Just like that, freshman year is finished. Piles of acquired coffee cups have been packed back up, and with only a few pairs of matching socks left, I completed the year first year of my college experience. What a year it was. Looking back it is hard to imagine life before my newfound friends, passions, and experiences. I can hardly claim to be the same person I was before this year, but I am glad that I have had to opportunity to grow so much in such a wonderful environment.

Before College I knew I was interested in medicine and holistic healthcare, however, this year has expanded my view of health and pushed my understanding for what it means to provide healthcare. At the beginning of the year I joined a student organization called GlobeMed which is dedicated to global health equality. My involvement with this organization quickly jumped from simply attending weekly meetings to fully immersing myself in the overall movement for global health. After attending two seminars in Chicago, as part of the national office of GlobeMed, I gained a rounder understanding of my role as a global citizen and the role of health in social justice. I now view healthcare at the community and global level instead of at the individual level. This summer I will be traveling to Thailand for two months to work with an organization called Social Action for Women. I hope to gain a better understanding of the social barriers that limit health and the unique social and cultural needs for healthcare in that specific community. Next year I hope to apply my experiences in Thailand to my new position in GlobeMed as Director of Partnerships. My goal is to bring a more relational aspect to the partnership and to engage the rest of the chapter in a more meaningful connection to our partner.

My passion for community health was also fueled this year by my involvement with Crossroad Community Healthcare Clinic. Starting in the spring semester, I began an internship with Crossroad. The role of college interns in the clinic is to provide solutions to many of the social barriers to health in the Cincinnati community. My specific role this year was to follow up on patient referrals. In this role I gained a better understanding of the social factors that limit patient families from following up on a referral from their primary healthcare physician. Many times patients are limited by transportation, insurance, understanding, cultural value of health, and work schedules. In my role I was able connect families to resources that would allow them to overcome the social barriers and to attend the referral appointment. This experience allowed me to better understand community health locally and to analyze the similarities and differences to community health in Thailand.

This year I was also able to serve the Cincinnati community as a student tutor through Bearcat Buddies. I tutored the first semester at Hayes Porter Elementary and then again the second semester at Taft High School. As a tutor I was able to develop a personal relationship with individual students. In this role I saw that many of the social barriers to health at the clinic overlapped with social barriers to an excellent education at the schools. However, I truly enjoyed my time as a tutor because I was able to champion the students I tutored. I believe that every student is capable of achievement and has the capacity to contribute in a meaningful way. By showing up every week ready to cheer them on, I was able to consistently encourage and support the students. I hope to continue my involvement with this organization in the following year.

I believe that the success of my freshman can largely be contributed to the amazing community I became a part of. Throughout high school I participated in a faith based organization called Young Life. Upon entering into college I had the opportunity to complete training to become a Young Life Leader. The community I have found in Young Life goes far beyond what I could have hoped for. I feel truly blessed to be surrounded everyday by friends who are driven by the same faith, who encourage me and support me, and who make me laugh. At the end of this year it was incredibly hard to say goodbye, even if just for the summer, and I realized that it would not be so hard to say goodbye to something that was not so wonderful.

On a more individual level, freshman year also provided me with the opportunity to delve further into my love for art history. In high school I constantly found myself at the Columbus Museum of Art wistfully staring at a masterpiece that I knew little to nothing about. This year I took Intro to Art History as part of the college of Design Art Architecture and Planning. It was by far my favorite course. Sometimes I doubt the relevance of an art history education as a future physician, but this year cemented my belief in the vitality of this part of my education. I love art, and the courses that I took this year pursing that passion provided a hiatus and much needed break in many long and stressful days. If I am to become the most excellent physician that I can be, this year has taught me that I need to be well rounded and to feed all the parts of my brain and my soul. Not just the parts that relate to science.

While this year was fantastic, I will not settle for a sophomore year that does not succeed this past year. In the following year I intend to intentionally pursue and achieve many goals. One such goal is to get into positions of mentorship. Many individuals stepped up this year and guided my wandering path through freshman year. Next year I hope to provide that service to someone else. I can achieve this goal as a Connections Dual Admissions Mentor and as a Resident Adviser. In both of these roles I hope to set an example and to also provide individual care that meets my menti’s/residents’ unique needs.

In the following year I also hope to obtain some professional goals. I plan to pursue monthly shadowing opportunities to expand my knowledge and understanding of medical specialties. In specific I would like to shadow in the Emergency Room, a Cardiologist, and a Gynecologist. I believe these experiences will allow me to narrow down the type of medicine that I would like to practice. In addition I hope to become involved in research. During my senior year of high school I did bench work in a biochemistry lab, and disliked it horribly. Learning from this experience I would like to work in a more clinical setting or in a subject that I care more deeply about. I plan to pursue research that is more public health focused or has a focus on treatment. To achieve these goals I will first contact Dr. Abbey Tissot, my Dual Admissions Adviser. I will also do some research to better educate myself on these opportunities in the Cincinnati community.

If I could give myself one piece of advice for the following year it would be this; maintain a kingdom perspective. So often I become caught up in the day to day activities and lose sight of the bigger picture. I believe that the plan the Lord has for me is far greater than the one I have for myself and I also believe that I need to stay focused on what truly matters. I want to remind myself daily of my passion for medicine, art, deep and meaningful friendships, service, and my faith so that I will not get caught up in the frustration that comes with homework, late nights, and a busy schedule.