

Dear Anana,

I enjoyed your letter! To answer your questions, I've lived in the same apartment for the last 2 years. I've moved around a lot as I've gone from high school to college to graduate school. I have never been to California but I've heard so many great things about the weather, cities, and beaches that I want to visit and maybe move there for a few years.

I think it's awesome that you want to help people when you're older! That is what attracted me to my job too. I like knowing that the research I do on emotions has the potential to help people with mental disorders.

I've always been interested in why people do what they do. In high school, talking to a college student studying neuroscience, is how and when I first learned what neuroscience was! I chose to study neuroscience because, by studying the brain, I could learn how and why people do what they do.

Because I wanted to study neuroscience, I only looked at colleges that had it as a major. A major is a group of classes (like biology and chemistry) that are required to specialize in an area (like neuroscience). Because I majored in neuroscience, I have a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in neuroscience. A Bachelor's degree means that you graduated from an undergraduate school. I also considered a college's location, size, and how likely I was to be accepted when choosing colleges. I wanted to live near a city at a medium to large (20,000 students) college.

When I started college, I knew I wanted to do research as a job and that I would have to go to graduate school and get a Ph.D. A Ph.D. is a doctorate degree in philosophy. Although I did not have a good idea of ~~what~~ how to get a Ph.D., I talked to graduate students I met in college to learn what it meant and what I needed to do to get there. Getting your Ph.D. means that, in a graduate program, you take classes and do research in a specific area. The final step is designing your own

research project, doing it, and writing it up (we call the finished product a dissertation). After you defend your dissertation, you get a Ph.D. A Ph.D. will allow me to do research studies on my own.

From a young age, my parents told me they wanted me to go to college. I prepared for college by working hard for good grades and getting involved in a lot of different things, like sports, and volunteering, so that I would have a strong college application. Around my junior year of high school, I started to think about where I wanted to go and applications.

Before I chose to study brains and computers, I wanted to do engineering. I still think engineering is interesting and sometimes work with engineers on projects. As I did neuroscience research, I realized that I had to work with computers. When we get data (information about brains from the MRI) we have to use computers to analyze (understand/make sense of) it.

My favorite part about being in college vs. high school was getting to make my own schedule. I prefer class in the morning so I have time in the afternoon to do work, study, and participate in activities. In college, I made my own schedule to do that! If you could make your own schedule, how would you do it?

Another thing I liked about college was getting to try new things. I joined different clubs, took different classes, and got to see what I enjoyed while learning new things. I also met a lot of new people, and, from them, learned about different parts of the USA and the world. What are you most excited to learn about this year? Are you making any New Year's resolutions? Do you think you'd rather go to a larger or smaller college?

I hope to hear from you soon!
Melanie