



**LSMSA Alumni come back to the campus to share their wisdom!**

**Connections Weekend 2008:**

**A Mom's Eye....or perhaps this time it should be A Mom's Ear!**

As I sat in on the opening assembly for Connections weekend, I looked at the 20 chairs on the stage filled with LSMSA alumni from 25 years ago, 21 years ago, 15 years ago, 9 years ago, and 4 years ago and marveled at the young professionals who had taken time out of their busy schedules to come and spend the weekend with current LSMSA students. They came from all across the United States to reminisce and to offer advice. They had learned a thing or two since graduation, and they wanted to pass on their knowledge.

As a mom of teenagers, I learned that other people could give my teens advice easier than I could. If I offered advice, it was often discounted before it was even heard. My own children are now in their thirties, and they often ask for advice from their dad and me, but 15 years ago they were not interested in our advice! When my kids were teens, I would often ask a friend, a teacher, or a youth group leader

to give my kids advice (I usually also shared exactly the advice that I wanted them to give!). It had a better chance of being accepted if it did not come from “the parents!” That is why Connections Weekend is a great place for LSMSA teens to hear and benefit from great advice. It may be exactly the same thing you would say, but the great thing about it is that “you don’t have to say it!”

Here are some of the things that “a mom’s ear” heard during the panel discussions on Saturday!

- Writing is essential to success in any career. If you can write, your boss will love you.
- Let me caution you-----If you say at age 15, “I can’t do that—I’m not good at that.” That statement will soon become your reality and you will never get good at it.
- You have to consciously seek to improve your writing even after you get a job.
- Regular public school is all about listening to get the information. LSMSA is about listening, viewing, and doing. That is why some people come here and do a lot better.
- Avoid debt (student loans) in undergrad. Save your loans for the graduate level.
- College is all about choices, and you will be the one doing the choosing!
- Don’t work so many jobs that it hurts your academic or social life. You need time to study and to socialize.
- You don’t have to know specifically your career path when you go to college, but you should know your interests, your passion areas.
- Test out your interests with part-time jobs. If you have to, work for free in order to find out what it is like to work in certain career areas.
- Look at what you are good at now --- and invest your career in that area.
- In an interview for a job, personality and initiative are the most important part of the interview with GPA coming in third. People find value in what you have done and where you have worked.
- An interview is an exchange. You will be asked questions, but you also should ask questions.
- LSMSA was the first time that I ever went into a classroom and did not rule it. I faced possible academic failure and it helped me as a person to learn how to overcome it.
- The friendships you form at LSMSA will last for a lifetime. Other people graduate from other high schools and never keep in touch, but that is not true of LSMSA grads. We are a powerful network for you in the future.
- It is important as you become 18 to become active, informed citizens. It is important for you to vote.
- Does it matter where you get your undergrad degree? Many times it is not that important, but in some fields, it is very important. So, the answer is...it depends!
- Have you thought about how an international business degree requires knowledge of foreign languages, foreign culture, and foreign policy for “every country” that a business might be involved with for trade or manufacturing?
- “Engineering with a purpose” is a term that refers to engineering with an emphasis on protecting our environment, using less fuel, creating less trash, and recycling everything.
- If China and India come on line with a lifestyle like ours, we need six more planet Earths!
- The big question for the next century is how do we use less energy.

- We can all make changes right now that will help us conserve.
- Think about volunteering. Teach for America had 25,000 applicants for 3,800 positions last year. It is very prestigious to be accepted. It is also very rewarding.
- Our country has to get education right for America to continue to thrive.
- Most communities lack educational leadership. Maybe you don't want to be a teacher, but you want your community to have good schools, so run for the school board.
- "The speed of the boss is the speed of the shop."
- We need to recruit great principals in order to turn our educational system around. You won't find a great principal in a bad school.
- In college, you should change your class schedule to get excellent teachers.
- Broaden your degree---Take pre-med and political science! What if you don't become a doctor, will your undergrad degree make you employable? A diversified degree will also make you a more interesting candidate for whatever direction you take.
- Always have a plan B. What if I don't get into med school or law school?
- Don't acquire so much student loan debt that it turns you into an indentured servant!
- Don't choose a degree because of big bucks! Happiness cannot be measured by the amount of salary that you earn.
- Writing matters a lot in engineering.
- Writing matters a lot if you are going to be a professor (even in the arts!).
- Recipe for success: Be ethical, be able to read and write well, be able to do basic algebra, and be nice to people. You will go places in any company if you can do those things.
- Learn how to make intelligent choices.
- Lack of diversity in any field or in any company causes a lack of products and solutions.
- One of the best things about LSMSA is its diverse student body and what we learned from each other.
- It is ok to change majors; it is ok to change careers; it is ok to change jobs. You change!
- Find out who YOU are and then do YOU!
- Talk about your future plans to others. They may help you achieve those plans!
- Get your support where you can---from people at work, from your family, from your friends.
- Don't judge yourself by anyone else's standards. You do not have to have more, earn more, or do more than anyone else in order to be happy. It is a key to happiness to learn to do what pleases you.
- It is ok to be a bargain hunter. It is ok to choose a college based on how it will not put you in debt to get a degree there.
- Whatever happens in life is meant to happen. In tough times, look at the experience and reflect on what you can learn from this.
- Sometimes tough things happen to people. Your life will not always be on the mountaintop. Sometimes it will be in the valley and you must learn to cope with it. Life is not always fair.
- When things don't work out ok, then look at what will work or what might work in the future.
- All you can do in life is position yourself to take advantage of opportunities that might come along.

- It is ok to be less than perfect.
- Perfectionism keeps us from achieving our dreams.
- Internships are important. Some pay you. Companies who hire interns are “trying them out.” They often hire those with potential.
- If you can’t get a paying internship with a company, then offer to work for free. Constantly ask yourself what you can learn from your experience. You may only be a receptionist in a doctor’s office, but seeing that office and how it runs through the eyes of the receptionist will help you when you become a doctor.
- A co-op program at a university allows students a chance to experience a variety of jobs within a discipline while they are earning their degree. (i.e. engineering majors can work as a chemical engineer one semester and then as a mechanical engineer for the next rotation) This helps students choose a specialty. Be careful though not to eliminate one career area based on just the experience within one corporation. Most co-op students get paid starting salaries while they co-op which really helps with school expenses, and co-op placement, like interning, often leads to employment after graduating.

It was a great weekend for advice. There is an old German saying, “We get too soon old, and too late smart!” Let’s hope that Connections Weekend made our current students smart beyond their years!

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