**Jeff Z. Wu**

**Lincoln High School, 2007**

**City College of San Francisco, 2009**

**University of Southern California, 2013**

***Impetus to choose CCSF after Lincoln High?***

I actually emigrated from China to SF when I was 10. I started learning the alphabet when I came here and it took a few years, but it didn’t take me too long to start integrating since I quickly formed a group of friends. So, when I went to high school I think I was a point where I didn’t have a lot of direction as to what or where I wanted to go because my parents didn’t really have an education themselves. So, I took the AP classes but I didn’t have that focus and determination to push myself to attend a university. I actually hated the thought of going to community college because it seemed like a concept that was very taboo where people would deem us as something you only do as a last resort, so I was willing to go anywhere that I was accepted, but at the end of the day my mom who was actually a professor in China had that concept where you can do something better for yourself and that you can’t just settle for what you have today and that’s where she pushed me to go to community college and that’s where I ended up, so it’s more of a not knowing where I was going and a bit of an unknown for me – I didn’t know what to do and I just ended up there, but it all turned out good. However, at the end of the day, it set me back a couple of years. Because I did not graduate in the two years amount of time that I was supposed to (from USC). I graduated USC in 2013 and it wasn’t because of the courses that were hard, but again, not knowing where I want to go or what I wanted to do. I was jumping between running a startup in New York to doing investment banking to doing so many things in college that I never figured out until the end of the day – which is why I did not graduate (from USC) in two years.

I took the time to evaluate my opportunities and to evaluate different types of work out there and to come to a conclusion before I left school. That’s why it took me four years to graduate from USC.

***Fall of 2007, you arrive at CCSF. Where did you begin? How did you navigate your way around?***

When you first go to community college, you don’t know anything. I first went to a counselor and looked into the UC System and how you’re guaranteed acceptance into a UC School. I kind of just started learning and learning. The counselors were only a starting point. They can only give you 10% of what you need to know. From then on, you move on to professors like you who can provide more guidance. You can go to honors courses and join specific outside extracurricular activities. You build upon what you learn from day one and get from there. There is no playbook to go on. You have to be savvy and just kind of learn from yourself. I learned so many different things from City College – and even students today might not know the first day. For example, doing work study will give you early enrollment as compared to someone else. You can find certain professors that can give you better, not only learning, but potential to do something else besides school work. There are so many things you have to learn and figure out besides the school work. There were things I had to learn and figure out in order to get on with other things and start talking to people.

***What would you say was your favorite thing about CCSF?***

My favorite thing about CCSF would probably have to do with the people and resources available. I had a lot of friends who were willing to study with me, start a brand new fraternity, have the right teachers and all those resources helped. Without people around me, there’s nothing I can’t do without them.

***How did you build community at CCSF?***

I knew a bunch of folks from San Francisco. I had a solid base of people who were coming from my high school. After that, I started joining AGS, other organizations and making friends with classmates and doing outside class study sessions. You start doing organizations together and you start building those relationships on a day-to-day basis.

***How did you feel about the curriculum and the instruction at CCSF?***

I mean…. I guess looking back I can compare it to USC-level courses. The teachers at CCSF have the heart to teach, but I didn’t feel like they have all of the resources to connect the students to the real world. I mean, they have the background, and they have the textbooks, but at the end of the day, I didn’t feel like they were able to actually show what is being done in the real world. Bringing the expertise and speakers and those who can provide context to the textbooks – and not just recite the textbooks. I think that is where I felt like was missing at community college. But you have good people who can teach the material, but at the end of the day, I wanted real world understanding of where I could take what I was learning in the textbook and apply it to the real world and getting a job.

***What were your goals coming into City College of San Francisco?***

To transfer to a four-year university. At the end of the day, getting an education, not necessarily and AA degree, but enough credits to be successful at a university.

***How did you decide upon USC?***

The USC application process was not very difficult because I did the work to apply to a UC. I think USC likes people with unique backgrounds and attributes and I put unique answers that stood out to everyone else. Going through that process brings some research into looking into yourself and who you really are, how you’re like. I think USC was a good school for me because I had a strong interest in business, and the school provides a tremendous business network and school pride, but an undergraduate business program that gave me the courses to focus on building the fundamentals of valuation, corporate finance, government work and all that was a draw for me compared to the other schools.

***What could City College do better?***

We could do for days on this, you know. There is always room for improvement, and I think what I said, maybe connecting the students better to the real world. Connecting lessons with presentations, with case studies, with networking receptions and things like that to play more into doing testing with the material, but applying the material with different means of presentations, interview sessions, or even networking sessions and applying them to the real world.

***Tell me about the transition from CCSF to USC.***

It was definitely overwhelming in every single level. The courses available and basically, the lifestyle. The courses were less intense than I thought because you have so many spread out classes as compared to community college where you were trying to stuff everything into one. Whereas, at USC, you are trying to take it slow and trying to spread it out – you have more time, more freedom and you have more decisions to make – drinks with friends, do you want to join other inaudible. Back at community college, you just focused on studying and you didn’t really focus on school activities or school spirit activities. So, you really have to not commit yourself into focusing on just living but also just school, but when you go into that world, you forget about school a lot. It was balancing the world of school and being able to enjoy yourself or getting an education at the same time. It was a lot of fun, but it was hard to get that school mode going in the first few months, but you kind of learn to time manage and it was good.

*I want to show this clip to ABG and I want you to talk about why you decided to start ABG because it is one of the most successful clubs. I am going to send you the videos where people are talking about their most memorable experience at City College – because it is a club that has survived and thrived. I want the current students to understand the history of the club.*

Hi, my name is Jeff Wu. I graduated from Lincoln High school in 2007 and left CCSF in 2009 and then graduated from USC. When I first started at CCSF, I didn’t really feel like there was a focus on business students. I wanted to, at the end of the day, stand out in my applications. I wanted to combine my vision of how to help out students at CCSF who had a strong vision in business but also to help myself out in getting my reputation, getting my experience and I did a lot of research and found out about this organization called ABG and that it was an awesome organization that we should definitely start, and so I approached my friends and eventually found Peter Dang, Phil Pak and Rachel Posman as my posse. We all came together and all felt like it was a good organization for us. We felt it would make a good impact for the students at CCSF. It was not an easy route, nor was it a day 1, day 2 effort. It took us a long time and almost an entire year to really go from originating idea to having it implemented at City College and it was definitely a whirlwind of going to meeting after meeting talking to professors and administrators and really kind of nailing in why we should have it here and how it will really impact students. I am glad to hear it has done really well since the organization has started and I hope that it will continue the success that it has brought on. I started the idea at the end of 2007, and early 2008 where I started the idea, finalized and implemented in 2008. I was actually not the first president because I did not want to put myself into an organization where I felt like I didn’t have a full commitment after I first started it. I was leaving shortly after starting it, so I wanted to appoint someone who was not leaving CCSF and someone who could make the commitment to make the club successful and I left Peter as president so that he could continue to establish the foundation of the club and lead the success for one more year after handing it off to someone else. He was the president and I was the co-founder of the club.

***What was your USC experience like?***

USC experience as a unique one where there were so many options to take on that I didn’t even know where to begin. But it was definitely a good experience where I not only tried so many different organizations and learned so many thing in classes, but also tried to meet a lot of great people at the university. Throughout my career, I went from doing private wealth management at Bank of America to financial analysis at Southern California Edison and Walt Disney to doing investment banking at multiple boutique firms to even running a startup in New York and flying back and forth. So, I did a range of things and did all that – the reason I did all that is because I wanted to try out different areas of business. It really gave me that whole understanding to be out there in the world, and at the end of the day, the reason I chose investment banking come out of college is because of what it can teach me and what can have today, still, I am the only person who does the pitch decks and all of the Excel spreadsheets and all of these internships have led me to what I really want to do, and now it has given me the skill set to be successful in my career.

***How did you end up at Viceroy Hotel Group?***

I quite GE Capital, traveled for 3 weeks, came to LA not having a job and within a few weeks, I was able to interview and have a job within a few weeks. It was easy and fast for me and I felt like after talking to just a few people, it was the perfect opportunity.

***Tell me about Viceroy Hotel Group***

OK. Viceroy Hotel Group is a luxury hotel lifestyle brand and we manage hotels for private investors to REITS to wealthy individuals. We provide the brand name, the operation excellence and that whole marketing to help the hotel become the best place for people to come and stay. What distinguishes Viceroy is that it has a unique destination approach to its hotel instead of having box like Marriott, Hilton, or Hyatt, we really tailor each hotel to its destination. For example, at LErmitage where you just stayed, we really focused on what it is to become Hollywood. Like the Beverly Hills is who stays there are celebrities or wealthy individuals who come here who want to experience that lifestyle. We have Tom Cruise, Cher, and a bunch of people who stay at the hotel. In SF, we have Hotel Zeta which follows that technology, latest trends, and playful vibe. In the Hotel Zeppelin, it’s that unique 70s music, that retro feeling and so every hotel has that personality that is on its own and you cannot find that across any other hotel portfolio out there, so that is what we are focusing on. For me, in particularly, work on three different aspects at the hotel: I work on the finance, strategy and business development. For finance, I work with the banking relationships, with the treasury management, forecasting how our finances are going to be for the next year and five years for the business – and communicating all of this material to our board of directors. From a strategy point of view, I work with the senior management team, the CEO and CFO, the senior marketing officer in developing the strategy that we want to implement on a yearly and five-year basis. So, developing and executing that vision. Business development, something I recently joined, is to help them in researching where the next best hotel locations might be, how we might make that hotel successful and how do we win over the business at the next hotel that a REIT is opening. So, understanding new markets, understanding the business, and pitching Viceroy as a team and why we should be the operator for that property.

***How did City College change you, and what did you learn there?***

During the years at City College, it taught me to be savvy. Thousands of students, thousands of competitions of where we all try to compete for the same spots. It really taught you to understand to get out of your comfort zone and to talk to people and get out there and really fight for yourself.

***What is your proudest accomplishment to date?***

I don’t know. What could that be? Proudest accomplishment. That’s a tough one.

Can you really say that a twenty-something year-old sat with the Board of Directors? I sat with the Chairman of the Board the other day and these guys run a multi-billion dollar business. They are a public firm in the Emerities. They manage from oil to real estate to tech, and they own a bunch of businesses, and we are simply a small portion of that. Because of their size and expertise, we use them as funding and expertise. We have a parent company to fall back on and working with these folks has had a tremendous impact on my learing.

***Where do you see yourself in the future in terms of your career? What else would you like to pursue?***

Right now, I am comfortable and feel like I have accomplished a lot already in this role. I want to continue down the road strategy. I like to think big picture and lead a group of people and to understand every aspect of a business, so I would like to one day become a Chief Strategy Officer for a company and right now, for me to be continue to be savvy and right now, I am trying to join the board of the USC Marshall School of business. I was on the board of a nonprofit and I am trying to be out there, network, and help out other classmates. I know a bunch of people who are out there either in accounting firms or startups and I am trying to bring them all to my circle and helping them with my businesses. I just gave a contract to a friend at KPMG and I am potentially giving a contract to another service firm and I have another friend with a startup and I am pitching his idea to my marketing team. So, just really getting out there, expanding my network and really to follow

The impact of community college on my life has been a great option for me to really build a foundation to become who I am today. Going through the process really taught me to, you know, be able to adapt in ways that I never thought I could. So, becoming who I am today definitely led me to trying out all of the things in community college that I would not have tried out. Because trying those things has led me to develop a new perspective, develop a new skillset and then taking all that and taking that to the next level, to either do university or even today or every day in your career.