

Isabelle R

Pathways to Success: Texas Community College Essay Contest

I grew up in Rockwall, Texas, in a family of four. My childhood was happy and active, filled with reading and drawing, playing with my brother, and dabbling in different sports such as competitive saber fencing, archery, and ballet. Throughout my academic time so far, I have been homeschooled. At first, this meant purely being taught different subjects by my mother, but after several years, we joined Kings Harvest Homeschool Co-op, which expanded my academic horizons to classes taught by a variety of teachers. Luckily, the work was rigorous, so when my freshman year came around and we decided to start trying dual credit, the workload did not overwhelm me. We decided to begin dual credit, knowing that it would be good practice for when I go to a university after high school, as well as give me college credits, but I was surprised by how very helpful it was. I am extremely grateful that we joined Collin College's dual credit program, as it has grown, challenged, and prepared me in so many ways. The coursework was at a perfect level for me, rigorous, but not to the point of overload, and being in classes full of students other than my fellow homeschoolers was a new experience for me. The professors astounded me with their knowledge and love of their subject and their interest in their student's lives and well-being. Learning how to use the learning platforms was extremely helpful as well, as all I had known previously was Google Classroom. In addition to my regular classes, I also joined Collin College's National Honor Society, Phi Theda Kappa, and have become an Honors student. Both of these accomplishments and experiences have

been extremely valuable in challenging my capability and widening my horizons. Overall, my dual credit experience has prepared me so well for my future at a university that I am confident in my ability to maintain straight As throughout the rest of my academic career.

Above all of my many interests, two of my favorite pastimes are reading and drawing. I am happy to spend hours reading, tucked away with my favorite book, lost in a world of fantasy, or sketching away. In addition to my love of literature, I am a very visual person who loves to draw, paint, and express myself creatively. So I plan to major in English and Art in order to pursue a career in publishing. As an English major, I will be able to learn to better analyze and develop the works of literature that fascinate me. In visual arts, I will be able to explore my other passions and learn to integrate illustration in my work with literature, bringing the author's worlds and characters to life visually. Taking both English and Art courses during my time in dual credit has grown my interest in and my competence in both of these fields, as well as given me some integral connections. During my undergraduate years, I plan to improve my skills in communication and critical thinking as well as hone my skills as an artist, gain experience with internships, and from there, become a professional editor and illustrator. I want to remind people how much joy literature can bring, to reintroduce them to books, especially in today's world of digital distractions.

I am more than prepared to work hard to achieve these goals, but recent struggles have made things more difficult. In November 2022, my mother was

diagnosed with breast cancer. This was a shock to my entire family, and the next year was a struggle for us all, especially financially. Our out-of-pocket expenses during 2023 exceeded \$25,000, despite having insurance. While it has absolutely been money well spent, it is also very limiting for my family as we prepare for me to go to college. My parents and I will work hard over the next several years to recuperate these losses. I hope to add as little additional financial pressure as possible on my family by working a part-time job while in school and applying for scholarships. The amount my parents can contribute to tuition has of course gone down with these circumstances, so I will be paying for college primarily myself. I am especially grateful for my experience in dual credit, which allows me to enter my undergraduate education as a sophomore, reducing my expenses significantly. Going forward, any scholarship I receive will be dedicated to paying for tuition, housing, food, and/or books, and my goal is to get through college as close to debt-free as possible.

In short: throughout my high school career, dual credit has provided me with many skills and experiences that will benefit me throughout my time in college and empower me to accomplish my goal of working in the literature industry. While in college, I want to continue learning and develop the skills to secure a career in the publishing field. My need for financial support makes the opportunity for this scholarship a true blessing. The process of preparing for my future this year has been very stressful for me, but I refuse to give up hope. I can't say that I believe any student truly deserves to receive this or any scholarship, but I humbly ask that you consider me for it. Thank you for your time.