

## **Reflection 5: My CODES Backstory**

This reflection is the second so far, where we chose the Topics, and in this reflection topic, given how we are nearing the end of the semester, and how the last thing is going to be to watch the presentations of the CODES Showcase, particularly the presentations of the freshmen CODES students, It has a very cathartic feel to watch these students be in the position we used to be just short of a year ago. All these reasons helped me determine my last reflection of the semester, and I have decided that it will be a reflection of my backstory and how I got into the CODES Program.

When I first heard of CODES, I was still a senior in High School, I was halfway through my last semester, and I was looking to choose a college to attend. In that time, I was mostly on the hunt for possible scholarships, and I was about to attend Maryville University. But while I was watching TV with my Mom, she suggested that I look into this peculiar research scholarship, called CODES, which she was told about by an SIUE Advisor as she was searching much harder for funding. At first, I was hesitant as I was not yet a fan of research, and I was already pretty much in a daze from the end of high school jitters, but some extra convincing from my mom got me to fill out an application.

I then quickly wrote all the information needed in the application. One thing I distinctly remember is managing to write all those essay questions in the span of a night, something that was a precursor to my ability to write essays very quickly. A few days later, I got a notification that I was a top finalist for the scholarship. This was exciting to me, as I usually didn't get to the final stage in scholarships; I was hardly contacted back at all. Then, the interview came along, and I was prepped all day for the interview. When I got back from school, my mom helpfully straightened up the basement, and I had found a mini table to place my laptop. And then the interview started. I was nervous, but I put on my good speaking voice for my first-ever meeting with Dr. Despain. I remember I had made a whole script of questions I wanted to ask to help me stand out, and Dr. Despain seemed pleased.

And then, on the last day of my Algebra Class, I was chilling as I had gotten a high grade in the class and didn't have to take the Final, when right when class was almost over, I got a text message from my mom to check my email. I checked my most recent email...and it was Dr. Despain messaging me to tell me that she was happy to give me a place in the CODES Program. I was absolutely ecstatic, and ever since then, that is still one of my happiest core memories. I just think back to me being a loner in high school, to being surrounded by some of my closest friends in my life. If I hadn't filled out those essays or if I hadn't gotten informed about CODES, my College Journey would have been very different.