with unexpected measures. It especially helped me stay calm through tests and due dates at St. John's. No matter if you are the calmest or the most chill person there are times where you will get so emotional that you need to know how to compose yourself afterwards and heal. So please just if you have someone to



talk to that's great. Have that support person that you can vent to and cry to because it will help a lot more than you think.

Your senior year should be the most memorable year of your life, so please don't fill it with unnecessary drama or just slack around. Actually be productive and DO NOT I repeat DO NOT procrastinate on anything so you can have more free time to yourself, but also at the same time it's okay to take a break and relax. Remember that grades and classes aren't everything, so go out and experience the best year of your life!

Sincerely,

A Senior of Class 2022

P.S. Just apply to as many colleges you want to and don't be afraid to take a chance even if you are afraid of rejection. Remember that rejection is just the beginning and it's not your loss if a college rejects you, it's the college's loss.

Dear Junior,

My name is Mekhi Nicholas and I have been informed that you are also doing the St. John's Program like myself have. Now, that program has brought me a lot of things. Both positive and negative. But, let's address the obstacles that you will face first so that way you are more prepared unlike myself. I will be using my own personal experience with St. John's University to tell you how it is. Though this is subjective due to it being from my point of view but I hope it can still be of use for you. The challenges that I have endured while participating in both the SJU and Nicotra program include time management, motivation, and keeping my composure. Because despite the teachers at high school knowing we have college classes at St. John's that are strenuous enough, they give us more work to couple it. So, I had to find the time to do both without losing my mind

because that was a very stressful time for me and I usually break easily under heavy amounts of stress so not just breaking down was a real challenge for me during the time of this program. There was also motivation whereby I just wanted to just give up and not do serious assignments like the final papers for nearly all my college classes with the exception of one but each were at least 3-5 pages minimum with the highest being 8-10. But I did it anyway because I was determined to show my worth and that I have the potential to become a college student regardless of my age. Now don't lose motivation like I did. Keep doing what you have to do with the knowledge that you will gain a higher point of education from this program most others do not have the chance to gain. The work may seem strenuous but let me tell you and I know this may sound cliché but all your hard work will pay off eventually in the end.

Now, I may have scared you with all this talk of papers and stuff but that is not all St. John's has to offer. The SJU Early College Program has helped me as a student by making me adapt to new environments and helping me know what to expect from places of higher forms of education incorporated within it. These challenges have made me become more of an adapter to scenarios that would have easily overwhelmed me at the beginning of the school year. Now that I have the foresight beforehand to know what college is like, I can become more prepared mentally and emotionally to deal with such struggles. Overall, the SJU/Nicotra Program has made me more knowledgeable about college and has shaped my own opinions on it. And while it does have its unfavorable moments, the benefits outstrip the negatives in my opinion when it comes to gain from such an experience. So, this can help you know what you're getting into when going to college or if you wish to go to college at all. The choice is yours to make.

Now, St. John's has made me and my other classmates of the SJU program become more mentally and especially emotionally challenged with the assignments they threw at us. Some of us vented in ways to let out those negative emotions and not allow it continue to affect our lifestyle outside St. John's. The method to this? Emotional Regulation. Emotional Regulation has been more valuable to me compared to the likes of Interpersonal

Effectiveness, Mindfulness, and Distress Tolerance. The main reason is because I have already mastered the skills or acquired and used such emotional concepts with my fellow SJU students in the same program as myself through the school year. So, if those skills would be compared to Emotional Regulation as to how valuable it is to me in terms of honing it and learning how to do it effectively, it would be worth little to nothing in my opinion. Emotional Regulation has something I have a constant battle with because I try to control my emotions but some people just trigger it. And I cope by basically shutting down and not talking with anybody. I have been improving in this emotional flaw of mine but that tendency to just shut out the world itself rears its ugly head every now and then. So, that is all I have to say for you at the moment, my junior. Do not let this despair you. Try your best and you will accomplish the best. You are the next graduating Nicotra after us seniors now. Honor the Nicotra Knights and all members of it! If you have any questions, you can contact me at [mekhi.nicholas@student.nicotracharter.org](mailto:mekhi.nicholas@student.nicotracharter.org). Salutations Junior and I hope this was informative and knowledgeable for you to use at your own and full disclosure.

-Sincerely,

Mekhi Nicholas.

Dear Juniors,

Being in the SJU/nicotra program was definitely an experience to have. There have been many times in the program when me and my peers felt overwhelmed with the work. Having a dual program was a good thing for me because I know it will benefit me in the future but it was a lot. Having high school work and college work at the same time everyday stops us from completing everything. For me I would focus more on my college work instead of highschool because I felt it was more important. This caused my grades to drop in my high school classes. I've learned quite a few positive things being in the dual program. Being in this program I learned how to manage my school work a lot better than before. Having college work is a lot more than high school so you need to learn how to manage your time. I've been able to learn many new things about the outside

world. I've learned things I had no idea about while being in my high school classes. I've also learned to become a lot more mature and independent. In this experience I wish we were a little more prepared. I feel we were rushed into the classes without enough prep. When we finally did get used to it definitely was a great experience for me. Being in college classes was very confusing because I had to become very independent with new things. I feel they could have prepared us a little more with that aspect of the classes. What helped me the most this year was the mindfulness skill. Being mindful really helps you level your mind and focus on your work. When being mindful I feel you are able to get your work done a lot easier than usual. I usually take my time doing all kinds of school work but being mindful in my college classes helped me change that. I was able to get on top of all my school work and get it in to my professors on time.

Dear Junior,

I hope you are doing well as of receiving this letter, that you are enjoying your junior year and excited for your senior year at Nicotra entering into the St. John's program. I want to share some important information with you about a senior's personal experience in the St. John's program. I hope my insight into balancing out high school and college classes helps you in any way it can.

Firstly speaking of a challenge I personally had faced was balancing my high school and college classes towards the end of the year. I just had a film, movement, wellness, and senior seminar. These classes did not particularly have a lot of work to complete except at the end when a decent amount of work was due such as my essay and presentation. While in the beginning, these classes were not difficult, towards the end of the year when film yearbook videos, essays, and, final presentations were due for senior seminar class, things got tricky. I also had finals and final essay assignments for college so I had to learn how to manage my time even better and understand my own limitations.

Getting away from the challenging part, a positive outlook on this early college program would be that I feel that taking this College program has helped me positively by helping me realize the difference between college and high school classes. I now have even better time management skills than I had before. I also now realize college work requires more in-depth thought and effort than my standard high school classes. These college classes were something I couldn't slack off in and needed to give my all. I also learned perseverance, to push through even in the most difficult of situations. Sometimes you're not going to be with people that you like but that's just life sometimes.

Something I wish I could have told myself sooner before this program started to make my life easier would be to not procrastinate so much and do my assignments way before the actual due date. This mostly depends on me and my work better since I do feel I work better under pressure and did set a certain day to complete my essay. But I also heard of when my essays were due months in advance and still didn't do them until a few weeks before the due date. If I had done them earlier and in a much more efficient manner such as a page a day I would have been less stressed. My time would have been more used to relax and have free time.

If I had to choose between one of these 4 important DBT (Dialectical Behavior Therapy) skills such as mindfulness, distress tolerance, emotional regulation, or interpersonal effectiveness that helped me throughout my senior year it would be mindfulness. I feel mindfulness is way more valuable to me because I'm able to have access to both emotional and rational minds. There is always a way to use them effectively, especially during my first college year at St. John's University. Since I wasn't used to college and wasn't used to even getting my first B on an assignment I was very surprised when I received one for sending an assignment in "late" even though I sent it to the wrong email by a one-dot mistake. I was just very angry with the way she responded to me, but I knew I was mad at the moment and accepted that, and eventually, I pushed past it. I knew I still had work to complete and noticed my classmates were also perturbed but I didn't let emotions get

the better of me and used my rational mind to know that I could make it through the semester if I just got one B.

I hope that you found something useful in reading about my insight about my senior year here at Nicotra. I know things seem stressful at the moment for you but I have faith in you to do well in this upcoming year.

Best wishes,  
Giovanni

Dear Junior,

This letter is just a mini reflection of my personal experience and what I feel I can pass advice onto you as someone who went through what you'll be going through. To start off I will be talking about some challenges I faced within this program. A majority was the drama that turned into way more than it had to be. Bullying and fighting all that. Then on top of that those things were barely dealt with. Other dilemmas were feeling outcasted there. So many older kids who want nothing to do with us and are a majority that's white, it's a bit intimidating.

However, there were some positive things I have learned from these challenges. For example I learned is that giving people who make you feel smaller the reaction you want, is never good. Keep to your personal values and don't let someone who is so miserable and insecure with themselves have to put other people down to make you act out. They don't deserve your energy. But also don't let those things get overlooked. Speak up to people and make whoever is in charge listen, if they don't, understand you're never in the wrong and the system is very much rigged. Another thing I have learned is that as per usual, minding your business, taking care of yourself and doing your work, never fails. Of course be involved with your friends and fun stuff, but prioritize yourself above all.

I wish I would've put more effort into my work and motivated myself to make it so I could have an easier experience. You create your habits everyday by doing things how you do them. Once you recognize and acknowledge your current habits, reevaluate them and see if you should correct them to better ones. Personally, I was well aware of the no motivation and bare minimum that I was doing. I tried to tell myself if I can get this grade doing minimal effort imagine it with some. However, that did not work but I will be improving for college because I heard they don't play there.

The DBT skill that helped me the most during the past year was practicing distress tolerance. I was stuck balancing double work at different grade levels, stress was bound to be there! Taking time to have breaks and prioritizing my mind when things got too much was a big help. Of course things needed to get done regardless (and they did). But I wasn't afraid to give myself time to recharge. I would reward myself and do things to help from stressing about this work. I would light incense, go out for air, clean cluttered space, practice physical and mental self care, etc.

Overall, this was definitely an interesting experience I won't ever forget and I'm glad it was the way it was. So many memories were given, whether they were good or bad. No matter what you will get through this program, the credits are yours to have to move ahead in with college and ultimately just a flex, not everyone gets to do what you're doing (although I will admit stuff sucks but just mind your business around drama, do your work and you'll be good). I wish you luck and success!

Sincerely,

Mary Spurrell

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Dear Junior,

You all should enjoy your senior year by spending time with friends, meeting new people, and attending events; nevertheless, do not slack off. Avoiding procrastinating and

maintaining academic standards are two of the most crucial suggestions for you seniors. Determine why you're looking for what you're looking for. The easier the application procedure will be if you plan ahead. It's best to start looking into colleges as soon as possible. And I'm not joking when I say "research." Choosing a college is a significant decision that requires careful consideration. Scholarships that demand essays should also be considered. Begin a chat with your guidance counselor as soon as possible. Send him her or them an email with a brief description of your future ambitions and current interests. Make an appointment with your counselor during your junior year, when he or she is not overwhelmed with senior help. The more your counselor understands about you, the more equipped he or she is to assist you in making sound decisions about your future. A letter of recommendation from a guidance counselor is also required by most universities. Your letter will be better if they know more about you.

You'll have lectures, midterms, assignments, and even quizzes at St John's, but it all depends on your teachers. Just remember to take plenty of notes, study, and turn in all assignments on time. I'm not going to lie to you. This program benefited me as a student in plenty of ways. For one thing, it taught me how to be more responsible and on top of my work; I had to make sure that everything I did was done with a lot of effort; it gave me an experience of what college will be like when I am eventually enrolled in it; and it provided me with credits that will help me in the future. I used to get stressed out and break down because of how overwhelmed I was, It was difficult at first to adjust to doing both college and high school classes at the same time, but with the help and support of some of my teachers, I managed to adapt and got used to to doing both college and high school courses, and I also had support from my peers and my precious dog You can take one piece of advice from me!! Write all of your notes in one Google doc every class, and share the doc with your classmates so that you can get the notes written down faster as a group. I wish you the best of luck in college :) I am confident that you will succeed!!

Best , A Senior <3



Dear Junior,

Senior year is not what you would imagine. It's not all fun and games, it's not a breeze, it's really not. Senior year is full of stress, losses of friendships, aggravation and much more. But it's also full of success and new beginnings. Senior year is the year you figure out what your next steps into the real world are. You have to do your best, seek for greatness, and have motivation. It is now coming to the end of the year and I can say I have not lived up to everything I am saying for you, which is why I'm saying this now. Live up to your full expectations.

The program is a great way to get a head start. With this being said, we are gaining credits to excel in our next years of college. It's a great opportunity that needs to be taken up. Certain challenges that I faced were getting all the work done for high school and college. It was challenging for me because I had trouble focusing on multiple things at once. There are many ways to overcome this challenge but it takes more time than you would think.

With these challenges came solutions and lessons learned from the experience(s). An example of a lesson and solution for me was to manage my time better. I am a huge procrastinator and managing myself better helped very much. I was able to space out my time when it came to my work and always chose what I felt should be done first and which were most important. Many things can help you with your challenges but it's a matter of how and when you decide to solve them.

I wish we had more time. I wish we were able to get all of our credits and had more time to excel. More time to gain more credits in order for us to have our associates degree. There are so many things we could have done differently in order to help ourselves but now that is your job. You are going to be in charge of changing the experience and helping yourselves as well as others and the next coming classes to prosper in the program.

In all seriousness, the DBT skills were difficult for me. I needed to persevere through it all because I struggled heavily with them. Mindfulness and distress tolerance would be the most important skills to have. You need to keep an open mind and really help yourself. Know how to handle your emotions and know when and where is the right time

to express them. Speak your mind and always have an open mind. I cannot stress that enough because when you have an open mind you're able to grasp more information and understand everything around you.

In conclusion, college life is difficult, it's tough, it's work and it's effort but it's completely worth it. The head start I've gotten is impeccable but it takes **HARD WORK** and **DEDICATION**. Everyone is different, so all I can really say is good luck but never give up. Keep the motivation and keep the drive. Don't lose it. And if you do, don't show anyone you've lost it. They'll use it against you to their advantage and drain you. You've got this. Only the best will come to the people who do their very best.

Former Senior,

Leo Arias

Dear Junior,

Hello! I'd like to start off by saying hi, my name is Tyler. You should know this but I am a senior and I'm hoping my letter contains some good advice for you to make your senior year easier. Although this letter should help more if you are in the SJU program, the advice should still help even if you aren't. This year, I faced a problem with procrastination. Procrastinating both college and highschool work. Now I'm not gonna tell you to try to change that habit, even though adults will say to try and change it. But if you procrastinate and wait till last minute to hand in work, I'll give you some advice. I like to do all my research and plan how I'm going to write my paper early, and then put my paper together last minute.

You can't change habits like procrastinating, so find ways around it. The positive thing I learned from procrastination is that I have very good writing skills. Just to let you know, I procrastinated so much that I wouldn't start a 5 page paper until around an hour before it was due. Doing this really put my writing skills to the test and being able to

finish a 5 page paper in an hour and still get a high passing grade helps your confidence skyrocket. It isn't a very good thing to tell you if you don't have good writing skills but be confident in yourself. Something I wish I had to make this program easy is that my highschool teachers would realize that I had college work to do on top of their work. So if you are in the SJU program and you're getting a lot of work to the point where you're overwhelmed, tell your Nicotra teachers.

The teachers in Nicotra are a lot nicer than other seniors make them sound. A skill that helped me around work is emotional regulation. Being able to control my emotions helped with work ethic. Pushing your emotions aside to get work done is helpful, although it isn't very good for mental health. Alright, I'm done with all this talk about work. This makes me sound so serious, but I kinda needed to sound serious for a good grade. But I hope my letter helps, and if you got any questions or need advice then you can ask one of the teachers to find me. I'd be happy to help. But if this letter is enough from me then I hope you enjoy your senior year!

From your Senior,

Tyler Chen.

To All the Juniors,

Hello My name is Elise Crossen a senior that was most certainly ready to leave high school. Some challenges I faced during the SJU/Nicotra program was coming across a load full of work. Also meeting the professors was scary because I had the impression that they were going to be like a piece of work aka trouble. Plus people always told me that professors are a hard shell, you can't crack them easily. Some positive things I learned from the challenges I faced/experienced during the SJU/Nicotra program is that I learned how to be myself and I learned how to be more aware of my bad time management skills. I

just adapt with my new/positive working habits. Challenges always help you realize what you can accomplish. If you push yourself past your limits, you can always see if you could do better and you build upon that.

Honestly I wished we had “less work” I should say. I'm not going to say there was a ton of work because if you want the college experience you need to actually get a real feel of independence. You have to be very reliant on yourself especially when it comes down to work. We had work from both Nicotra and St Johns and it made life really hard but it was also an eye opener for me. And I'm glad I found the skills I need to work on such as TIME MANAGEMENT.

I think mindfulness and distress tolerance helped me the most this year because distress tolerance skills such as listening to music helped me THE MOST and I say this because there were plenty of occasions and times where I just wanted to give up or throw a fit. But I had to realize the importance of maintaining my emotions , especially in a professional setting. You need to have coping methods in order to get somewhere with finding yourself. And I found myself by finding things I loved to do. Hopefully the SJU program helps you all find yourselves, I hope it helps you find your strengths and your weaknesses. It's always an important thing to recognize your weakness so you can change them into becoming your strengths.

Sincerely , Elise

Dear Junior,

I know that the idea of going to St. Johns is scary. There's new people, new scenery, and new educational opportunities. When you get your schedule, and classes try not to be overwhelmed. I know that may be difficult but know that it's less than it looks like.

The challenging part of St. Johns is going to be time management. The semester goes by quickly and the deadlines are longer, however that's simply due to the fact that the work requires time. And don't be too hard on yourself if you procrastinate. Everyone does at first so it's totally normal. Don't be so hard on yourself, it gets you nowhere.

It's not all for nothing. As a student, I appreciated the independence of being on the college campus. I had a library full of resources. Teachers to turn to. And no matter what, If you pay attention, and do your work, you're gonna be just fine. I learned how to not procrastinate and how to organize my work life and keep it separate from my private life.

If I can give one piece of advice, it would be to use your resources. Don't feel the need to never ask for help. You will get a lot of attention because you're in the program. Highschool teachers are always willing to help you. Mr. Liqouri was my biggest help. He'd proof read my essays and help me game plan on how I can tackle my many different assignments. I regret not going to him for help sooner sometimes.

Interpersonal effectiveness is going to be your biggest help. Remember how important it is to be yourself. And how important it is to correctly show the meaning behind your words and actions. The total idea of group work, will go smoother with the help of interpersonal effectiveness.

Best of luck,

Elisabeth Hynes

Dear Junior,

Some challenges I faced were lack of time management and so much work at once. It was difficult when I didn't pay attention. It's definitely not like highschool. The environment is different and the professors will treat you like college students. I was able to grow educationally and understand what needed to be expected of me. So even when the work

seems hard, push through and do the best you can because it'll get you where you want to be. Even through the challenges there are moments where it's actually a good experience. Honestly there were so many promises that didn't happen which made this experience less exciting. So keep your expectations low but also understand this is a "new" school so it can be hard. Just don't expect the best of the best right away. Also I wish they mentally prepared us more without overbearing us with work because that's their definition of preparing which isn't always the best in this case. A DBT skill I used is emotional regulation. Understanding my emotions and where they're coming from was the best way for me to move forward and find peace within myself in order to do my work. I took a break from all the college work for a week and focused on what I needed for myself in that moment and once I got back into it I was able to do my work to the best of my abilities and pass my classes. I won't lie, some of the classes were hard and I wanted to leave the program mid way however I did it and I can say with confidence I would do it again only because it was an experience I won't forget. So don't give up when things get hard you got this!

Best of luck, Eli <3

Dear Junior,

These last couple of years have been very challenging but in the end it will be very rewarding. I can't speak for those who are doing internships but for those in the St. John's program you will need to be on top of your game and realize that this opportunity you are given is a privilege. Being a high schooler on a college campus comes with great responsibility and maturity. I would tell you to get a planner or write down all of your assignments on the notes app so you don't forget. I would also tell you that it is going to be stressful trying to juggle all of these classes at once and although you may not like that senior seminar class or any of the high school classes in Nicotra it's going to pass by fast.

No matter what, make sure you prioritize your college classes over the high school classes but make sure you're doing what you need to do in order to pass. St. John's ends in early May so that will give you some time to relax and enjoy your senior year and you get to look forward to all the other senior activities. If there is a teacher accompanying you on the college campus make sure that you ask as many questions as you need and confide in them when you need to. Get started on your college essays in the summertime and make sure to start the applying to college process before November otherwise it'll be stressful and apply to as many as you want even if you think you might not get in because you never know. This is going to be very stressful as it is very new to you so make sure you are taking care of yourself and your mental health along with practicing mindfulness. Cherish the time you have now and try not to stress too much. That's all and I wish you the best of luck!

Sincerely,

Sophia Batista Co '22

Dear Junior,

Senior year is not what you would imagine. It's not all fun and games, it's not a breeze, it's really not. Senior year is full of stress, losses of friendships, aggravation and much more. But it's also full of success and new beginnings. Senior year is the year you figure out what your next steps into the real world are. You have to do your best, seek for greatness, and have motivation. It is now coming to the end of the year and I can say I have not lived up to everything I am saying for you, which is why I'm saying this now. Live up to your full expectations.

The program is a great way to get a head start. With this being said, we are gaining credits to excel in our next years of college. It's a great opportunity that needs to be taken up. Certain challenges that I faced were getting all the work done for high school and college. It was challenging for me because I had trouble focusing on multiple things at

once. There are many ways to overcome this challenge but it takes more time than you would think.

With these challenges came solutions and lessons learned from the experience(s). An example of a lesson and solution for me was to manage my time better. I am a huge procrastinator and managing myself better helped very much. I was able to space out my time when it came to my work and always chose what I felt should be done first and which were most important. Many things can help you with your challenges but it's a matter of how and when you decide to solve them.

I wish we had more time. I wish we were able to get all of our credits and had more time to excel. More time to gain more credits in order for us to have our associates degree. There are so many things we could have done differently in order to help ourselves but now that is your job. You are going to be in charge of changing the experience and helping yourselves as well as others and the next coming classes to prosper in the program.

In all seriousness, the DBT skills were difficult for me. I needed to persevere through it all because I struggled heavily with them. Mindfulness and distress tolerance would be the most important skills to have. You need to keep an open mind and really help yourself. Know how to handle your emotions and know when and where is the right time to express them. Speak your mind and always have an open mind. I cannot stress that enough because when you have an open mind you're able to grasp more information and understand everything around you.

In conclusion, college life is difficult, it's tough, it's work and it's effort but it's completely worth it. The head start I've gotten is impeccable but it takes **HARD WORK** and **DEDICATION**. Everyone is different, so all I can really say is good luck but never give up. Keep the motivation and keep the drive. Don't lose it. And if you do, don't show anyone you've lost it. They'll use it against you to their advantage and drain you. You've got this. Only the best will come to the people who do their very best.

Former Senior,

Leo Aria



Dear Junior,

There were some challenges that I faced and overcame throughout the SJU/Nicotra program. For example, managing to complete my assignments from Nicotra and the SJU program together on a similar date. However, as time went on, I was able to manage completing my assignments and study for my exams in a timely manner. Additionally, in order to attain that goal I created an academic study calendar to keep track of my school and college work. Overall, as time went on I was able to organize when and where was the right time to study for academics and have time for myself.

Furthermore, I learned many positive things from my challenges that I experienced throughout the SJU/Nicotra program. Some of the positives that I took into account were that my friends were always there for me. They always supported me and helped me in tough times. All of us were there together as a team knowing that all of us came here together and we all will leave here together. Where all our classmates helped each other in completing assignments, helping each other study, checking up on others to see if they all caught up, etc. Just the fact that we were all there to be with each other when things got a little to a lot difficult was really pleasant knowing that we had each other's backs.

Moreover, I wish I had made my experience easier throughout the SJU/Nicotra program was that all the professors would update their assignments on the SJU Canvas daily. Making me anticipate what my grades were after each assessment. When I couldn't see my grades updated, it made me a little anxious. Since I would have liked to see if I was on the correct path to completing the course. Otherwise, just a quick check in via email or in person helped but being consistent with grades is an effort I like to put in occasionally.

Withal, mindfulness has been most valuable to me this past year. Since being in the present moment helped me get through my highschool career. Where I'm taking the next step in my academic life going to college. Preparing for the next chapter in life but also

being mindful of who and what are around in my current aspect of life. Overall, being aware of what's going on around me helped a lot to the point where what decision I make will have an effect on me in the future which I am looking forward to.

Sincerely,

Sana Ahmed