

Building aspirations

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



Educational identity is the most significant principle of becoming a successful student. There are many different majors a student can choose that it can become overwhelming. Young learners may not know what they want to study or take up as a career. I believe people need to find out who they are before they know what they want to study. If we know what we are passionate about we can find out what our strengths are and use them to decide what to major in. This was an easy question for me to answer because I always wanted to be an architect even before I knew the word "architect" existed.

The key word here is "knew" because I can't explain how a child would know such a thing. I can tell you the exact moment this decision was clarified in my head. It was Christmas day, 1994, when I was 7 years old. That year I received from Santa Claus: a T-square ruler, a clear 45 degree triangle, and a drawing board, which was just a 24" x 30" polished piece of wood. I didn't know what these things were, but I remember having this conversation with my dad. I said, "I'm so excited, I can't wait to cut this board up into something cool!" My dad laughed and said, "Oh son, that's not for cutting! That's for drawing." I said, "How can I draw with a piece of wood?" He explained I was supposed to draw with paper on the board. Despite the change of thought, I was still excited. My parents always encouraged me to draw, build, or just create in general. I loved to draw and I especially loved to build things. I would build Lego sets, birdhouses, puzzles, and just about anything I could get my hands on. So I guess it just came naturally that I wanted to become an architect by putting my drawing and building skills

together. A few things happened between that moment almost 20 years ago, when I decided I wanted to be an architect, and today.

Despite me thinking from an early age that I knew what I was going to do as a career when I grew up, I had several occasions of self-doubt where I questioned my ability to actually be an architect. These moments were almost always followed by an overwhelming sense of panic, the type of panic that occurs when you lose your sense of purpose and self-identity. At these critical moments I would tell myself that if I couldn't be an architect, I would become a nurse. I guess it was because my mother was a nurse. I didn't want to be a nurse, but that was my back up plan. In high school I took some art classes and a couple drawing classes.

They made me think artistically, but not in the way an architect should. I went to La Sale High School, which was also a college preparatory school, but they offered no architecture classes. The classes they had for drawing didn't offer anything in respects to drafting or technical drawing. Drafting is the backbone of architectural drawings and to not have taken any classes on that type of drawing skill worried me. I was excellent at math and I was very well organized. Those are two strong traits to possess going into architecture classes. Despite some challenges I thought I had it all figured out.

When I started my first classes in the architecture program at Pasadena City College, I painfully became aware that the skill requirements had separated the strong from the weak. The amount of time and effort that was required to produce the work was astounding and I felt I was simply not prepared for the demands. As a result, the work I generated was average and some days I

would feel embarrassed to pin up my work next to my superior classmates. I shortly entered one of those panic modes I described earlier where I thought being an architect was all I ever wanted to be and now I'm terrible at it.

I didn't know what I was going to do. Some of the students' were spectacular at drawing and I my drawings were just mediocre. I didn't want to give up on my life long dream. I needed guidance and inspiration from someone or something. I looked to the architect Louis I. Kahn. He said, " An artist can make a cart with square wheels, but an architect can't. " That quote made me feel better about my drawings. They didn't have to be pretty or pull some sort of made up meaning from them. The drawings just had to work. Kahn expresses that architects communicate through drawing.

It isn't about making art. It is about conveying an idea. That is what I want to do with my drawings. I was also lucky enough to find a teacher and a place to do just that. My instructor, Professor Lee was strict, but she knew what techniques to show us young architects in order to become successful. She showed us proper ways to draw, build models, organize work, and how to research other projects for reference. The class wasn't easy and there were massive amounts of work, but as long as we put in the effort and did the work she was there to guide us in the right direction.

I was ailing a little less discouraged at this point, but I still wasn't sure I could hack it in the program until we went on a field trip. I had no idea that this visit would have such an impact on my educational identity and make me confirm my thoughts about wanting to become an architect. We visited the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels built by Spanish architect Rafael Moneo,

which is located in downtown Los Angeles, off Temple Street and next to the 101 Freeway. His modern-contemporary design conveyed a spiritual Journey that reflects the cultural diversity of the people of Los

Angels. It is made from poured concrete, is 11-stories tall, and every angle is acute or obtuse. We entered the cathedral from the South. Unlike most Cathedrals we did not enter through a rear door near the last pews. Instead, we entered the ambulatory, which circles the interior of the Cathedral. This makes the spiritual journey longer because you are walking from the front of the cathedral to the back, and then to the front again. When you are inside looking at the altar you see a huge cross, which is a series of windows made from alabaster, a naturally occurring stone.

The alabaster gives the interior a warm even glow. The milky light it gives also makes it very spiritual because it makes the cross look like it is floating. In this moment looking at the cross with light pouring out around it I knew this is what I wanted to do. I wanted to be an architect. Every move Money made in his design had a reason and purpose that was thoughtfully planned. He was not just drawing plans to a building, he was making a connection with the people who entered the cathedral. It had become clear to me that being an architect was not about being the top in class or whose design was the best.

It is about the concepts you make and how you can relate them to the people who are using the space you create. Piper explains it is a "... Writer's Job to connect people... " Together on earth. We are all different, but we have needs that can be addressed through reading and writing. Piper also

expresses that "change writing" involves original thought and engagement. That is what architecture does. It promotes original thought from the architect, but at the same time requires engagement from the people using the building. It connects the people together who have multiple points of view.

Even though I knew I wanted to become an architect at an early age it didn't mean I would automatically be successful. I had my doubts, but I never gave up. I still had to find out what I was passionate about. I could then use those emotions to create designs that connect to people. I hope that through these designs people will expand their knowledge. It is important to find yourself first in order to find your strengths. You don't have to know what you want to take as a major or what career field you want to be in at young age. So don't be afraid to explore.