

Chelsea Kolz

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Of course Patrick Henry students enroll willing to sweat for their tuition. Many wonder how they'll have the money to make it through, though, ("it's dang expensive," says my mother) and hope for some gifts along the way. The recipients of the Alumni Association Tuition Scholarship are glad for the gift it has been.

Scholarship entrants submit an essay. In 2009 the prompt read, "Given the uncertainty about our political, economic and cultural future, in what way do you want to impact the culture?" Hannah Mitchell, winner in 2009, told me, "I love our school. 'Just, plan your whole life and unpack our educational philosophy in five pages. GO.'"

Mitchell said, "Writing the essay was an extremely beneficial exercise. One afternoon, I dropped everything else I had screaming down my neck, and just thought about life. I decided heck, I'll just say everything I think I want to do, and then go try it all."

In her essay Mitchell said she wanted to work for a mainstream press. She took a journalism course and interned with Our State magazine in North Carolina, which invited her back to freelance, said Mitchell, "because there's something in my writing they want on their pages." She added, "I believe it is the excellence of my God that they see: Psalm 90:17 says, 'confirm for us the work of our hands.' He does."

Mitchell was a sophomore when she won the scholarship; now she is a graduate "living with people (she) has a heart for and writing about them," She is applying for positions at mainstream university press, "working retail for one of America's greatest fashion designers, Ralph Lauren," and hoping to pursue a degree in social work and remain in Appalachia, where she says her heart is.

Like Mitchell, who is a dear friend of mine and spent many late nights comforting my underclassman soul in the cubicles, my calling at Patrick Henry College and in the world is artistic rather than political or legal, and will entail ceaseless writing. I won the Alumni Scholarship in the spring of 2011, also as a sophomore. The gift could hardly have come at a better time. It was the angstiest season I have ever experienced (I was thwarted in love, flirting with a contest in the New York Times and also failing geometry). My parents were overjoyed. I called my mother to tell her I had won two thousand dollars. "Call your father," she said. "He'll be so happy. The refrigerator died today."

I am now a junior at PHC, an RA and soon to intern both with the best-selling author Ann Voskamp and WORLD magazine. And I am so glad to be in this place, receiving the most nourishing education I have ever known.

Take the gratitude of two writer-women, who cannot thank anybody enough for their education - not our parents, who live on cabbage and wear barrels so that we can be here, and not alumni who give scholarships.