**Jena Mayer**

**CCSF, Class of 2011**

**UC Berkeley, Class of 2014 Environmental Economics**

**Yelp! (19 months)**

**Marlon’s Mom (career)**

***What brought you to CCSF?***

It was the start of the economic crisis, and I used to just work at coffee shops or whatever. I was 22 and I had been skating along pretty good in San Francisco and living the party life and doing my random waiting jobs and stuff and when the economic downturn hit, I tried to get two jobs that I thought would seem pretty easy to get. One was at a coffee shop as a barista and they were like, oh, do you have 10 years of barista experience, and I also applied at a co-op down by ocean beach and they were like, “have you worked at a grocery store before?” And I said, “yes, I have!.” Then they asked if I had co-op experience and I did not. So, I didn’t get the job. It was also at that time that I realized that it was a tough job market and I needed to increase my skills. I didn’t know exactly what I wanted to study, but I knew I needed more education.

***Where did you go to high school?***   
I went to high school in Colfax, which is a rural town on the way to Reno – in the middle of nowhere, CA.

When I was in high school, the closest city to anything happening was San Francisco – sometimes we would go to Sacramento, but it’s not that great there. So, whenever we would come to a concert, show or party, it would be in SF. So, finally I just moved here. That was where my people were.

In high school, I was kind of like a rebel. I didn’t think I needed to go to college and not a lot of people in that area did go to college. The richest people were construction or contractors or real estate people, before the crisis of course. Then all of those people – I don’t even know what happened to them now.

***You arrive at CCSF. Where did you begin? Did you have any ideas what you would do?***

I knew I wanted to take and I was really following the elections and I got really into it listening on NPR and thought I should learn more about political science because I didn’t understand things that were going on in the news. I wanted to also study economics so that I could be informed about all of the issues that were going on in the election. I got to city college, talked to a counselor, took a placement test and they kind of just… the counselors didn’t push me into anything, but they did ask what I was interested in. I said I was interested in kids and they encouraged me to take a child development class. So, I signed up for a child development class, political science, econ and all of the beginning stuff, English and math. Took a full load.

***Did you know you wanted to transfer to a four-year school?***

No. I just wanted to increase my job potential and feel like a more educated citizen. Especially in San Francisco where so many people are educated. I kind of felt like I was in the minority.

***How did you find and build community?***

During my first semester, fall of 2008, I was surprised how easy the classes were for me and I felt I needed more stimulation. I was having trouble in Spanish and I met Jesse Clayburgh. He was a Spanish tutor or maybe he was just one of the nice people and he said he would tutor me. He started talking about the club – ABG. He said it was about business and stuff. I started looking into the clubs and decided not to pursue that club right away. But I went instead to UIG (Undergraduate Investment Group) and they were meeting the following week. So, I went right away. I didn’t know I wanted to be part of a club but someone just mentioned it to me so that’s how I decided to go.

***How did you end up becoming president of UIG?***

I started going to the meetings and after 3 or 4 meetings, the officers said they were all moving on. It was a big club. It had 50 or 60 members at the time. I thought what the heck. I will apply for something. I am not that organized so I probably shouldn’t be treasurer or secretary. I guess I could do VP, but someone else was running for VP who had been there for a long time.

***When did it dawn on you that you could transfer to a four year school?***

It dawned on my first semester when I realized that. Compared to other students, I felt like I was more interested in what I was learning. And I think it was Ms. Goodman and she said, “what are you going to do next?” Then I met you and the clubs and you were the advocate for transferring and you were like the Berkeley prep class. I remember when Jesse got into Stanford and you said, “well, I guess that’s okay.”

***How did you know what to take?***

I think I put together an ed plan with a counselor, but even then, I wasn’t exactly sure what to take because my first few semesters I didn’t know whether I wanted to go to a UC or a CSU. I took a bunch of classes that didn’t count, which is why I was there for three years. Once I decided I wanted to go to a UC, I realized that about 20 credits did not count. The counselors…. I felt like they didn’t guide me that much, but it might have been just because they didn’t want to push me in a certain direction. I changed my mind three times. First I thought business Haas and then towards the end, I met with one of the Berkeley counselors who told me about environmental economics and since I was interested in environmental issues and business that might be a good crossover.

***What’ your experience with CCSF instructors?***

Amazing! I had better instructors at City College than I did at Berkeley. I’m sure the instructors were a lot more accolades at Berkeley, but they were so busy it was like they didn’t have time for you. The teachers at CCSF really cared. You were the only student there, and they would be elated and give you the whole hour if you came to their office hours.

***How did your CCSF experience compare to your Berkeley experience?***

They were so different. They were like night and day. At CCSF, I felt it was really hard to find community, but the teachers were amazing. The teachers were very accessible and the other students not so accessible and I felt like it flipped at Berkeley. There were tons of social stuff to get involved in at Berkeley but not a lot of teacher support.

***Looking back on things now, what you say was your greatest memory of CCSF?***

My greatest memory of City College would probably be. Well, it was definitely the clubs, but more specifically, I went to a conference at ABG at Cozumel and it was an all-inclusive hotel and activities planned for us and other students all over the country that were part of the same club and both of us presented and even though I have been the president of ABG at CCSF, presenting in a room of 500 people instead of 50 was a growth experience.

***What was your experience like at Berkeley?***

Fun, but kind of a struggle. Academically I went from CCSF where I felt like a rock star to Berkeley where I felt more like middle of the road. And then I joined the Berkeley snowboard team and that took up a lot of my time. I became the president of that. I was putting a little bit too much of my focus on that and my grades started to slip a little bit. I was already at Berkeley and that was my goal – but I didn’t put a lot of effort into my academics once I got to Berkeley. I thought, “time to relax.”

What advice would you give to someone like yourself who was working for a while and later discovered that hmmmm….. I think I may need to get myself to change course?

The advice I would give to a person in that situation would be…. Don’t wait. If you’re feeling that way now, it’s only going to get worse probably. The longer you wait, the longer you put off going after your real dream or your real goals. I’ve done that lately with relationships or old jobs I have had before college and you just end up wasting months or years of your life on jobs that aren’t going anywhere. Take a risk and jump in both feet, and go for what you really want.

***What did you think you would do after Berkeley?***

After I graduated from Berkeley, I thought I would work for the Public Utilities Commission. I wanted to do energy policy. The government moves slowly, but I just waited and waited and waited, and meanwhile, life was moving on and I lived in the most expensive city in the world with no income. So, in the meanwhile, I took a job at Yelp on more of like a fun social level. Meanwhile, I got a call back from the PUC, but I had already been at Yelp for a few years and decided not to go.

***What do you think is the most misunderstood things or misperceived about community college or City College?***

I think most people assume that CCSF is a place where people are just going and that’s the end of the line and that they’re going to linger around there taking art and random classes and get an AA degree, and then they’re done. That’s what I thought in high school, too. That they were going to get a two-year degree instead of a four-year degree.

***Did you feel prepared for Berkeley after CCSF?***

I felt prepared. The only thing that was shocking to me was the class size and that that the teachers and professors had absolutely no time for you. You had to schedule office hours and you could be there with 20 other people and you had to answer a lot of question on a board. He never got real personal. I guess somebody could have told me that at City College, but it wasn’t like it was going to stop me from going to Berkeley?

***What can CCSF do better?***

I think they could probably help you right when you get to City College – to see beyond just City College. To get you on the track for transferring. Nobody sat me down and talked to me about the difference between UC and CSU. That would have helped me. And I probably would have been out in two years instead of three.

I don’t think I ever went to, or even knew about the transfer center. But I might have met a transfer counselor just for Berkeley.

***Did you try to figure out what you would do once at CCSF?***

I was living with my boyfriend at the time and I had saved up money. Max encouraged me to go to school. He just wanted me to get your AA and that would be good enough for my family to accept you.

I thought I would work at the PUC, be a consultant or be an economist for the government. Then when I got the job at Yelp, I felt that I loved sales and thought I would ride the tech wave and be a downtown SF workaholic. I was at Yelp for a year and a half.

***How did you decide to forego your career to stay home with Marlon?***

After I got married, I felt the next chapter in my life would be moving to the suburbs – well, maybe not the moving to the suburbs part. I then got pregnant with this guy and thought I would launch my career first and then have kids down the line. I got pregnant with him after only being at Yelp! For eight months. I loved Yelp and I loved the environment. I got four months off, came back and went back for a week and just missed this little guy so much and didn’t want to miss a single milestone and I will be a stay at home mom until he goes to school.

***How did CCSF shape you? What impact did CCSF have on you?***

City College has had a huge impact on my life and on my career. If it wasn’t for City College, I don’t think I would have stayed in San Francisco. My whole life would have been different and it’s hard to think of exactly how, because I would have been a completely different person. All of the political science I took helped shape me.

When I first started going to City College, I had never given a public speech, I had never taken a math class above beginning algebra, I had never been to Mexico. I had a pretty sheltered life and coming to SF and CCSF and meeting all of the people in the clubs and the faculty really opened up my eyes to people around me and made me want to learn more. I thought that is what I should do to get a job and I thought that maybe if I had an AA they would hire me at the grocery store. I never thought I could consider becoming an economist or working at a startup. It really made me dream bigger and I have achieved my dreams.

***What would you have done differently?***

I probably would have gotten started at City College sooner and I probably would have taken classes that counted toward something. I think I got pretty lucky, but I know there were a lot of people out there who weren’t as lucky as me – who didn’t know they could achieve those things. I know a lot of people at City College were bright, but they didn’t get enough direction.

I didn’t realize that joining a club would be a really enriching experience that – I thought it was just a box that you check off. I got an opportunity to present in front of people, get outside my comfort zone and hang out with people who had different backgrounds than me and organize events. I felt like I had 20 different jobs in one – just organizing events.