

2014

## Purpose: The Key to Navigating College

Evan P. Crain  
*Grand Valley State University*

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Purpose: The Key to Navigating College

Evan P. Crain

Grand Valley State University

### Abstract

I arrived to college in my first year as a sophomore, accepted to the Seidman College of Business and with a firm Christian foundation. And I had a plan. That plan was to figure it out.

The challenge for all college students is to understand what “it” is. Given the importance of a college degree and the power of habits developed during this time, the college years have a powerful impact on at least the near future of one’s career, if not beyond.

Unlike my initial thoughts, “it” was not an undying passion to solve some terrible problem in the world.

“It” was the development of a mature worldview and a deep sense of character and purpose. “It” was not a passion, but the ability to deploy resources built during these college years.

Drawing on personal experience and discussion of sources covering topics essential to developing “it” during the college years, this paper seeks to deliver a general roadmap for developing the sense of character and purpose any young person should identify in college, based on a solid worldview foundation.

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### Purpose: The Key to Navigating College

I arrived to college in my first year as a sophomore, accepted to the Seidman College of Business and with a firm Christian foundation. And I had a plan. That plan was to figure it out.

The challenge for all college students is to understand what “it” is. Given the importance of a college degree and the power of habits developed during this time, the college years have a powerful impact on at least the near future of one’s career, if not beyond.

Each person has a widely varied experience during college, and this paper is by no means an authoritative answer to the problem of understanding the “why” and “what” of college, but it is a good start. The undergraduate degree is unique compared to other degrees. As it is most often completed immediately following high school, the student likely has very little experience and resources. It is often difficult for these students to understand why they must pay large sums of money for four more years of an education. The best exception where purpose is clear is a technical degree, which I will discuss at a later point.

The principles I will describe are also applicable to all of life. Unlike my initial thoughts, “it” was not an undying passion to solve some terrible problem in the world. “It” was the development of a mature worldview and a deep sense of character and purpose. “It” was not a passion, but the ability to deploy resources built during these college years.

I begin by laying a foundational worldview. Worldview is your perception of theology, philosophy, science, mathematics, history, law, politics, economics, morality and ethics. These views coalesce and affect every attribute of your life, how you think, behave, etc. For example, a Buddhist monk will likely have a different view of college than the Christian foundation I outline.

Second, I will examine the college philosophy. Purposes vary depending on technical vs. non-technical degrees. Other ideas will be discussed, such as the classroom experience, extracurriculars, community and mentorship.

I conclude with a series of questions that form the basis of this paper. These questions demonstrate curiosity in learning and will lead to a great collegiate experience.

### **Foundational Worldview**

My intention in addressing worldview at length is for two reasons, the first being that one fundamentally may not agree with my analysis of the college years if coming from a differing worldview. Secondly, going through college without a clear understanding of worldview, or more directly, identity, will likely confuse rather than help. Even still, the mess of conflicting and confusing ideas presented throughout college could leave one's sense of identity in a worse position than when it began.

Today's society believes in liberty – liberty from everyone else. This freedom is from the bondage of family, finances, illness, etc. Rather than liberty with a foundation, founded in several key institutions, such as family, today's liberty calls for a hedonistic moral philosophy. Hedonism is rooted in the Greek "pleasure," (Geisler, 1989) and creates the basis of moral evaluation through two simple statements: if pleasure, then it is good; if pain, then it is evil. Given that people perceive each of these in often stark contrast, society is both relativist and very much pluralistic. The cultural mish-mash that ensues sends mixed messages to those growing up in a society without any real purpose. C.S. Lewis describes the phenomenon from the viewpoint of a demon in *The Screwtape Letters*:

"[M]an has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to having a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head. He doesn't think of doctrines as primarily "true" or "false," but as "academic" or "practical," "outworn" or "contemporary," "conventional" or "ruthless." Jargon, not argument, is your best ally ... Make him think it is strong or stark or

courageous—that it is the philosophy of the future. That's the sort of thing he cares about.” (Lewis, 1942)

Liberty, as defined in today’s society, substitutes God with government; this is truly a poor substitute indeed, as government is merely a portion of creation. In effect, people are at a loss for sense of identity.

Mankind clearly has a conscience and a standard of right and wrong. There appears to be a Natural Law. For example, the abortion debate hinges on the fact of whether or not the fetus is a person. If not a person, it is not murder. Or, trust is an important factor in running a sustainable business. Most probably feel wronged if trust is not upheld.

My paper hinges on the following question: from where – or whom – does this Natural Law originate? If self, then I would agree with Albert Camus, “There is only one serious philosophical problem. And that is suicide.” (Camus, 1955) If it comes from Buddha, then we must reach enlightenment. If the source is the Brahman, then we must absolve our sins over many life times. If Christianity, then Natural Law is based on the being of God, in whose image we are created. And for identity, there must be purpose; the end of a college degree is for character and skills development.

### **Developing a Sound Christian Worldview**

Our views in theology, philosophy, science, mathematics, history, law, politics, economics, morality and ethics must be cohesive, sound and lead to this same Natural Law. Syncretic views have supported to the identity crisis (the “salad bar” of beliefs). This is the process of reason, a process resembling the scientific method.

Developing a worldview is not a simple process. In fact, it is a lifelong process. A sound worldview begins with a clear understanding of the foundation, and then matures to consider alternatives and understand their place in right and wrong.

When I was younger, I completed a study called Navigators 2:7 with three other men. The study took a year and covered the basics of developing and implementing a sustainable Christian faith. The first book focused on basic principles – how to read the Bible, memorizing key verses from the Bible, understanding why Christianity matters, etc. Each book in the series – there were three – developed the foundation of Christianity in one's life, such as giving a testimony, presenting the Gospel, etc. This was one of my first experiences in leadership, as the four of us rotated facilitating the study. I adopted great habits necessary for success in my time in college, the most important being daily readership of the Bible.

My mind undergoes a simple process when presented with an idea I have not encountered.

- What is the central idea being conveyed?
- Do I agree or disagree?
- What evidence do I have?
- Which way does the evidence point?
- Do my beliefs remain the same, or must I change?
- Communicate the decision/take action.

This method is very similar to the scientific method. (Science Buddies)

- Ask a Question
- Do Background Research
- Construct a Hypothesis
- Test Your Hypothesis by Doing an Experiment
- Analyze Your Data and Draw a Conclusion
- Communicate Your Results

This process demonstrates prudence for worldview because I must follow my worldview to its logical end. From this, I have realized that my premises are occasionally incorrect. Most importantly, however, reason protects from the fads of society, academia and popular culture.



The successful college experience requires identity and a sound worldview. Start with a foundational study, such as the Navigators 2:7, which will develop great habits in understanding Christianity. Build from there, so that you will not be surprised by the worldviews of others.

### **The College Philosophy**

#### **Technical Degrees**

The definition for the word 'technical' varies. In the university setting, I define a technical degree most generally as STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. Science also covers health related fields, assuming the focus of the profession actively utilizes advanced science.

Unlike non-technical degrees, technical degrees embody purpose; yet character development can be more of a struggle, as these degrees tend to monopolize one's time. The embodied purpose is demonstrated through an entire curriculum planned for a specific profession, with very limited variability in course options within that degree.

For example, mechanical engineering prepares one specifically to be a mechanical engineer - all courses are intended to provide the foundation of what any mechanical engineer absolutely must know. Each course builds on the other; an average individual would not succeed in Heat Transfer without prerequisite courses in calculus, programming, thermodynamics, etc.

Technical degrees require dedication, offer rigor, cover advanced concepts in depth and exercise the capabilities of the brain. Starting wages are generally higher, and salary ceiling along technical routes are also generally higher. Finally, due to the rigor of the program, those in technical degrees easily transfer to non-technical functions, provided having developed soft skills.

Soft skills include emotional intelligence, communication and other non-technical skills. The challenge of a technical degree is the monopolization of time by the program. Time spent preparing for class may limit time spent on character and soft skills development.

## **Non-Technical Degrees**

A non-technical degree is the antithesis to a technical degree; non-technical degrees focus on soft skills, but lack in prescribed purpose. I define non-technical degrees to comprise any degree not in STEM.

The challenge in these degrees is finding purpose. For example, while philosophy is a critical area of knowledge, the need for philosophers is limited, especially outside academia. Consider also a supply chain degree. Supply chain is a widely comprehensive function comprising procurement, non-technical manufacturing (materials management), logistics and quality. Jobs vary widely; subsequently, the supply chain degree is very broad, as classes are generally introductions to diverse topics. However, as studies are generally not as intense as technical degrees (depending on the caliber of the student), time for liberal studies, character and soft skills development is more available.

**Breadth, Options and the Struggle for Purpose.** Depending on the degree, the curriculum is still designed around employer expectations, but there remain two problems. Not every degree is generally employable, and there are no hard set standards for non-technical professions (versus, for example, a mechanical engineer). Students often enter these degrees unsure of their ultimate vocation, and continue to struggle due to the many options presented by the degrees (for supply chain: do I want to be a buyer, materials planner, logistics planner, logistics specialist in road, rail or marine, supervisor, etc.?) Even if one is certain of vocation, the breadth of class options causes difficulty in finding a clear sense of purpose.

The remedy: students must then develop that sense of purpose, and design their curriculum around that purpose. However, initial interests may prove to be less of a passion than originally thought. For example, after taking classes focused on advanced analytics, I became more interested in leadership. However, it was the pursuit of advanced analytics that clarified my true interests. I will suggest the following framework for assisting in finding passions (this also is applicable for selecting a technical degree):

**Try, try and try some more.** The more one has experienced, the more likely one will discover a long term vocation. My parents were intentional with my sisters and me by forcing us to try new activities (music, sports, martial arts, volunteering) and to take a job as soon as it was legal. In college, I became involved with a number of diverse organizations, mostly student organizations. Mentorship is another way to try; I've learned so much by asking people questions. I have met for lunch, coffee or otherwise with many people and have quizzed them about areas in which I have been interested. Often, their advice has completely redirected my activities. A final method is to read in areas previously not encountered.

**Pare, remove, simplify.** After a year of wide involvement, select a few areas you really enjoy. Trying to have experiences in all areas leaves one with a lot of half-developed skills - and utterly burnt out. I used to want to be a businessman, engineer, statistician, programmer and a leader at the same time and had dual majors in Operations Management and Finance and dual minors in Accounting and Mathematics. At first, it was like being a polymath, but eventually became bipolarity, and I dropped the two minors.

**Specialize.** Finally, select just a couple areas that you feel you would enjoy the most and do the best. Focus your life around these areas. Professionally, I am a future leader with a focus on technical areas. Personally, my top three passions are public speaking, leadership and strategy. I only become involved in areas that require at least one of these areas, just to keep balance in my life.

**Character and Soft Skills.** Character originates in the same way as wisdom in Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." (The Holy Bible, 1984) The Westminster Catechism sums worldview and the purpose of life: "The chief aim of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever."

There is a special group of philanthropists in Grand Rapids casting a vision of a thriving city of health, education, business and family. (Many of these philanthropists are also Christians.) My formative experience in Grand Rapids during my collegiate years caused me to focus on becoming an “ethical, effective leader.” (Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies) My chosen vocation is to be a business leader. Therefore, I must do everything in the end of glorifying God. With that in mind, I have sought to combine effective leadership with compassion and a "doer" mentality. Like many young idealists, I try to identify problems and then fix them, and also develop a sustainable compassion for doing so as I grow older.

### **The Classroom Experience**

The classroom environment is difficult to utilize to its full potential. However, an apologetic for the classroom, as well as university in general, is that collaboration with faculty and students during class unlocks a potential for refinement of knowledge and philosophy not offered elsewhere. The atmosphere and character of the university environment encourages singular focus on the development of knowledge.

For example, many universities offer weekend studies and night classes. I feel that this weakens the overall experience; there are so many other distractions, primarily work. Full time education replaces the demands of work with the demands of learning. Both are equally wholesome, and are best done one at a time.

That being said, there are several areas that make the classroom experience difficult that need treatment.

- Problems focusing during class
- Bad professors
- Classes lacking in rigor
- Incompetent students
- Multitasking enabled by technology

**Problems focusing during class.** I will begin with problems focusing during class. One must remember that classes are not meant for entertainment, per se, and sometimes a boring professor, but not necessarily a bad professor, makes for a difficult class. My only advice is to be prepared, love learning for learning's sake and to not bring technology that will allow you to tune out. (Disclaimer: My hypocrisy pains me.)

**Bad professors.** The definition of "bad" in reference to professors can vary. "Bad" may imply incompetent, unethical, lazy, mean spirited, etc. I have had three bad professors, and have brought this to the attention of administration each time. However, be warned that "tough," "aggressive," "boring" or a counter-cultural sense of niceties do not fit the category of "bad." They are simply different, and one can learn a lot from these people. I recommend avoiding or switching sections when encountering a bad professor; situations with bad professors may end with consequences beyond a simple bad grade. Conversely, remember the other students who must endure these professors; if there is a big enough case as to the negative consequences of these professors on students, bring these professors to the attention to administration (be sure to have legitimate reasoning of the professor's negative effects on OTHER students, with each student's permission).

**Classes lacking in rigor.** Students in this era flock to [ratemyprofessor.com](http://ratemyprofessor.com) before registering of a class. Is the professor helpful, clear, easy/hard and even hot? Despite the stereotypical pursuit by students for easy classes, steer clear of easy classes. There is a steady trend in my own collegiate career: the easier the professor, the lazier I get. The lazier I get, the worse my habits become. The worse my habits, not only do I learn less, my future is impacted negatively. Prudence is desired in registration; do not stack yourself with a too-difficult lineup. But instead of "blow-off" classes, take classes that might be of aid in your career, even if the connection between career and topic seems distant (e.g. psychology and business).

**Incompetent students.** The new philosophy of college, I am told, is team-based. Whereas in the last century classwork focused mostly, if not exclusively, on the individual, the modern classroom is

designed to facilitate collaboration. In fields such as business, group work is more expected. In a globally connected world, teamwork skills are more sought after than ever. However, the nature of a team requires the team to share in the results, no matter the work ethic of each individual. The problem is endemic in both college and the workforce: sometimes people do not share the burden. The most foolish reaction is to do their work for them, but this is not the sustainable answer. One must instead be a leader, and through vision and by helping them acquire the tools they need to succeed, one may actually cause underperformers to achieve excellence. Unfortunately, this is not always successful. At least in college, though, there are usually group evaluations in which one can affect the grade of under performers.

**Multitasking enabled by technology.** The advent of small and network-connected technology allows the ability to "multitask" (or, more accurately, ignore the presenter/professor). Before, one would have to bring in print newspapers, which are very obvious. Now, I either have the WSJ app on my iPad, or most of my classes are in computer labs. For this, I do not have a strong solution. I recommend choosing professors wisely by avoiding easy classes, and enrolling in the most interesting classes. Leave technology at home if possible; otherwise, download an app that blocks all off-topic sites/apps.

### **Extracurricular Experience**

I have already largely discussed the extracurricular experience under non-technical degrees, with the purpose of demonstrating how extracurriculars, that is, experience outside the classroom, lead one to determine purpose for a non-technical degree. Extracurriculars serve another purpose, which is to develop experience. Internships are the most important of extracurriculars, student organizations the second most important. In addition, universities generally offer a plethora of programs geared toward students in all disciplines.

Internships are most often a requirement for full time employment; it is increasingly common that other internships are requirements to get better internships. The quintessential teenager lawn mowing business is not as desired as experience in a real job or other internship. Employers desire candidates who

have experience in their field, and therefore have some training, competence and professionalism. Most important is professionalism – employers are looking for those who are already comfortable, socially and professionally, with the work environment.

Different universities and different programs have different styles of helping students find internships. For example, those in education may be placed in a teaching assistant and/or student teaching assignment. Those in an engineering program may apply to the university, which then distributes resumes to employers, almost guaranteeing an opportunity. Some programs require internships to be taken as unpaid and for credit, others focus on non-credit paid internships. In any case, relevant internship experience is a necessity for getting a job before or quickly after graduation in the same field as one's studies.

Internships cover professionalism and competence, but rarely allow opportunity for leadership. Leadership is most often found serving on the boards of student organizations. (Also, for those with limited work experience, demonstrating leadership in a student organization may greatly help secure an internship.) As mentioned earlier, one should try membership in a variety of organizations. Involvement should be pared down to one or two areas in which to become a leader. Leadership in a student organization is another thesis in itself, so I offer a primary piece of advice: treat the organization like a small business and is if it were a paid position.

Different student organizations offer different experiences. One quasi-student organization where I have been involved has a paid staff. As President, I was the public profile and speaker. Other student organizations have a solid foundation and a history of strength; this type of organization offers the opportunity to learn how to sustain an organization. And still others organizations need to be turned around or even created; these experiences teach entrepreneurship and growth leadership. Interestingly enough, I continually find myself in leadership of troubled organizations, which I then generally turnaround (or eventually exit when I am unable to influence change).

**Community Experience**

Consider a community - a geography and collection of people, both good and bad. The good includes relationships, landscape, culture, government and area attractions. The bad includes poverty, crime, government and whatever is counter to the character of God. As I mentioned before, Grand Rapids has made my collegiate experience quite unique. The wealthy in the area made their riches in the area, and so give back to the area. They seek to develop the good aspects and minimize the bad parts. But one does not have to be wealthy to give back; I urge students to develop the good in the community and serve to eliminate the bad.

In my experience, of the “good,” I have found unexpectedly an appreciation for art, landscape and music (especially the symphony) while in Grand Rapids. To resolve the “bad,” my major interest is in organizations that help people understand worldview (e.g. the Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview) and those that help people develop skills for jobs (e.g. Goodwill, APICS, etc.). Because of my engagement with people in development during my time in Grand Rapids, I also see myself connecting people with resources to organizations that need resources. Finally, I also have developed a keen interest in politics.

**Inter/National Experience**

Inter/National Experience implies both domestic and international experience, that is to say, any experience that is not where you call home. I have already discussed the new focus by universities on teamwork; globalism is another area where universities are spending prodigious resources. Many students today study abroad. I spent some time in Nicaragua working on social product innovation with Nicaraguan college students. The experience itself was difficult, but I learned much about the world from my travel. But one does not have to go abroad; I have traveled all over the US for conferences, and will soon spend 6 weeks in Washington, DC in an internship with the US House of Representatives. Traveling refines one’s understanding of interests, capabilities and passions. This most often occurs when experiencing the



proverbial baptism by fire by being placed in a brand new geography; such experiences are tough to work through, but often have great return. Most hopefully, one learns humility and compassion for the needs of others.

Not everyone has the funding for expensive international or domestic excursions, but universities often have scholarships. One may have to drive or fly third class to save money. There are many opportunities for funding to present at conferences; just get to know the people in the Office of Fellowships and Undergraduate Research, the Honors College and some people in administration (participation in Student Senate might help facilitate this).

I once applied for a nationally competitive scholarship that would allow me to study abroad for two years. While I did not succeed, my experience working with the director of the Office of Fellowships challenged me to take risks I never thought possible. I strongly urge applying for a nationally competitive scholarship just for the rigor; my experience set off a chain of events that included my time in Nicaragua and strong relationships with several mentors. Of course, there is always the possibility of winning the scholarship and realizing those dreams.

## **Mentorship**

I have read that many executives love to learn; many describe themselves as “curious.” Some people are not as inclined to enjoy learning as others, but lifelong learning makes a considerable difference for the sake of self and others. There are many ways to learn: through lecture, reading, experience and mentorship.

I have discussed each area implicitly, except for mentorship. I have two official mentors, both in business, and have many others who play the role of mentor. Unlike other forms of learning, mentors are aware of the challenges and variables affecting one’s life and give tailored advice based on their own learning. For over a year now, I have relied on the advice of my mentors. They have successfully

prevented me from falling flat on my face in several occasions. There is a movement that says “fail early and fail often.” I say, why fail at all when you can do it right the first time?

Mentorship has three challenges – finding a mentor, establishing a relationship and respecting the relationship.

There are many forms of mentors – personal, professional, spiritual, family, etc. A mentorship in the work setting might help one build a network, develop professionalism and offer career advice. A spiritual mentor might provide accountability and spiritual instruction, etc., etc. It is very reasonable to find a mentor, whether explicitly or implicitly, for each of these areas.

Occasionally, one might wish to seek an official mentor relationship. During my tenure as a Fellow in the Cook Leadership Academy, I was provided the opportunity to network with a plethora of qualified mentors, with the expectation on both sides to develop one or two long term relationships. Out of the list of possible mentors, I found two that were most applicable to my life. After meeting with them once, I suggested that we meet on a regular basis – in these cases, about once a month.

The official mentorship is a relationship that will likely become a friendship, but there must be boundaries in the interactions. A good mentee comes prepared with questions, seeking advice for challenges in their life. To not be prepared in this way would not use the mentor’s time well, nor would it help the mentee gain as much from the relationship. If simply meeting as friends, this should be communicated.

Finding a mentor is an essential practice; as I said, why fail at all when you can do it right the first time?

## **Conclusion**

Navigating university, especially the undergraduate years, is a challenge. Successful navigation is dependent on your sense of purpose and identity. Why did you choose to go to college? What do you seek to gain from your experience? What experiences do you need to have to be successful in the area that you choose?

To answer those questions, start with the basics. What is your worldview? For what purpose do you exist? How can you achieve that purpose?

At this point, start asking more specific questions. In what areas am I interested? What qualities define my personality? Try to match yourself to a degree that carries these interests and is populated by people with similar personalities.

Begin navigating the collegiate experience. Is this a technical or non-technical degree? Do I need to develop a purpose for my studies beyond what is given? In what ways can I become involved to see if I really like this area?

As you have more experiences, pare your involvement to the areas that are most beneficial. Which organizations would I enjoy serving in a leadership capacity? In which internships would I best utilize my skills? Where should I travel and how can I get funding for the trip? What areas of the community am I most passionate and have the greatest burden for improving?

Along the way, look for mentors and make the most of your classes. All of your experiences should aid you in developing the skills and character you need to successfully navigate the next challenge: your professional career.

## **Appendix A**

Reading has been a joy in my life since first grade. When I heard a friend was reading chapter books, I picked up my copy of *Alice in Wonderland* – I put it down after deciding the prose was too verbose for my interests at the time. I read both literature and non-fiction, and find delight in one vehicle

that delivers truth through storytelling, the other directly. Below is a list of books I have found to be of aid while I navigated college.

- *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*, Norman Geisler – A simple presentation of several dozen major moral philosophies, a Biblical perspective and response to each. When you wonder why society behaves a certain way, understanding their worldview helps.
- *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber – This is a tough read. It explains how our views of salvation influence our perspective on wealth. It also describes the belief systems of major sects of Christianity in the early 20th century. It is amazing to see that the modern church is often a conflicted hodgepodge of these sects (e.g. the theological conflict between capitalism and asceticism).
- *Multipliers*, Liz Wiseman – Probably the single most influential leadership book I have read. I have sworn away diminisher tendencies to become a multiplier. (There is a condensed Harvard Business Review version available.) Again, not the best written, but extraordinary concepts.
- *Axiom*, Bill Hybels – One to three page leadership axioms. A great daily read. Based on Hybel's and other's experiences.
- *Courageous Leadership*, Bill Hybels – Written very much like this thesis, a compilation of everything Hybels has learned as a leader. Written succinctly, it is easy to absorb a few pages at a time.
- *Humiltas*, John Dickson – Not the best written, but outlines the evolution of the honor-shame society of Biblical times to the modern society that prizes humility. Humility is not modesty, but serving someone else.

- *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, Daniel Pink – Well, I don't know about truth, but Pink presents a lot of psychology research in a fun format. We work best when we are doing what we love. Know what you love, and as a leader, give others the opportunity to do what they love.
- *Made to Stick*, Chip Heath and Dan Heath – There are 6 parts of a “sticky” idea, something people will remember. My favorite are ‘simple’ and ‘concrete.’
- *Necessary Endings*, Dr. Henry Cloud – I learned that gardeners prune both good and bad roses off a rose bush, with the intention of allowing a select few roses bloom magnificently. The principle applies to life – one might have to step away from something good if it allows something else to be great.
- *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen R. Covey – Make your relationships win-win. Find a way to let both sides benefit.
- *Getting Naked: A Business Fable*, Partick Lencioni – A fun story about vulnerability, delivered in a manly way. Lencioni's business fables are literally non-fiction books set to a story, making them very palatable and quick reads.
- *Death by Meeting*, Patrick Lencioni – Another business fable, this one describing how to have great meetings. Conflict! You must have conflict! Within certain bounds.
- *The Lord of the Rings/The Simarillion*, JRR Tolkein – Tolkein did not write these as allegories to Christianity, but they are packed with the Christian worldview. Honor, integrity, leadership, honesty. All values set to a visionary story in a genre called cosmogonical myth.
- *Avalon*, Stephen R. Lawhead – An essential read for understanding godly government, set to a brilliant story.

- *Servant Leadership and the Christian Worldview*, Evan Crain – A manifesto of sorts, nonetheless a highly formative paper I wrote beginning my first year of college and concluded my second year.

### **About the Author: A Short Autobiography**

I was born in Midland, Michigan on July 12, 1993 as the third and final child of Steven and Ruth Crain. My dad is a chemist; my mom is a dietician by training, but a homemaker by practice. My sisters are Andrea (1986) and Valerie (1989).

We lived in Midland until 1999, when my dad accepted a job in TS&D at Dow's La Porte, Texas plant. We remained there until 2005, when we returned to Midland, where my dad moved fully back to R&D within Dow.

I began working as an intern at Health Enhancement Systems (HES) in April 2010. I attended Delta College for three classes from 2010-11. I graduated from Midland High School in June 2011, beginning in August 2011 at Grand Valley State University. In the summer of 2012, I took two online classes at Central Michigan University and one course at Saginaw Valley State University. In the Fall Semester of 2012, I became Vice President of the APICS Grand Valley State University (GV) Chapter. In March of 2013, I left HES and began an internship at Steelcase, Inc. In May 2013, I left Steelcase and began as an intern at Dow Corning Corporation. In August 2013, I returned to the same role at Steelcase and remained there until I graduated. In the Fall Semester 2013, I assumed roles as President of the APICS GV Chapter and the Cook Leadership Academy, and as Student Director of APICS Grand Rapids. On April 26, 2014, I will graduate with a BBA in Operations Management and Finance from Grand Valley.

Post-graduation, I will intern with Congressman Dave Camp in Washington, DC for 6 weeks from April 29 - June 6 and then begin at The Dow Chemical Company in the Supply Chain Rotation Program on June 16, 2014.

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