

Never follow others

Looking back years of study and research work, what makes me proud most is that I have kept taking my own path and not following others'.

Like many other students in China, my childhood was planned by my parents. Courses for Music, Math, English and Swimming took most of my extracurricular time. Fortunately, I was allowed to make my own choices and quit those courses I had no interests in. With these choices made on my own, I had to undertake their consequences and thus be responsible for myself. Such experience developed my character as independent and responsible.

With such character, I insisted my own path to enrich my life. No one had ever imagined that I would one day stand on stage and sing in front of hundreds of people because my voice was once sour and unpleasant. However, my love for music pushed me to change my voice through practice but not quit like many others. Despite all the challenges, I successfully joined the chorus in Senior High School and finally became one of the Top Ten Singers in Fudan University. It's a miracle created by my persistence on my own choice.

Aside from developing myself, I chose to participate in volunteer activities to help those in need. In the summer of 2011, I travelled to Xinyang, a rural village in Henan Province, China, to volunteer as an elementary school teacher. Poverty prevented the children of Xinyang from receiving quality basic education. I was moved by the children's desire to learn in spite of the unfavorable conditions. Their eagerness to learn in spite of their rather hopeless situation reminded me of the importance of education. The unique experience with the children of Xinyang fostered my desire to become a professor and to devote myself to the propagation and advocacy of education.

With independency, I've never followed others in research work. Prof. Yuen-Ron Shen once told me that one of the most important things in scientific research is innovation. Contribution in knowledge can be made through using new measurements, observing new phenomenon or finding new explanations. And none of these above can be achieved by following others. When I was working on my own project in Optics Lab, I kept reading papers concerning similar topics and outlining the frontier of my certain field of study. Based on the knowledge contributed by others, I set my research objectives on the unknown regions, where I could make my own contributions. However, doing research on the unknown regions is full of challenge. During this challenging experiment that required dedication and a meticulous eye for details, many times did I encounter difficulties that seemed almost impossible to resolve, but I have never given up. And I'm proud of that because my insistence turns out to be rewarding and valuable.

I've never followed others in deciding my academic objectives. With economic boost in China, a degree in Physics is not as competitive as one in Economics or Managing. And a degree is a key factor for job hunting. So for many Chinese top students, Physics is not even among their choices. So when I finally made my decision to study Physics in Fudan University for a Bachelor's Degree, many of my friends and relatives were really confused. "Why don't you choose Economics or Managing?" they kept asking me. But the answer is simple, I believe the most important thing to learn in undergraduate years is the basic knowledge and the ability of learning and working.

Furthermore, I have never followed others in deciding my career. I set my career objective as becoming a professor while many of my friends are looking for jobs and decent incomes. After four years' study and research, I was fully aware of the difficulties and challenges I would encounter in graduate study. So when I was applying for the graduate program, I was ready to devote plenty of time in experiments even though the success is uncertain and enjoy both the bitterness and happiness of exploration. I chose graduate study, where I can fill my life with passion and challenges and enrich my heart, to begin my career in scientific research. And just like singing, which is also my own choice, I will insist on my own path and endeavor.