

SENIOR COLUMN

Destiny is a matter of choice, not chance

By Katie Dvorak

UPON coming to Penn State as a shy and naive freshman, I always felt that fate played a large role in my life.



MY OPINION

I was wrong. I am about to embark on yet another adventure — this one into the working world. As I leave my home in State College and create a new one in Maryland, I know my destiny is not a matter of chance, but a matter of choice. College is all about choices, from the big ones like choosing what major to study to the smaller ones like joining a club or organization on campus. Sometimes the choices we make aren't the best, and often they are hard — but they are always our own. In the past four years, some

choices I made weren't the right ones for me.

But, if I didn't make mistakes, then I wouldn't have learned from them.

Through trusting people who ended up hurting me, I learned to appreciate those who would always be by my side.

If I never made an error as a reporter, editor or copy editor in my time at the Collegian, I wouldn't have been able to grow as a journalist and as a person. If I never received a bad grade in a class, I wouldn't have pushed myself to work harder and do better.

While at Penn State, I chose to always look for a silver lining, so I would not spend my time only seeing the rain clouds.

It's the rainy days that paved the way for true appreciation of the warm ones spent with friends at the Creamery, sitting outside Old Main reading or grabbing a drink at Café 210.

The classes that disappointed me and stressed me out led to a

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greater appreciation for the ones that opened my eyes and instilled in me a passion for learning.

Despite the stress that ensued after not getting a housing contract for sophomore year, I chose to move into the Meridian with three other girls — and because of that had unforgettable times in one of the craziest apartment complexes in State College.

If I didn't choose to take chances, I wouldn't have been able to see this world for all the love and beauty it holds.

I took the plunge and studied abroad in Ireland last year.

While there, I saw so much more of the world than I had before and discovered more about myself.

I penned a love letter to a boy

freshman year, and though it was unrequited, taking that chance allowed me to grow to love him as a friend.

I tried out for the Collegian my first semester, following in the footsteps of my mom — who was the copy chief in the '70s.

In doing so, I found a place where I always felt at home here in Happy Valley and a place that will break my heart to have to leave behind.

If I never chose to rely on my parents for help, then I would never have realized how selfless two people can be.

When I was struggling, they were always there. My mom and dad sacrifice so much of their time and energy to make sure I am happy.



ONLINE

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Listening to me complain, cry and stress throughout all four years, they showed me how to be stronger, be more independent and be proud of who I am.

Journalists themselves, my parents led me to pursue journalism, and for that I owe them a hundred thanks.

As I ready to leave this place, I look back and realize I've learned that chances are worth taking, but in the end it's the choices I make that continue to shape my future.

Destiny is not predetermined — it's something we have to create for ourselves.

Katie Dvorak is a senior majoring in journalism and the Collegian's Copy Desk Chief. Her e-mail address is kzd111@psu.edu.

Senior offers what not to do in PSU experience

By Erin Shields

FOUR years ago, I came to Penn State fresh out of an all-girls high school — and somehow managed to be put in one of the only all-girls dorms on campus. Go figure.



MY OPINION

I arrived with little to no experience in picking out clothes to wear to class (I wore a navy dress with a white collar and saddle shoes every day in high school) or deciding what to eat for lunch (My dad always packed mine. Thanks, Dad).

Looking back at my time at Penn State, I remember getting some great advice on the do's of college.

Do get football season tickets — they're worth the hundreds of dollars.

Do schedule interesting classes — college is about learning new things.

Do go to frat parties (but don't drink the jungle juice labeled “for girls only”).

While I appreciated all the do's, I really wish someone had told me some of the best don'ts at Penn State, so I'm here to offer you some of mine.

I'll start with the most important “don't” of your college career at Penn State.

Don't go to class without a Daily Collegian. Our reporters and editors work hard to cover the news and sports so you can be informed.

But if you don't want to read it, do me a favor and pick it up to do the Sudoku while you're listening to lecture in 100 Thomas (Studies have shown it can make people up to 40 percent cleverer within seven days! Plus it'll make circulation go up).

Don't miss out on THON. I didn't know about THON until it was

too late to sign up freshman year, and I regret it. Join a committee (oh hey Mac Pac), do it through your organization or just go as a spectator.

Not many people can say they are part of the largest student-run philanthropy in the world — much less one that raises millions of dollars and makes a huge impact on the life of kids with cancer.

It's a way to get involved on campus, go on ridiculous canning trips and interact with some truly strong and inspiring children.

Don't forget to study abroad. If you can afford it, go.

I almost didn't because I didn't know anyone else going — but it was one of the best experiences of my life. I went to Barcelona, traveled all around Europe (until I ran out of money) and met people who I will be friends with forever.

We were the laughing stocks of Europe — and I loved every minute of it.

“Whatever your interests may be, pursue them, stay strong and don't give up until you reach your goals.”

Don't underestimate the power of great roommates.

You'll need them to vent to, to laugh and cry with and to keep you sane.

I was lucky and had some of the most amazing roommates anyone could ask for, and they became amazing friends I'll never forget.

Don't give up. I wanted to be on the Collegian since I came to journalism camp (yes, I'm a dork) my junior year of high school. I tried out, got denied twice and almost gave up.

Now, I'm an editor, I've been here for breaking news nights and I've met people I can't imagine my life without.

Whatever your interests may be, pursue them, stay strong and

don't give up until you reach your goals.

So now I've learned what to wear to class (sweatpants for early morning classes, but try and look nice every once in awhile), what to eat for lunch (avoid cheeseburgers, fries and West cookies every single day) and what to do and not do at my time here in college.

But, the one thing I keep thinking about is what's next, and who is going to tell me the do's and don'ts of real life? I guess I'll just have to find out myself.

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