Kelly Hom, Tax Supervisor

OUM, Inc.

CCSF Class of 2011

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Class of 2013

*After you graduated from Lowell in 2007, what were you thinking?*

I applied to several of the UC colleges and I think some of the state colleges, but I wasn’t really happy with where I got in, and at the same time, I wasn’t really sure what I wanted to do, so I said, let’s spend some time at City College and experiment with some classes and figure out what I wanted to go – and go from there. That’s how I ended up at City College.

*What was your CCSF experience like?*

I spent two years at City College. It was great. I actually really loved my time at City College. I felt like I made a lot of good friends and made a lot of connections. I found that a lot of the professors that I had at City College. I felt that a lot of the professors that I had at City College really cared about your growth and they could that if you were putting in the effort to learn and be better, they would help you as much as they could.

*What activities were you involved in while at CCSF?*

I joined a couple of clubs. I don’t remember exactly… I wasn’t active in the clubs, but I took part (English tutor) in the writing lab. I took advantage of all of the resources in the writing lab. I made good connections with my fellow tutors and tutees. It was just fun meeting people from all different backgrounds, which is a big thing going for City College.

*What were your thoughts about transferring while at CCSF?*

I didn’t know that was one of the areas (that I wanted to explore). I was leaning toward business or computer science – so I took a little bit of both and decided that I liked business more. It was all the math for computer science that I did not want to take – so I went the business route – accounting. City College – they have a lot of introductory courses – and the class you teach – the general business course is a good opener for business. Yes, we met in general business class.

*How do CCSF professors compare to the ones you had at Cal Poly?*

I honestly feel like the City College professors care a lot more about you individually. The classes are smaller at City College, so I think the professors will remember you more. They know who is there to learn and who is there just to sit there. I definitely feel like I had more of a connection with my professors at City College. With classes of 30-40 vs. 50-100, you can’t get individual time with professors at a four year school. In every class, there are the few who get the connection with the professor, but it is not…..

All that pressure at Lowell – and that’s the one thing about Lowell that I didn’t like. Because it is such a high caliber school and you are with students who are above average – you have to kill yourself to be better than everyone else. Too much focus on academics without time to grow other parts of yourself. That was one of the downfalls about Lowell. Which is why I am glad I went to City College – because at City College, it really opened my eyes to how much more there is – and all of the different types of people that I went to school with – different ages and backgrounds – and you can make a connection with everyone.

*What was your Cal Poly experience like?*

I didn’t get into Berkeley – even with a 4.0. I am really bad at writing those personal statements. I tried for Haas. It was good. I got into a bunch of local schools, but wanted to get further away from home. Cal Poly had a good business program. It was a different environment. It was hard at first – especially coming from San Francisco. The majority of SLO (at the time) was all Caucasian and it was singular. It was good exposure to the rest of the world and other things out there. It was still fun and still a good experience and good getting out of my comfort zone, learning how to be more independent outside of home. Growing up in a really sheltered Asian family and getting away was good.

*Most memorable CCSF experience*

That’s a tough one. I have had so many. Believe it or not, I think it is the time that I spent in the writing lab both tutoring and you know, just meeting all the new people and all of the other people, chatting it up with my tutees and everyone was just so welcoming and it was just … I don’t really know how to say it, but it was just a good place to be. It really felt like a community there.

It was crazy because we were all tutors down there, but we were all so different. We had old people, young people, people from different ethnicities – yet, we were all doing the same thing. Whenever I would go down there, it was like a community.

*What would you say about where you are today – five years into your career – and if you can look back, and do you ever think about the impact, if any of your community college experience on what you are today as part of your trajectory?*

I definitely feel that CCSF had more of an impact than Cal Poly. There, it felt a lot more like just the classes and learning the material. City College – their sense of community made me realize that that’s also what I am looking for in a career. Because when I was researching different companies and career paths, at Cal Poly, a lot of them push BIG FOUR (accounting firms). They basically say that if you don’t do Big Four, you’re set up to fail. It strikes the fear in you and you say, “If I don’t get into Big Four, what will I do?” I realize the environment and the feel of these firms, they were a lot more – I don’t want to say cut throat, but everyone is thinking about themselves and how they can move up for themselves, which I think is great for some people who want to do that, but I was looking more for a firm where I really liked the people who I worked with in terms of colleagues and bosses – and I feel like that’s what I found here at OUM -- which is why I decided on a smaller firm as opposed to the Big Four.

I haven’t completely decided yet if I’ll stay in public accounting. I told myself that I would leave public accounting once I am not learning anymore – or if I come to a standstill or wake up one day and hate going to work. I love the people here, the work is interesting – you know, it’s not always like the most fascinating work in the world, but I run into different problems that I haven’t before, and it makes it interesting. I am keeping my options open, and I am pretty happy with where I am right now. No, I have thought about that (going to a Big Four) a couple of times, they do pay better at the higher levels, but when you’re starting out, it’s all about the same. Some people I know who have gone to Big Four are doing well and some are not.

*What could CCSF do better?*

I don’t think it was anything… my challenges were my personal challenges of getting myself out there and coming out of my shell, but there wasn’t anything in particular about City College that I thought was a roadblock to me. I see several clubs that you’re doing now, and I see you posting them on social media, and that was started the year I was there. I would have loved to get involved in that. What you have right now reminds me a lot of… at Cal Poly when they bring in alumni at different firms to speak about the real world. I guess that would be the one thing (CCSF could do better).

There was a lot of stigma (from Lowell) of people going to CCSF. When my classmates from Lowell found out I was going there… I knew more people going to four year schools than City College. I loved my time there. I always tell people that I loved my time there. I heard there are a bunch of new buildings there too. I saw the new MUB building being built.

*What would you have done differently in terms of your education?*

I would have tried to have gotten involved in more club activities (there weren’t as many clubs as there are today). There wasn’t a lot to do for AGS when I was there. I mean clubs just in terms of meeting new people and again, being part of that community of people. I focused a lot on my academics and I wish I had maybe taken it a bit slower. Maybe five years (in total) instead of four.

That’s the only thing I would change. Just getting out there more.

*Did you ever see a counselor? Or did you just figure it out on your own?*

I think the only time I saw a counselor was to talk about transferring. They were really helpful, but for the most part I figured it out on my own -- and took my stuff to them to make sure that I didn’t screw anything up (chuckle).

*Do you feel like the accounting courses you took at CCSF gave you a basis or opened your eyes to the profession where you said, “yes,” this is it*?

I had Barbara Cutten, blonde, short hair. I really like her though. She was a tough teacher, but she is very…. She is also another one I think of where if (both you and her) they see you trying and putting in the effort, they will too.

*Any other thoughts about CCSF?*

I like City College.Anytime I see CCSF in the news, I have to read the article. Because you know, there was a time where they almost lost their accreditation.