

## STUDENT TESTIMONIAL

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Alexander Whitney  
2013 Middle Years Programme graduate  
2015 Diploma Programme graduate  
International School of Beaverton  
Beaverton, Oregon, United States

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 studies at the Minerva Schools at KGI, an innovative, global undergraduate program, in San Francisco. Now a second-year, he will live and study in Berlin in this fall before experiencing Buenos Aires in the spring. 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 IB 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 program 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 IB Diploma 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 IB 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.

**Who inspired you most as an IB student? Did you have a mentor or teacher that left a strong positive impression?**

I don't think any one person inspired me most during my studies. It was more the general collective of my teachers that really motivated me. Seeing all of the hard work they put in to make sure we were prepared for exams and life beyond high school was incredibly heartwarming. It made me want to honor their efforts and ensure that their work was not for nothing.

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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 IB diploma 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.

Did you face any challenges during your education, studies or career? How did you overcome them?

I think the biggest challenges for me were the everyday things — juggling homework, friends, family, studying, extracurricular activities, and anything else I had going on, all while being prone to distraction and procrastination. It was hard and I'd let the stress build up a lot of the time, but I'd always go back and tell myself that no matter what happened everything would be okay. I had a great support group that I could fall back on, and I feel very fortunate that I could go to them when I needed it most.

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

I think the biggest thing that IB diploma 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. Although it's cliché, I feel that there's a certain truth that statement holds, and we should remind ourselves of it every day.

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