

Julian Marc Podcast

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INSTRUCTOR: This is journeys of learning where we talk to students that have taken unconventional pathways to reach their educational goals. I'm Janet Weber, and I'm your host and a counselor at De Anza College. And I created this podcast so that students will feel less alone on their own journeys of learning.

We are here with Julian Marc, and he was a student of mine at Foothill College. And I do remember the day we met. It was when I first started at Foothill so it must have been in 2014? Is that right?

STUDENT: Yeah.

INSTRUCTOR: And I remember that you locked yourself out of the house, and you came into the meeting with scrapes and bruises because you had to climb in through the window. I think you had locked yourself out in your pajamas and then you had to --

STUDENT: Yeah.

INSTRUCTOR: -- climb through the window.

[Laughter]

STUDENT: What was it? I was like 30 minutes late or something I think that is what it was?

INSTRUCTOR: Yes, yeah. I remember you were late. You were like sorry I had to climb through the window and --

STUDENT: That was back when the DRC was in the portables in the --.

INSTRUCTOR: Yes.

STUDENT: -- parking lot.

INSTRUCTOR: Yes.

STUDENT: Yeah, it is so funny that you remember that.

INSTRUCTOR: So that was 8 years ago?

STUDENT: Yeah, that was 8 years ago.

INSTRUCTOR: And was that when you were just starting at Foothill?

STUDENT: Yeah, that was when I just started and decided to go to community college out of high school.

INSTRUCTOR: Okay so let's start with you just telling us a little bit about your background.

STUDENT: All right, I grew up in Palo Alto my entire life. And I underwent Palo Alto Unified School District route of going to elementary school, middle school. And then I went to Gunn High, School which was pretty interesting. And I eventually decided to go to community college because I didn't have the grade point average to go to a four year university. And that was kind of my route at that time.

INSTRUCTOR: So then you went to Foothill and tell us about your experience at Foothill College.

STUDENT: Foothill was the best decision I've ever made. And I was hesitant about it too because I was really worried about going to a community college and then what my parents would say, my peers would say. They all went to very you know, prestigious four-year universities and did all the AP courses.

INSTRUCTOR: Especially from Gunn High School.

STUDENT: -- Yeah especially from Gunn High School. And if anyone is listening to the podcast you don't know what Gunn High School is, look it up. They have a lot of articles that explain the whole

environment there. But I cannot express how grateful I am that I decided to take the leap and go to Foothill Community College instead of not going to college at all or any other community college for that matter, because Foothill was amazing.

INSTRUCTOR: Even if you had the GPA to go to straight to a UC it probably it wouldn't have been good for you at 18.

STUDENT: Yes, yes, yes. If I went to a four-year university straight out of high school, I would have not had any personal growth that I obtained from going to Foothill Community College. I probably would have chosen a major that didn't even come close to what I'm passionate about. And I would just be a completely different person. And if I went to a four-year university off the bat I think that things would have ended a lot more different than what they are today.

INSTRUCTOR: Yes, I think you're a great example of why community college is so great.

STUDENT: Thank you.

INSTRUCTOR: [Laughter] So tell us about your

college journey.

STUDENT: Okay so from the beginning I entered Foothill College, I wanted to really go into mechanical engineering because a lot of my friends told me to do so and they were Mac-ies too. And my family wanted me to do so. And so I kind of went with that major for a while and then I wanted to go into nano-technology that is where it started. And then after that I kind of realized that I didn't want to pursue that. I wasn't very passionate about it and that's not where my interests really lay.

And so after that I decided to take a bunch of general education courses or courses that I just really wanted to take. I would read the descriptions every single time before I wanted to sign up for classes. And I would see what really spoke to me instead of seeing what I had to get done in order to transfer as soon as possible. And that was very essential for the personal growth that I had obtained during that period of time.

INSTRUCTOR: I really like that you weren't rushing to transfer that you were using your time

with the general Ed classes to find what you were interested in.

STUDENT: Yeah, and that was the most important thing that lead me to what I was actually passionate about too. Is that I used that time to take the general education courses to see what really spoke to me. And what got me excited instead of doing what people told me or like what I thought would make the most money or would get me out of there the fastest is taking the time and digesting the material and seeing how it resonates with me.

INSTRUCTOR: And don't you think in retrospect it probably actually saved you time?

STUDENT: Surprisingly, yes. The very long road ended up saving me a lot of time. And a lot of pain probably and a lot of money most importantly.

[Laughter]

INSTRUCTOR: Yes.

STUDENT: Yeah, and that's also a very big benefit at Foothill is or just the whole community college route in general, is that the general Ed classes there are what? Like a fourth of the price of UC or

any of the other college experience like for gen-ed? And that was ended up being a very beneficial thing too. I wasn't thinking about it in terms of money first. But that was like one of the most beneficial parts of it as well.

INSTRUCTOR: Yes, you don't have that pressure.

STUDENT: Exactly.

INSTRUCTOR: So you started out in Foothill and you struggled a little bit finding what you wanted to do and even had some struggles in classes until you found your way?

STUDENT: Yeah, I had a lot of precipitous moments where I was in classes and studied so hard and I still failed a few classes actually. I got a lot of D's and C's oh my gosh, it was so rough.

INSTRUCTOR: Tell me like what were the obstacles you were facing?

STUDENT: A lot of the obstacles had to do with a lot of kind of finding my place in the world and coming into adulthood I would want to say. And the whole obscurity of like your personal identity at that age seeing all of your friends go off to college

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and then watching Instagram stories and seeing them all partying and making friends and stuff. And then having your own personal issues, at the moment I was very depressed honestly because of my experiences at Gunn High School. I knew a few students who committed suicide and it was very detrimental to my mental health because they were pretty close to me. And so I was recovering --

INSTRUCTOR: And they were fellow students?

STUDENT: Yes, they were fellow classmates of mine

--

INSTRUCTOR: That committed suicide from the pressure.

STUDENT: Yeah, a lot of it was pressure some of it was other things too. I feel like that doesn't really get spoken about too. That it wasn't just the pressure it was a multitude of factors that were coming into play.

INSTRUCTOR: It usually is multiple reasons, yeah.

STUDENT: Experiencing that just as I decided to go to Foothill Community College, because that kind of like brought me down a lot. I had to like really

recover from that and that took away from a lot of my executive functioning skills and being able to concentrate in class. Because I would be sitting in class like trying my best to concentrate and then just the blues would kind of seep in while I was sitting there at the desk. And that is definitely not a good way to facilitate learning. So -- that was very intense and inhibited me from learning for the first few years and definitely played a role in my failure and so the classes in combination with the other factors that I discussed trying to find your identity and coming to terms of to how big the world truly is. And how many factors there really are.

INSTRUCTOR: And on top of all of that, working with ADHD which is really hard in the classroom.

STUDENT: Yeah, I was diagnosed with ADHD and Asperger's so I definitely had learning disabilities which was the reason why I didn't really do too well in school prior to Foothill Community College. So that was a very upward climb --

INSTRUCTOR: Especially ADHD with Asperger's that makes it really hard.

STUDENT: Yeah, yeah it was very difficult to form rapports especially like new friendships. But I learned tactics to get around it and eventually but in terms of learning it was very difficult. I already couldn't really concentrate that well. It was hard for me to memorize things at the moment. And it was very difficult to learn material during that period of time.

INSTRUCTOR: And also the listener might not know this but you're very smart.

STUDENT: [Laughter] I've been told that.
[Laughter].

INSTRUCTOR: So it was that combination of being extremely smart but struggling in classes.

STUDENT: Yeah, and that was very frustrating. And it had a very big impact on my self-esteem especially because to know that you could do something and just to like have the world crumbling around you and being like athletes lifting up the world on your shoulders knowing that you can just do so much. It was very difficult. And at the time I honestly didn't believe that I was very smart. I let

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the blues in and during my time at Gunn High School too I had a lot of counselors, just one in particular. I won't name them but he told me that I wasn't incapable of ever going to college. I was incapable of --

INSTRUCTOR: Really?

STUDENT: Doing a lot of things -- yeah he told me that I would never go to college. And that I would --

INSTRUCTOR: Wow.

STUDENT: -- never get a degree, and that I wasn't capable of it. And he told me that to my face.

INSTRUCTOR: Wow I'm surprised.

STUDENT: Yeah. It was very brutal and I started replaying that moment and I started believing it for a little bit when I was at my lowest at rock bottom. So it was very difficult when I was down yeah at the bottom of the ocean.

INSTRUCTOR: And then how did you start finding your way?

STUDENT: So there was a lot of things that I did to kind of find my way. And it wasn't just one

thing. And most importantly, I did not do it by myself. I had a lot of people you, Janet, [Laughter] you helped me so much. I started to utilize the resources that are available to me. But that was the most important thing is that it is not a one man army type of thing. You have all of these people here that are for you. You have these resources available. You have therapists and counselors. You have tutors, you have friends, and you have family. And you have this entire network that is available to you. And it's really hard to see that when you're in the dark.

But once I started to kind of come out of my cave you know rise to the surface I kind of realized that oh, I have all of these people here for me that want me to succeed that believe in me. And using that kind of sparked the intrinsic motivation for me to be like hey, I can actually do this. Like being able to talk to you and talk to a counselor that I had and also like my friends and then getting a tutor; that really helped me out a lot. And then that essentially allotted more time for me to kind of

focus on my mental health and getting into exercise and then just being able to vent to friends and that really pulled me up. It helped a lot.

INSTRUCTOR: I love that you're saying that because reaching out is so important.

STUDENT: Yes. But having the bravery to do so is also a whole other thing in its own sense because it does take a lot to realize like hey, I have problems and hey, I need help. But once you get there and you get over whatever is making you not seek out other people. That's when you can really start to flourish and become what you want.

INSTRUCTOR: I would love for you to speak a little bit more to that because I think that Administrators don't sometimes understand that. They see that we are offering all of these resources for students and they don't understand why students aren't taking advantage of them. And I like that you said that it takes bravery to reach out for those resources.

STUDENT: Yeah. There's like a combination of factors and I think some of it is ego to like

recognize that you can't do it and that you need other people. And it's another thing is ego but some of it is knowledge. Like I didn't know that there were counseling services at some points. I didn't know about Pass the Torch Program that was at Foothill College. I actually didn't know about it until I was referred to be a tutor for the Pass the Torch Program.

INSTRUCTOR: Oh really?

STUDENT: I had no inkling of what that was until I was recommended by one of my really great teachers at Foothill, Sherry, she recommended to be an English tutor there. And then after that I was like hey, I can use this for my math issues that I had. And that was very beneficial. Because you would see the flyers and stuff that are around campus but you don't take the time to really read them. Like it's usually through word of mouth that you hear about the kind of programs. Yeah, I would say word of mouth is probably the biggest way that I think it is a combination of those two factors that really is part of the reason why not a lot of people utilize the

programs that are available.

INSTRUCTOR: So then you started utilizing those programs and using your accommodations, and then you started doing really well.

STUDENT: Yeah, utilizing the accommodations is a (Indiscernible) extended time on tests definitely helped. After I sort of found my groove into things and I was having support from all of these different facets. I really began to flourish and I turned my life around honestly. I was extremely depressed. I was so down and out. I cannot emphasize that enough. And I wanted to end it. I ended up being very successful in a lot of my classes. I started being happy again. And I don't even know how to put it into words, honestly. It was like the entire script was changed it was an incredible experience.

INSTRUCTOR: And so you found your way by engaging in the college community, using the resources, talking to your counselor, working with the tutors, getting your accommodations, and talking to your professors?

STUDENT: Yeah.

INSTRUCTOR: And then you started doing well in school and then that built on itself; right? Like as you started reaching out for help then it was easier to reach out for help for the next time; right? And then doing well in class you start realizing like oh I can do this. And then you start doing better in your other classes. It kind of built on itself.

STUDENT: Precisely. That really gets the ball rolling because that self-doubt is all completely. And I started believing in myself and then eventually I went from crawling to sprinting. It was a magnificent transformation to be able to like notice that you had a certain thought pattern and then breaking out of that.

INSTRUCTOR: Yeah, and then I remember you started doing really well and then we started looking at okay where do you want to transfer to?

STUDENT: That was an interesting experience because of my abysmal grades that I had during my trough. On paper I didn't have many options I think I had what was it? Like a 2.2 or something when I was looking at colleges? I remembered I hired like a

college admissions essay person to help me with essays. And she was telling me like oh like you can't get into pretty much anywhere that you want to go. But an advantage that I had was an upward trend. So I received a lot of A's in a bunch of classes and I think it was like a year. I received a few certificates --

INSTRUCTOR: Yeah you started getting straight A's; right?

STUDENT: Yeah I was getting on the dean's list for an entire year and a lot of my teachers were very proud of me and started using my work as examples. I've never thought that would ever happen. I got nominated for an award in English which was probably the pinnacle of my academic career. I started becoming a tutor in English, those factors helped a lot when it came to my GPA being considered.

And taking the chance in writing whatever the hell you want on your essays was also another thing. My advisor for the essays I had this piece the prompt was essentially express your creative side. Except like don't do something creative. And I really

didn't listen to that I just did something creative.
I wrote a poem actually.

INSTRUCTOR: That's right.

STUDENT: Yeah, and I talked to also the -- what was it? The recruiter day when all of the UCs come in?

INSTRUCTOR: Admissions.

STUDENT: Yeah, admissions. Admission counselors when they come in I decided to apply to whatever college that I kind of wanted to. I decided to apply to UCs despite my GPA and not meeting the requirements and taking that risk and being bold was definitely something that ended up paying off. Because I was kind of considering like oh maybe I should like you know go to this other school. But I decided I worked this hard and I think that people will see me if they scrutinize the paper.

INSTRUCTOR: And let's just say another resource that you took advantage of which was the admission counselors coming on to campus. And you took that --

STUDENT: Exactly.

INSTRUCTOR: -- time to go and talk to them which

lead you to applying to UCSB.

STUDENT: Exactly. And I was very hesitant. I actually did it impulsively. I was like oh this thing happening today? Okay. And I went to it. I think you told me about it; right?

INSTRUCTOR: Hopefully.

STUDENT: Yeah, but doing that like I think actually really helped me. Because I formed a very good rapport with the admissions counselor and I think that helped me a lot. And also having you and Bianca check my essays too and encourage me to go through with that piece. That helped me out a lot too.

[Laughter] Not being shy to share it with you too.

INSTRUCTOR: And remind me what it was about?

STUDENT: It was actually about my journey and like how I was very depressed didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I had no ideas and then kind of struggling through the system and then it's very complex but yeah, it was about like kind of the whole institutes of my educational journey and being able to come out on top and be happy. And also empathetic and help other people in the community.

Because that's another thing that I kind of rolled over is that tutoring really helped me not only learn but helped me learn about gratitude and also how becoming in the college system can be. And that is a way to help other people and for people to come together in order to create sort of a culture of being able to help everybody. If that makes sense.

INSTRUCTOR: And one of your early interests and one of the reasons you wanted to go to Santa Barbara is it was using technology to help people with learning differences.

STUDENT: Yeah, that was one of the main reasons why I wanted to go to college and getting into psychology.

INSTRUCTOR: Learning differences and cognitive differences.

STUDENT: Yeah, and different learning styles because despite what some studies and the results say it's a very prevalent factor. People very much so do learn differently. They -- I learned that when I was tutoring. And there are different ways to address it. And that wasn't really applicable in a lot of

classes. I even noticed that some classes at Foothill there weren't many ways for people who learned differently or who have like learning disabilities to really flourish because they were kind of inhibited by this main wave of like learning like the very coffca-esq like single file as we talked about before.

INSTRUCTOR: Yes that old style of lecturing and memorizing and regurgitating.

STUDENT: Yeah, and then forgetting about it two weeks later. Yeah that was not resonating well with individuals that I tutored and so switching it up and having more of a talk about it to like use other learning strategies and to take your time and also build yourself confidence most importantly. That's what really made the difference in terms of not only my own personal journey, but also an individual I used to tutor. They really flourished after we kind of used those methods instead of the stereotypical methods.

INSTRUCTOR: Nice.

STUDENT: That was the reason why I wanted to get

into learning technology.

INSTRUCTOR: I didn't know that. So when you started tutoring in the Pass, the Torch Program you started figuring out how to teach the material?

STUDENT: Yeah, to meet individual needs.

INSTRUCTOR: And then that is what sparked your interests in this field?

STUDENT: Yeah.

INSTRUCTOR: Interesting.

STUDENT: Exactly.

INSTRUCTOR: Okay so now tell us about the transition to UC Santa Barbara and what that was like?

STUDENT: So that was a little bit difficult for a few reasons. When you go from a very accepting and nice place like Foothill College and you kind of go into the bigger bond it's a little bit of a difficult transition. Moving out of my house was pretty hard because I love my mom. And not having like the same resources that I had in Foothill College was also very difficult too. Because of the rapports that I created with you and Bianca and also my counselors

and the other tutors and stuff. It was difficult. But eventually I kind of found my groove. It took me I think probably like half a year which is a little bit long but when I was in the transfer communal housing, a lot of my other roommates kind of felt the same. And we kind of helped each other and that was --

INSTRUCTOR: Oh nice.

STUDENT: That was very nice to have other people who understood what it was like and who were undergoing the same thing and being able to kind of come together.

INSTRUCTOR: So it was hard for you to go to the big lecture halls but once you started getting into the upper division classes and you were really interested in the material is when you started really flourishing there?

STUDENT: Yes, getting over the thousand person lecture hall and like eventually getting into your specialization in your upper division classes that's when I really started to flourish. Because it reminded me of a lot of the class size is similar to

Foothill. And it wasn't very scantron you know memorize, regurgitate. It was more engaging and the quality of the education was significantly better when you go to those upper division classes especially when you are studying what you want to study that made a very big difference too and you are passionate about the subject too.

INSTRUCTOR: And then you found that you wanted to go into neural technology.

STUDENT: Yes. So long story short, I had a few jobs that went into cognitive behavioral therapy and applying it to individuals who were either on the spectrum or had learning disabilities or other things. And after that, I decided I wanted to get into neural technology and it is similar to if people know what neural link is except it will be over your head. It won't require surgery and it will also help people learn because you will have the actual feedback in real time and be able to see a multitude of things. Now I want to get into neural technology and create a device that essentially helps with detecting subdural hematomas, Alzheimer's,

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Parkinson's, other neural degenerative diseases, as well as applications in augmented reality and virtual reality interfacing, and robotics and eventually neural prosthesis. So those are my aspirations at the moment.

I do want to get into learning as well and using this neural technology to help individuals learn, especially people who learn differently. Because you will be able to have the feedback in real time and see what actually works. And see what gives greater activation or blood flow through certain brain regions. And so I think that's what will really kind of make it come full circle. And that is what I aspire to do.

INSTRUCTOR: That is really interesting. Do you want to say a little more about that?

STUDENT: I don't want to give too much away just whoever wants to learn more about it I can sign an NBA. [Laughter]

INSTRUCTOR: Yeah.

STUDENT: I can send you one.

INSTRUCTOR: Okay let's go to this then so what

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was your major at UC Santa Barbara?

STUDENT: It was psychology. And I was in the psychology and brain size department. And I also got a minor in philosophy too.

INSTRUCTOR: I remember that was one of the reasons that you wanted to go to Santa Barbara because their psychology program is very scientific based.

STUDENT: Yeah, I took a bio psychology course again a really great teacher Tiffany Ridda *(sic)*. Had to give a shout out. And that that bio psychology course --

INSTRUCTOR: She's great.

STUDENT: Yeah she's fantastic. And what's funny is because I had a stats course with her before. And I did not like her. And eventually like after I took this bio psychology course I grew to really like her and she's --

INSTRUCTOR: She's a good teacher.

STUDENT: She really motivated me too to get into bio psychology and also neural science because I did apparently exceptionally well in that class. She

really motivated me to go for it. And so, I was considering sticking to just psychology because psychology is pretty difficult. But I branched out more into the neural science aspect of it because of that influence and it was fascinating. That was what I really got passionate about was the neural science.

INSTRUCTOR: And then when did you graduate?

STUDENT: I graduated in 2021. It's kind of interesting because of the pandemic.

INSTRUCTOR: It wasn't as exciting because it was the pandemic but was it an exciting moment for you?

STUDENT: Yeah, I cried honestly.

INSTRUCTOR: You did.

STUDENT: After I took the pictures and stuff. It was such a long road and it was so fulfilling to finally have your diploma in your hand after undergoing all of that. And I was like wow, like it actually happened. It felt so surreal and I was -- I had to pinch myself. And -- it was one of the most rewarding experiences in my life.

INSTRUCTOR: That makes me so happy.

STUDENT: I mean you helped me get there so thank

you so much. Like --

INSTRUCTOR: You are welcome.

STUDENT: You are the reason why I was able to achieve it.

INSTRUCTOR: I'm sure your parents are very proud.

STUDENT: Yeah they went from very worried about me to smiles on their faces.

INSTRUCTOR: And before we got on to the podcast we were talking about the long winding road towards your goals and both you and I believe that, that can be a better path because it makes you a wiser more interesting person. And you were saying that you a hundred percent agree with that?

STUDENT: Yeah, I could not agree more. That was the best decision I ever made. And that winding path was worth it. It was [Laughter] the best thing. It helped me in so many different ways. That winding path is always worth it.

INSTRUCTOR: You really found yourself at Foothill. You found what you wanted to do. And you learned about reaching out and community, and mental health, and about your cognitive differences,

learning differences, ADHD and --

STUDENT: Yeah, it gave me the power of the mirror. I really found myself during those years. And I found my purpose most importantly. And that was an experience that I would never trade it. If I was able to go back and do it and I had the opportunity to just go immediately to a 4 year or even transfer in 2 years like what people would say is traditional, I would not do it. Just because the experiences that I had during those years and the personal fulfillment is irreplaceable. It made me who I am today. And I'm very grateful for it.

INSTRUCTOR: Have you gone back to Gunn High School and told the counselor that you graduated in neural science from UCSB?

STUDENT: No I didn't. [Laughter]. I heard that he actually got fired from Gunn for an AP class. But he is not at Gunn High School anymore but when he sees my face on Forbes Magazine I think that will really draw a picture [Laughter]

INSTRUCTOR: I love that. [Laughter]

STUDENT: Yeah, I really wish I could. I was

thinking about that actually. [Laughter]. I did think about that. But yeah, he's not there anymore.

INSTRUCTOR: My fourth grade teacher told my mom that I would never go to college.

STUDENT: Really?

INSTRUCTOR: And luckily, she never told me that and when I finished grad school she found her and told her. [Laughter].

STUDENT: I would have paid to see that reaction. [Laughter]

INSTRUCTOR: Because that's pretty young to decide someone's future.

STUDENT: Yeah how can you write someone off at that age like in fourth grade?

INSTRUCTOR: Okay so I have 2 more questions for you.

STUDENT: All right.

INSTRUCTOR: If you went back in time what advice would you give yourself?

STUDENT: This is really corny but like everything is going to be all right. Like just take your time and to really digest the moment into not care about

what other people think. And to listen to yourself and take that period of time to find yourself. Even though I eventually did it, it took me a really long time and even though that is fine too but there were a lot of things I could have done to expedite the process. I don't even know if I would even tell myself actually just because like everything turned out like a fairytale.

INSTRUCTOR: I think that is really good advice to just enjoy the time that you're going through rather than worrying about it.

STUDENT: Yeah, and being present is very important. Don't worry about what college you may or may not get into. Don't worry about your past and -- and what happened. Focus on your period now and just digest it and live. Try to find solitude.

INSTRUCTOR: And like you said and not to compare yourself to other people.

STUDENT: Yeah, and I think that's the most important thing to really take away from this answer is that comparing yourself is not only pointless but it is just not healthy either. And everyone has

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their own path. Everyone has their own means of doing things and their own time frame and recognizing that will set you free.

INSTRUCTOR: I love that. What advice would you give to students right now that are on their own winding paths to their goal?

STUDENT: Don't take a U-turn. Embrace the drive. Roll down the window. Be free and recognize that the windy paths are honestly you will end up to the top of mountain. Once you get there the view is beautiful. And don't ever give up. And it's so cliché but really don't give up on yourself. Believe in it. You are here for a reason. You have the passions for a reason. And you will fulfill yourself.

INSTRUCTOR: I think that's the perfect place to end. Thank you.

STUDENT: Yes, thank you.