

STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

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Originally from Portland, Oregon, Alex Whitney received his IB diploma from the International School of Beaverton in 2015. He recently completed his first year of undergraduate studies at the Minerva Schools at KGI in San Francisco. Alex will double major in Business and the Social Sciences and is passionate about developing digital content for new, innovative businesses.

Why did you originally decide to pursue an IB Diploma?

By the time I entered the Diploma Programme (DP) I knew it was the perfect fit for me. The emphasis on critical thinking and developing well-rounded citizens through a broad range of courses, in addition to initiatives such as Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS), aligned with my view of what a proper student should be. I knew I'd have the opportunity to explore a variety of subjects so I'd have the best chance of finding a career path suited for me. In addition, the international mindedness of the programme particularly drew me in, not only because I was fascinated by the idea of learning more about other cultures, but also because I knew it would be beneficial in today's increasingly connected world.

As an IB student, how did you shape your studies to your interests? What courses were most valuable?

There wasn't one particular course in the DP that I found most life-changing. However, I think the variety of options that I was offered, and eventually ended up taking, was monumental in shaping my current path. I took classes ranging from physics and biology to English literature, higher level mathematics, and art. Having the exposure to many different areas of study gave me a feel for what I liked and didn't like, and ultimately shaped the classes I am taking at Minerva today.

Tell us about your current studies – was there a moment when you knew you wanted to pursue this subject?

I think my current studies and interests really stemmed from my Middle Years Programme (MYP) personal project. During my tenth grade year, I designed and prototyped my own yo-yo model and helped market it with the support of my sponsor company. I don't think I would have taken the initiative to design and build my own model, if I hadn't received the opportunity first from IB. Now at Minerva, I'm

exploring different projects surrounding product design and marketing as a direct result of this, and the staff and professors I've worked with have provided incredible support along the way.

Did the Extended Essay, TOK, or CAS prepare you for university? Are there skills you developed that you still use today?

Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) was definitely one aspect of the DP that I appreciated. It's very easy to get overwhelmed by all the different assessments, essays, and tests that come with taking DP courses. However, CAS helped my focus energy into activities outside of academics, such as biking and community service, and gave my life a much-needed balance. Furthermore, it helped me manage my time better between the multiple activities and projects I was involved in and moved me toward other career paths that I may not have found otherwise.

What advice do you have for current IB students that are thinking about a university programme like yours?

I think the biggest thing that the DP taught me was that I can do anything I put my mind to. Completing the DP and getting my diploma was one of the most difficult things I've ever done, but when the day is over and you have the certificate in hand you have to stop and remind yourself that you did it. Minerva is rigorous, there's no denying that, but I think a lot of the joy and fulfilment I get out of the program comes from believing in myself.