Jonathan Kenney 06/06/18

3rd Year-in-Review

This third year has been pivotal. Reading my 2nd year-in-review, I saw a person who was lost and really at rock bottom. Last summer one of the lowest points in my life, but this year, while still a great challenge, has been filled with healthy development and personal growth to the point that now may be one of the highest points of my life so far. This has come with insights into myself I never even considered before, new friendships, opportunities to explore like LeaderShape, and all-in-all an entirely new outlook the future and what I want.

The autumn semester was not too much better than the summer. I struggled through my classes due to the inner-turmoil I was dealing with; it felt like a mixture of disappointment and guilt. On the one hand, I was disappointed and depressed in my dissatisfaction with my career path, and on the other I was guilty as I have been lucky by the opportunities I have been given and felt like I was squandering it. While this may sound incredibly dark to the outsider looking in, it was necessary. In talking to my mother, she likened my feelings to “rock bottom” as they call it in AA. This motivated me to remove the internal barriers that were keeping me from growth. Now I was finally in a mode to grow but was still left without a method – this is when LeaderShape came and rescued me.

It seems cliché in the UHP to rave about LeaderShape, but it is a one I will gladly reinforce. I had heard about from many people, and Jason recommended it to me when I discussed feeling lost. I was a bit apprehensive as flashbacks to middle school church camp ensued, but I decided to give it a shot and was not disappointed. There is a whole reflection on my portfolio so I will not go into all the details, but the experience really allowed me to refocus and begin the process of healing from the disappointment and actually start actuating towards what would come next.

The spring semester was no cake walk, in fact it was my hardest semester to date. Regardless, I was committed. I began to introspect in ways that were not judgmental and take actions to work towards a life that I love. This led to many investigations from different engineering paths to new careers and even new hobbies. I have since taken up bartending, considered doing startups, started a research experience, and focused on relationships. These may seem unrelated, but they all stem from this attitude of exploration and “de-filtered” growth. I say “de-filtered” because I like to think it is still structured and intentional – in fact it these attributes are essential to its success – but it is without the judgment and preconceptions that have crippled me in the past. One central and binding factor has been my vulnerability when discussing things with people like my mother. I am comfortable acting like I have everything together, but this was not healthy when fighting my depression. Being able to process with my (wise and wonderful) mother has sent me to places I never thought I would go before!

The next steps on this journey through the quarter-life crisis are not clear, and that is okay. I will continue to explore what it is that makes me happy and satisfied. Within UHP, I am hoping to serve as an Ambassador on the admissions team and give back to LeaderShape through being an on-site coordinator. Additionally, my friend Elizabeth and I are looking at doing an experience for exploring and documenting “What Cincy Has To Offer” and in general I am expanding my vision beyond the box that I felt placed in. I know what comes next will require a lot from me, probably more than ever before. However, I feel more-so than ever before that I want to face the coming challenges and feel excited about what is next.