

My name is Morgan Redmond. I'm a fourth year at the University of Chicago studying public policy. I was a YPAS dance major, and I graduated in 2014. The following is my statement/thoughts/feelings on the counselors at Manual/YPAS.

I loved my time at Manual/YPAS, and my experience was heavily shaped by my teachers, staff, and counselors.

I was fortunate enough to have a phenomenal counselor in Mr. Robinson. It seemed that he knew me and my capabilities before I really had the opportunity to know him, or know what I was capable of. I remember receiving emails about certain opportunities from him or being nominated by him for certain opportunities during my freshman and sophomore years. Before I really had become fully acquainted with him, he already was looking out for me.

He was always supportive and helpful in anything that I wanted to pursue including the Governor's Scholar Program my junior year. That year he also played a role in my being a recipient of a book award during junior ring ceremony (unbeknownst to me until much later).

My senior year Mr. Robinson was incredibly emotionally supportive. I unfortunately became sick, and I was going through the process of being diagnosed with Celiac Disease. I remember spending hours sometimes in his office stressed about my future, and whether or not I would be well enough to attend college out of state or whether or not I would be able to afford it. His strong affirmations would assuage my feelings and his daily scholarship emails were a tremendous help in securing funding.

I could always count on his vote of confidence. Anything that I needed that he could provide he did, even letters of recommendation I had forgotten to ask for until the last minute. I was cleaning out my room at home recently, and I came across the letter of recommendation he wrote for my college and scholarship applications. He always sent them directly or gave them to me sealed with his signature, so I had never read the letter. It was probably one that I had gotten for some scholarship and maybe decided not to apply to. I opened it to find three of the nicest pages of print I had ever had the pleasure to read about myself. It brought back a lot of great memories and reminded me how blessed I was to have someone like him as my counselor.

Even talking to other students at my university, it's amazing how many of them felt like they were on their academic journey throughout high school and especially in looking to college alone. I was thankful that I could not relate to that experience because of Mr. Robinson.

My Manual/YPAS experience would not have been the same without him, and I doubt that I would be able to say that this spring I will graduate from the number three university in the country debt free without his guidance and support in high school.

Even though Mr. Robinson was my counselor, I interacted with Manual's counseling office through official visits from admissions counselors and other entities. I remember seeing Mrs. Medley in the halls and her always taking time to speak to me even though I wasn't one of her students, in particular. I remember she complimented me at senior prom on my dress and the fact that I wore chucks instead of heels. I was at Manual as a substitute teacher in December; I passed her in the hall and said hello. She recognized me instantly and we talked, and then after school let out, I spoke to her in her office about a scholarship opportunity I was involved with and about the university, and asked her to let me know if there was any way I could be of assistance.

It was great to see her and amazing to think that, after all of these years and not having been one of her main students, she still remembered me and still cared so much.

For me that's truly a defining feature of the Manual experience, and one I am so grateful I was able to have.