Kathy Ku is a master multitasker. While an undergrad at Harvard, she maintained "a ridiculous course load" of engineering classes while building a budding business — SOUTHS of Water — that is located in Uganda. Luckily, her coursework overlapped with her extra-curricular task, and she was able to bridge the gap between Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Africa.

Today, SOUTHS of Water is off and running (so to speak), and Ku is working to expand its reach in Uganda, where 30 percent of people currently lack clean drinking water and the leading cause of death for kids under age 5 is preventable water-borne disease.

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MY DORM ROOM PITCH:
SOUTHS locally manufactures affordable and ceramic water filters in Uganda. The goal is to place a water filter in every household to replace boiling water for people who are constantly getting sick from water-borne illnesses. Since February 2015, we've made about 4,500 filters, and 50 to 60,000 people are using them. This year we're hoping to pump out between 1,000 and 2,000 filters every month.
After my freshman year I traveled to Uganda for the first time, working in an all-girls school. Living with a host family, you could see how all these problems (of water-borne illnesses) take place. When I got back to campus, friends and I started looking to design and manufacture ceramic water filters, given the availability of clay and local traditions, but local organizations said they couldn't do the distribution. So we realized hey, we can do this ourselves, and I took a year off school and my co-founder took six months off and we started this rolling.

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HOW I JUGGLED SCHOOL AND WORK:

I'm not sure we did a very good job of juggling. My co-founder and I applied to a bunch of funding opportunities for students, and so we knew we needed to be back on campus. At certain points, I was probably spending more time on SPOUTS than I was spending on schoolwork. On weekends we started scheduling times to take showers, and it was a bit crazy. I finished school but my co-founder is still on leave.
**HOW I DEFINE SUCCESS:**

The day that I don't have to be involved. When it's such a successful business that it's more of a business that happens to do good, or when people are interested in buying the company itself. We're a social enterprise, so people often confuse us for a nonprofit. So success is the day we're seen as, more or less, the Brita of Africa.
I'D TELL MY HIGH-SCHOOL SELF...

Back then, the idea of taking time off of school was ridiculous. But now, my biggest advice is to take time off, to have status as a student but still have the capacity to roam free. A lot of people don’t expect much out of a college student, and so you have the freedom to screw up as many times as you want. Once I came back to campus, my grades were impeccable almost because I knew what I wanted to do and why I was taking the courses I was taking.

AMY DILUNA

TOPICS COLLEGE GAME PLAN, ASIAN AMERICA, NBCBLK

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✈️ NEXT STORY Going to Sleepaway Camp As A Kid Might Prepare You Better for College
Going to Sleepaway Camp As A Kid Might Prepare You Better for College

by ALLISON SLATER TATE

Here's a more fun way to prepare for college than studying: Go to overnight camp.

Summer camp may not help you ace your college calculus class, but experts say being away from home when you're younger can help you ease into campus life.

"While we don't track students who have participated in an overnight camp experience, I can comfortably speculate that those who have are more apt to apply the tools they learned there in resolving roommate conflicts, problem-
solving in small groups, and learning to live with people from different backgrounds," Kenyon College vice president for student affairs Meredith Harper Bonham told NBC News.

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While some students struggle when they leave home for the first time, veterans of overnight camp arrive on campus armed with some important lessons in communal living.

"Many of our students have never had to share a room, or even a bathroom, with a sibling," Bonham said, adding that some students have grown up in "highly segregated areas with respect to race, ethnicity and socioeconomic class."

Overnight camp forces the type of constant interaction, negotiation and direct communication that students will face in the communal, diverse environment of a residential college," she added.

"ON TOP OF FORGING FRIENDSHIPS FOR A LIFETIME, CAMP TAUGHT ME HOW TO BE AWAY FROM MY PARENTS, INTERACT WITH COMPLETE STRANGERS, AND BECOME INDEPENDENT."

Benjamin Eidelberg, 22, felt his camp experience came in handy when he got his undergraduate degree. He spent summers at Camp Cobossee in Monmouth, Maine, starting at age 10.

Related: Students, Parents Agree: This is The Top 'Dream' College

"Camp was a great way to prepare me for college and leaving home," Eidelberg, who got his Bachelor's from the University of Maryland and is now getting a Master's there, told NBC News. "On top of forging friendships for a lifetime, camp taught me how to be away from my parents, interact with complete strangers, and become independent."

He drew parallels between the first day of college, when he didn't know anyone, and the first day of camp, where the only campers he knew were his brother and two family friends.
"Like in college, I was forced to meet and socialize with strangers and ultimately develop my group of friends," he said.

Girls from Nancy's Summer Camp in Boulder float down Boulder Creek in Boulder, Colo. © RJ SANGOSTI / The Denver Post via Getty Images file

Eidelberg also found camp fertile ground for developing confidence and a new perspective.
"Camp served as an escape from life at home, whether it was school or just Pikesville [Maryland] in general," he said. "It was a place, similar to college, that was fresh and where others did not have strong predispositions, at least prior to my first couple of summers."

Kenyon College's Bonham said she sees the benefits of summer camp for her own children too: whether it's sharing care packages with their bunkmates or getting out of their comfort zones and trying new activities.

"While I like to think they learned all of these qualities as toddlers, receiving the additional reinforcement as pre-teens and teenagers can only help as they develop into humane, socially conscious adults," she said.

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Though summer camp experiences don't often make it onto college applications, college admissions counselor Sara Harberson of Admissions Revolution believes they could still serve applicants well.

"The memories and lessons students have from summer camp will imbue them with a genuineness and adaptability which may come through in unpredictable ways in their essays, letters of recommendation, and interviews," Harberson said. "Most importantly, their approach to the college process and their choices about how to spend their remaining summers are usually quite thoughtful, because they have a taste of what it means to be happy with their surroundings. That might make going to camp as a younger child priceless in the end."

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**ALLISON SLATER TATE  🐦  📸**

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