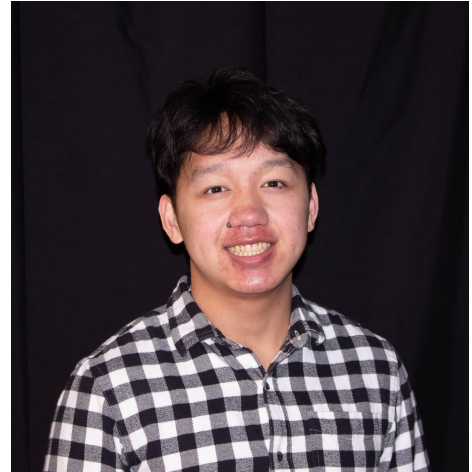


Soua Yang joined Upward Bound (UB) during his 9<sup>th</sup> grade year because he wanted to go to college, and the summer program looked fun. Although the stipend was a bonus, it was seeing pictures of the summer activities that really caught his attention. Soua also wanted to meet new people and gain experience living in a college residence hall. Overall, he wanted to be a part of the warm and welcoming community.



When asked how UB helped to prepare him for college, Soua mentioned taking advantage of the ACT practice tests and the Summer Bridge Program. The ACT practice tests and weekly ACT practice problems instilled good test-taking strategies that resulted in him getting a good ACT score. Even though Soua had already taken college-level classes through CIS and PSEO, he mentioned that his participation in the Summer Bridge Program, including supplemental instruction, positively impacted his study habits. Furthermore, assistance with applying for college was probably the biggest help he received from UB. As a first-generation college student, Soua didn't have any older siblings to assist him with the college process, so he appreciated the help he received from UB. When asked what Soua's most memorable event from UB was, he said it was the last bus ride home. He remembers sitting in the window seat, looking at all of the staff waving goodbye to the students, "It was a bittersweet moment for all of the staff and seniors. UB accomplished its goal of getting the students to college, but that also meant that the seniors were no longer a part of UB."

Soua is currently a senior at St. Olaf College majoring in computer science. This semester, he is taking a senior capstone class for his major, a data science class, doing research, and taking two gym courses. Soua enjoys the data science course the most because the class is about creating models to make predictions. For instance, a problem that Soua is currently solving is creating a model/algorithm to identify hand-written numbers from images. Soua said the class is very interesting, and the professor makes the course more enjoyable with his teaching methods and philosophy for learning.

According to Soua, the best part about college is being able to pursue his passions with like-minded people. One of the aspects of college which Soua finds advantageous is that he doesn't have to struggle alone. Not only that, but it's motivating when he sees other students working hard in their classes. As Soua wraps up his senior year, he is not only taking classes but he's also applying for jobs. A typical day for Soua consists of attending class and doing homework. Once Soua is done with his homework or studying, he starts applying for jobs or preparing for job interviews. Most of Soua's time is spent working, but he enjoys it, and he also goes out with friends once or twice a week.

Soua's short-term goal is to find a software engineering job after graduation. Preferably, he wants a job that works on physical devices or tools for manufacturing. Soua's long-term goal is to start his own technology company. Currently, he doesn't know what type of company, but he

wants to start one that solves problems with technology. For instance, Soua wants to improve the education system with technology because he wants kids to enjoy learning while going to school.

Soua is the oldest child in his family, so he feels a responsibility to succeed. He also thinks it would be nice to help his parents become financially stable and ensure his younger siblings recognize their own potential. Soua's advice for UB students who are unsure about going to college is, "give college a go." He mentioned debating a lot about going to college during his junior and senior years of high school. In fact, during his freshman year of college, Soua considered dropping out. Fortunately, Soua stuck through it and will be graduating this spring with no regrets. Soua has enjoyed his time in college; he learned a lot academically and personally and met some really great people. Going to college gave Soua a lot of opportunities and experiences that he doesn't think he would've been able to gain outside of college.

Soua mentioned that there are a lot of people who say college is useless, but Soua thinks that college is like going to the gym, "You can pay your monthly membership to the gym, but if you don't use it to the fullest, you wouldn't gain anything from the gym. Going to college offers many opportunities to grow, but if you don't explore or take these opportunities, then you might not grow as much as you hope."

UB would like to thank Soua for sharing his experience and updating us about his college life and wishes him all the best as he finishes his final semester of college!