

CELITA SUMMA

TELL ME A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND – ARE YOU FROM TALLY?

Born in Tallahassee – I've lived here my whole life – FSUS (Florida High) – Best and Brightest winner in Journalism category

ACTIVITIES / ACADEMICS YOU PARTICIPATED IN?

Over my four years of high school there, I took lots of AP classes, I participated in a bunch of clubs, I was very involved in my school's journalism program, the newspaper we have is called the Tomahawk Talk, and served as both assistant editor and then as co-editor-in-chief for that paper and it won a bunch of awards including first place in American Scholastic Press Association, silver/gold from Florida Scholastic Press Association

I've also won individual awards, I've won two All-Floridas on articles that I've submitted for the Florida Scholastic Press Association and also a couple of honorable mentions.

I was selected to publish an article in the Holocaust Education Resource Council newsletter.

I'm an AP scholar with distinction.

I attended North Florida HOBY, which is a youth leadership conference as an ambassador in 2014 – program I was selected for.

I was also selected to attend the Chuck Stone program for diversity in education and media which is at UNC Chapel Hill, full scholarship program, where I went last summer and I got to work with the professors and learn more about journalism

I've also been involved in Key Club for several years as secretary and vice president, I won the distinguished VP award for the state of FL. I was also a divisional interclub relations committee chair, which basically meant I was in charge of making sure that clubs in our divisions worked together to collaborate on service projects and things like that.

I also volunteered at the animal shelter in town for the past year, I've been a member of National Honor Society, I was secretary of that, and I was also President of our school's Rho Kappa National Social Studies honor society where we compiled a historiography where we interviewed residents at a local nursery home and put their stories in a booklet so that social studies teachers can use their stories in their curriculum.

I also participated in the summer youth training program in 2014 – so I worked at the public defender's office for 6 weeks over the summer

For the past two years I've worked at my karate studio as an instructor and a business associate.

WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING SO INVOLVED? HOW DID YOU HANDLE THE WORKLOAD?

Well I definitely think that time management is the most important thing to keep in mind. There were definitely times when I got stressed and I just had to step back, take a deep breath, and make a list, prioritize everything I had to do, and then get to it, and stick it out until it was all done. If I knew I had to work a certain night, I would make sure to get my HW done, I tried to make sure that no time went to waste and that I was always doing something productive that could help my academic or extracurricular activities.

HOW DID YOU CHOOSE WHAT TO GET INVOLVED IN?

The first club I got involved with was Key Club, and that was just stroke of luck that my English teacher was going to become the sponsor so she was encouraging students to join, so I got involved in service in that way. And once I started serving the community, I started to expand and branch into other projects, like the historiography and the animal shelter, so that I was targeting my own interests while I was still helping the community. So I think – most of them were just things that I heard around school and thought, “hey that’s interesting” and figured I’d give it a shot and see how I liked it.

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JOURNALISM – WHY DID YOU APPLY FOR THE JOURNALISM BEST & BRIGHTEST?

That was definitely the category that jumped out at me the most, because I’d been on staff of our school newspaper for 4 years by that time, so I pretty much knew how everything worked, and I really enjoyed that class because I like writing a lot and I like being able to express opinions on stuff that matters, so journalism was definitely my passion

And at the end of last year, our journalism advisor, who’d been our advisor for the past 3 years, she had a baby and so she left to go be a stay at home mom and we got a new advisor and that was the same year I became co-editor-in-chief and so that was a huge transition year for us

We had a lot of transitions around school that affected our journalism program and so over the past year I had to step into a major leadership role in journalism

I would stay til 9 working on the paper at school with our advisor, we had a lot of obstacles we had to overcome. And surmounting those challenges is kind of what made me so dedicated to our paper and to our journalism program, and so that’s what motivated me to apply for the Journalism Best and Brightest award.

WHAT SKILLS DID YOU DEVELOP? WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

I definitely learned a lot about flexibility. I kind of like had other things set out, laid out exactly how it was going to be, but I definitely realized over the past year that flexibility is important because things will come up that you can’t control, and so you have to learn to go with the flow

and work with what you have in order to produce the best product you possibly can. So I'd say flexibility is definitely something that I had to learn to be a bit more flexible and learn to compromise with different people, and be a creative problem-solver when it came to issues I had with the paper.

PRACTICAL SKILLS THAT NEWSPAPER TEACHES YOU?

Especially as an editor, I was involved with managing other staff members, and ensuring that all tasks were completed on time, so you get sort of a management aspect. I've also worked to develop and teach lessons, so that's another thing that I've been a part of in journalism. I learned a lot about Adobe InDesign and formatting pages, and also just in general, it goes along with time management. I've had to basically schedule the paper producing process.

We have to make sure that everything has a drop dead deadline and would get accomplished by the time it needed to get accomplished.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY INSPIRED YOU TO SIGN UP FOR THE JOURNALISM CLASS?

Actually the same English teacher who became the Key Club advisor. I was in her high school K-12 so I started in 6th grade and so we had the opportunity to take English 1 as 8th graders, and so I had that English teacher for English 1 and she came up to me one day after class and told me that I had really strong writing skills and that she really wanted me to apply to the journalism because she could see me being a strong editor and helping out with the paper a lot.

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And so I kind of took that compliment to heart and that motivated me to want to be the best I could be in journalism.

Emily Bouchard = inspiring teacher

She definitely kind of guided me along.

WHAT DO YOU SPECIFICALLY LOVE ABOUT JOURNALISM?

There are a couple of things. First of all, I really enjoy the writing aspect, because I like being able to articulate my thoughts and make it as eloquent as I possibly can. I also like the sense of community, the friends and community that came with journalism – parties after every issue came out – jokes as a class

Having that sense of community made it a whole lot easier to manage the whole paper-producing process, and have a good time while putting lots of hard work towards the paper.

OUTSIDE OF ACADEMICS/SCHOOL, PASSIONS?

I really like reading, I like listening to music and going to concerts, hanging out with friends, typical things like that.

ACCOMPLISHMENT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Probably the historiography that we put together for Rho Kappa social studies honor society, was an accomplishment that I was incredibly proud of. Essentially we went out to Westminster Oaks and we have a contact there who arranged some meetings with some pretty prolific people who have lived through important events in history, and she arranges us to meet with them, and they talk to us and share their stories, and it's been a really eye-opening experience to hear about history from the people who have witnessed it and lived through it first hand, and they have emotional ties and connections to those events and a lot of them maybe have never gotten to tell their full story before.

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It's been a real experience for them to preserve those stories... and for us to be able to put faces and names to the historical events we often read about in textbooks and then also being able to produce that finished product of the booklet that we worked so hard on as a group and see those being implemented in the classroom that was a really rewarding experience as well.

FUTURE PLANS?

I will be attending FSU in the fall and I plan to major in Editing, Writing, Media.

CAREER GOALS?

I guess I do want to work in the field of journalism, and specifically the writing aspect of that because I really do enjoy being able to write about all kinds of things. So I definitely do want to have a career of some sort in that field and I'm considering possibly attending graduate school for that, so we'll see how it plays out.

ADVICE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION?

I would say definitely take advantage of the resources that you're offered, make sure that you're networking and building ties with people, making the most of your connections with your peers and your teachers and make sure that you don't just do the bare minimum to scrape by, and that you go above and beyond and that can be any particular interest area that you may have, just pursue the things that make you feel fulfilled and that you can give back to others through those means.

WHY IS GIVING BACK IMPORTANT?

I think it's important to realize that once you expand your horizons beyond just the scope of yourself you really understand what you have and you can be grateful for what you have and it's a really good feeling to be able to help out others who might not have those things and also just depends what kind of service you're doing, but educating others, providing, donating, what you can do to make the community more wholesome, educated, healthy community.