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PIONEER ALUMNI

Pioneer Research Brings Ria Tomar A Big Step Closer to Making A 'Dream' Come True at Emory

November 2017, Issue 5

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Pioneer Academics Magazine, Issue 5

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www.pioneeracademics.com

Pioneer Academics, 37 Mandrake Rd., Monroe Township, NJ 08831, USA

Phone: 1-855-572-8863 (Toll Free, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. ET)

info@pioneeracademics.com

PIONEER NEWS

Pioneer Academics Transcends Distance to Bring Distinguished Speaker to Global Student Conference



Dr. Jan Dizard is a hunting enthusiast and author of books and articles about hunting, guns and attitudes toward nature and the outdoors.

On July 10-14, 2017, 30 inquisitive students and teachers from top high schools around the world gathered at Shenzhen Middle School in China for the sixth annual International Young Pioneer Union Summit,* a student-organized, five-day conference of high school students from as far away as Sweden. Dr. Jan E. Dizard, Charles Hamilton Houston Professor in American Culture, Emeritus, and Co-Chair of Environmental Studies, at Amherst College, Amherst, MA, USA, was the keynote speaker. Pioneer Associate Director Andrew Tonsing served as Master of Ceremonies. The theme of the conference was “Environmental Challenges to Globalization.”

Dr. Dizard is an environmental sociologist. In his address, “From the Local to the Global and Back to the Local: Environmental Challenges in the 21st Century,” he sketched the history of the human species and its impact on the environment over the past several thousand years, and explained how high schoolers can help meet the challenges of environmental protection.

Pioneer Academics (www.pioneeracademics.com), brought Professor Dizard to the conference using Pioneer Academics’ global education and technology experience. It was the first time ever that the conference’s keynote speaker spoke remotely in real time from half-a-world away. Dr. Dizard presented for 90 minutes from his office at Amherst College, outside Boston, Massachusetts, while Tonsing addressed the audience in China from his office near San Francisco, California.

“Pioneer Academics was excited to have the opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to providing unique educational experiences to high school students from around the world regardless of geography or background,” Tonsing said.

*** Pioneer Academics, PBC, is not affiliated in any way with the International Young Pioneer Union or movement. The mutual use of the word “pioneer” is purely coincidental.**



Top Private US High Schools Start Campaign to Kill Traditional Transcripts and Change College Admissions

That's the headline of a blog posted by Scott Jaschik, editor of Inside Higher Ed, posted May 10, 2017. The blog has received over 170 comments pro and con. Pioneer Academics thinks it's an important issue worthy of further discussion. Here is an abstract of Jaschik's post.

More than 100 elite private high schools aim to replace traditional transcripts with competency-based, nonstandardized documents – without grades. Eventually they plan to expand the change to public high schools and transform how high school students are evaluated.

The group goes by Mastery Transcript Consortium, and the product it hopes to create is the mastery transcript. In place of courses and grades, it would describe levels of proficiency in various areas, such as analytical and creative thinking, digital and quantitative literacy, and habits of mind, among others. Levels of mastery would also be indicated. Each credit earned would be backed up by examples of student work, such as essays, lab reports, etc.

Widespread adoption of competency-based education – in which the demonstration of mastery matters and seat time does not – will change the way high schoolers are taught, according to the group.

Mastery is closely related to the competency idea much

discussed today in higher education. A student could earn mastery after completing a program of study with a teacher or simply by showing mastery gained independently. The consortium believes that once the new mastery transcripts take hold, colleges will value them over traditional materials they currently receive.

Legislation would be needed to allow public high school and universities to alter grading and admissions standards. The Edward E. Ford Foundation has pledged \$2 million to be matched by fundraising by the consortium.

College counselor Liz-Paz-Rumore at Carondolet High School in Concord, California, across the bay from San Francisco, says acceptance will come over time. "Mastery assessment enables learning to be more conceptual and develops students' desire and capacity to stretch intellectually. The caliber of students this new system produces will ultimately pave the way for wide acceptance."

Pioneer Academics believes in all types of discussion that foster better education for young people. We encourage you to read the article in full and make up your own mind.

Source URL: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/05/10/top-private-high-schools-start-campaign-kill-traditional-transcripts-and-change?width=775&height=500&iframe=true>



Pioneer Research Brings Ria Tomar A Big Step Closer to Making A ‘Dream’ Come True at Emory

When you ask a 7-year-old girl what she wants to be when she grows up, her answer most likely might be something typical, like movie star, nurse, school teacher, ballerina or even policewoman or EMT. That is why the story of Ria Tomar of Fremont, Calif. is so atypical.

Now 17 and finishing her first week of class at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, one of the nation’s leading research universities, Ria is living out her dream that began a decade ago when she decided she wanted to be a neurosurgeon. She has been preparing earnestly to reach her lofty goal with help from the Pioneer Research Program.

Little Girl’s Dream

“Ever since I was a little girl, I wanted to go into medicine,” she said. “By the time I was a junior at Mission San Jose High School in Fremont and became a member of the school’s Neuroscience Club, I gained a further appreciation and deeper understanding for the very complex field.”

Her infatuation with the brain was nurtured early on in her life. It all began with frequent trips to her native India with her parents, both software engineers in Silicon Valley. She was able to see first-hand the stigma surrounding mental health there. “After studying the brain more, I fell in love with this enigmatic organ and started to ask more difficult questions. I realized that the body is a complex and efficient machine that does not take extra steps to complete a task. In other words, everything has a purpose. That is when I questioned the purpose of dreaming.

“Whether it is about how we consolidate memory during deep sleep or how exercise helps patients diagnosed with schizophrenia control their disease, the brain is like a treasure chest just waiting to be unlocked.”



"The human mind is the only space where we can truly, dream, learn and grow," says Ria Tomar.

Finding the Right Program

To begin the process of unlocking the "treasure chest" and absorbing all the knowledge she would need to apply for college before her senior year was over, Ria's research led to Pioneer as an ideal summer program. Pioneer also offers a spring program.

"I was definitely looking for a hands-on program where I would be gaining knowledge about medicine, about neuroscience, about the brain from people who know a lot more than I do. When I first heard about Pioneer, I thought it was way out of my reach. It seemed too good to be true – that I would be working with a college professor who would take time out to talk to me individually. Now when I look back at that whole experience I think, Wow! I didn't expect my interest in neuroscience to increase that much."

As the totally online, real-time Pioneer program got underway in the summer of 2016, Ria was assigned a professor of neuroscience from Georgetown University and selected for her research subject "The Decision-Making Brain."

"In the beginning, we learned about sensation and perception and other neuroscience topics and spent three or four hours each week in classes, reading chapters from our books, taking notes and soaking up as much information as possible. Initially my classes, called a "cohort", consisted of three or four other

students and we discussed our subject and we were taught some interesting things about neuroscience to prepare us for our work on the research papers. That was followed up by individual, one-on-one sessions with our professor-mentor who guided us through the entire research process.

"But once I started work on my 30page research paper, "The Neural and Cognitive Basis of Dreaming," it involved many more hours."

But, as Ria will tell you, the Pioneer Research Program offers several intangible benefits that she will carry with her for the rest of her life. "With this program, you have to take the

initiative, you have to ask questions. You learn how to communicate with your professor and with professional people. You also must learn time management. In my case, I was teaching dance three or four days a week while taking the Pioneer course."

Published Research

At the end of the almost two-month summer program, her paper was formally published in the 2016 edition of the Pioneer Research Journal, an international collection of original undergraduate-level research. It prompted Ria to say: "Just the experience to work with a professor and publish your own paper at 17 is mind-blowing. Looking at it from a totally high school perspective, you're working with somebody (your assigned professor) who you are going to have a relationship with for the rest of your life. He/she is going to write letters of recommendation for you, they're going to know you and help you grow as a person. When you go to college, that's just more than you can ask for. You already have a leg up on everybody else. That is what motivated me to pursue the entire Pioneer experience.

"Pioneer not only increases your confidence when you are applying for college, it increases your confidence in your daily life."

Ria received an A+ for her Pioneer research effort, and we expect she'll be standing tall atop her academic and professional ladder for many years to come.

PIONEER OPEN DIALOGUE SERIES (PODS)

Since 2015, Pioneer established the Pioneer Open Dialogue Seminar (PODS) initiative for the wider community to access and engage scholars, and to allow inspiration to flow both ways between experts and students.

May 2015

You don't say it, but you mean it



Host: Professor Reyback, Hamilton College

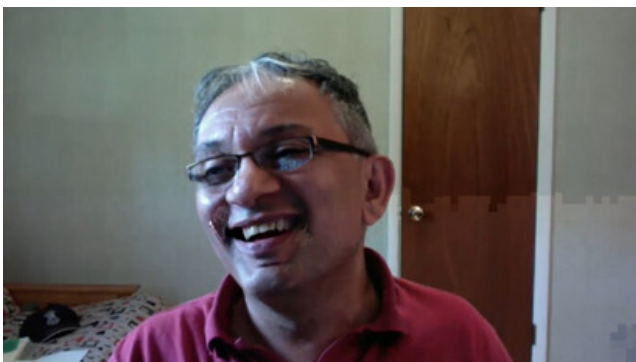
Non-verbal communication is transmission of meaning by a medium other than speech or writing. You may be thinking of facial expression, eye contact, or gestures. But nonverbal communication encompasses more than these. One form of messaging that tends to be overlooked is space. Yes, how people moderate the distance between themselves and others can give us clues about what they are “saying”.

It is not just executives, journalists or presidents who should be trained to express and interpret non-verbal communication. For all of us, to be able to read non-verbal communication means we master another language. It opens up another door for us to people and to the world.



July 2015

Commodities, Lifestyles and You



Host: Professor Agha, University of Pennsylvania

The things people buy and display through their activities convey something about their social characteristics and lifestyles. How do things acquire the capacity to convey lifestyle images? What role does advertising play in this process? The seminar takes a historical perspective on “lifestyle” as a cultural construct and discusses contemporary examples of how products are linked to lifestyles and confer social characteristics on their users.

July 2016

Choosing universities and preparing applications



Host: Peter Hauet, founding member of the International ACAC

Peter Hauet, who has more than 40 years of experience, shared crucial information on choosing schools and applying for universities.

- * If it is not connected to what you want to study, you should at least show that the research skills and other experiences are going to be important to you when you go to college. This will help you stand out in a positive way.
- * The important thing is finding the right fit – academic, social, physical and financial.
- * The biggest secret of getting into college is very simple; it is getting good grades in the most challenging classes for you.

December 2016

What It Takes To Be A Student Entrepreneur

Host: Professor Zoller, Kenan-Flagler Business School at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Dr. Zoller spoke online with 20 students from six regions: Rwanda, India, China, Hong Kong, the United States, and Malaysia. He spoke about what it takes to be an entrepreneur and how students can develop the skills necessary to become one.

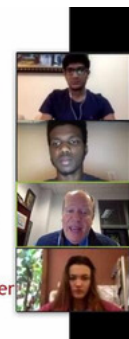
Dr. Zoller led a discussion of words like “opportunity,” “risk,” “luck,” and “failure” in the context of entrepreneurship. He also lingered on the word “success,” saying everyone has a different understanding of it, but that “unless you define it, you don’t know how to acquire it.” He advised students to think about the special contribution they wanted to make in their lifetimes and the change they’d like to see in the world, and then define that as success for themselves.



Definition: en-tre-pre-neur

- (n) Etymology: French, from *entreprendre* to undertake
- ❖ One who organizes, manages and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise

Merriam-Webster



April 2017

Justice and the Arab Spring: A Guide to the Arab Street



Host: Professor Rosen, Princeton University

Dr. Rosen began the discussion by introducing students to individuals who typified elements of Arab culture found in North Africa and throughout the Middle East. By understanding Arab culture, Dr. Rosen believes, we can begin to understand the Arab Spring and learn important lessons from it.

Students from US, India, Canada, Doha Qatar, South Africa, Turkey, Taiwan, Mainland China reacted enthusiastically to the Pioneer Open Discussion Series.

DID YOU KNOW?



Arabic numerals (the ones used in English) were not invented by the Arabs at all - they were actually invented by Indian mathematicians.



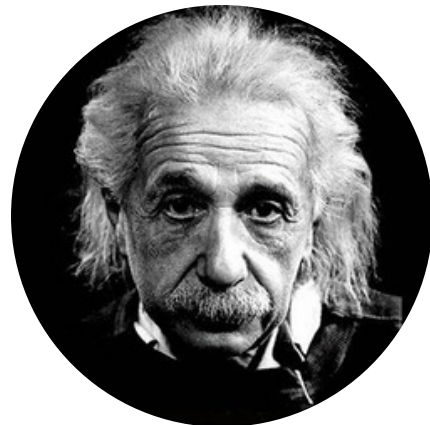
Ronald Reagan was a lifeguard during high school and saved 77 people's lives.



Officially, the longest war in history was between the Netherlands and the Isles of Scilly, which lasted from 1651 to 1986. There were no casualties.



Before the mid-19th century, dentures were commonly made with teeth pulled from the mouths of dead soldiers.



Albert Einstein was offered the role of Israel's second president in 1952, but declined.



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