



STUDENT HIGHLIGHT: SAMUEL LANGI

EAST HIGH SCHOOL CLEMENTE COURSE

We recently caught up with East High Clemente Alumni, Samuel Langi, who is currently a Sophomore at the University of Utah Honors College. Samuel is in the business program, focusing on accounting and management. Upon graduation, he hopes to either become a CPA or continue his college career in law school. Samuel was kind enough to recall his days as a Clemente student and offer some wonderful advice and insight to future Clemente students. Below is our interview.

What inspired you to take the Clemente Course?

I learned about Clemente through Bonnie O'Brien [East High Site Liaison]. She spoke to my history class about Clemente, and a group of friends and I decided it sounded interesting, so we signed up.

Now that it has been a couple of years since you took Clemente, what stands out to you the most about the experience?

There are a bunch of things. Some of them are small like the song "Video Killed the Radio Star." Listening to this song and learning how to take notes about it was one of the first things we did. When I think back, I realize that I really learned a lot about how to take notes in Clemente. The professors emphasized how to review texts and think about texts (which included paintings, songs, and even social media posts) at a conceptual level and not just each word or symbol. It was not just about writing each word. It was about identifying concepts and noticing certain phrases. We learned how to pull essential concepts from texts. I use those skills a lot now in the Honors College at the University of Utah. I feel that the honors classes and professors have a very similar approach.

Do you feel like Clemente put you on a path toward college or at least reinforced a path you were already on?

Professor Rohrer [U of U Honors College] taught the first quarter on Philosophy and I feel that her style really taught me what a college class is like. It was really similar to what my college classes are like now.



Going into Clemente, I knew I wanted to go college and I knew that was the next step for me. But my mom didn't go to college and so that made it really hard to think about navigating the process. Clemente, and especially Dr. Rohrer, made it easy for me to see what college would be like. It showed me that I need to be independent and hold myself accountable. Just like college, there was not a teacher or a PowerSchool notification to remind me to read while I was in Clemente. I quickly made the connection between doing the reading and then being able to have a better conversation and learn more. And that is exactly what college is like. So yeah, I already knew college was for me, and this showed me more about what I could expect.

I know that other kids in the class that I took it with were not considering college and did not see it [college] as a next step. I hope they had a similar experience to mine. I think they did because some of them ended up going to college after all.

Did any part of Clemente inspire your sense of agency and voice? Did it change the way you think about what it means to be citizen?

I think the podcast assignment we did in the fourth quarter was incredible. This was the last unit of the year, and it was all about the constitution. In some ways it felt like first real college assignment I ever had. The professors gave us the assignment and the rubric, but that was all, it was cool because it was not like other high school classes that told you exactly how to do the assignment, step by step. Instead [with the podcast] so much of what we did and how we did it was up to us to figure out. We were responsible for it. It was fun. I feel like I could produce better work now, but still it was memorable.

Exploring the constitution and producing a podcast [linking a topic of choice directly to the constitution] inspired me to not be idle. It's easy to see all the bad things that happen in the world and be discouraged. But you can make change. That's what I learned in Clemente. You can sit down with the people that make decisions. You can have a one on one with the mayor, you just have to be persistent, you just have to sign up. We learned you can speak with school resource officer [interviewing the school officer was part of Sam's podcast that focused on police presence in school], they are not some hidden power. Decision makers are accessible, but you have to try. It is still something I am really passionate about. Clemente opened my eyes and made me want to be active, to be involved, to not just accept bad things.

What would you tell a student preparing to go to college or to start a year of Clemente?

First, if you have questions, just bug the people that have the answers. Don't be afraid to be annoying. I was super annoying and always bugging people for answers when I was trying to figure out how to go to college. They don't make it easy. Especially in the financial aid world.

Second, I would say is that schoolwork is hard and setting yourself up to do the work well is hard and I feel that no one talks about that. It's all about you, it's on you. No one is going to bug you. You have to be proactive. Building good habits is so important. Finding ways to keep track of time, using a calendar, and other little things like that are a life saver. Also, don't be embarrassed or ashamed to ask the school counselor in the high school or university. They are there to help you.

Third, you have to challenge yourself. I know a lot of kids who wished they did honors college, wished they had done things like Clemente. Being scared is a good thing and it is good to lean into that. Accept challenge. The worse thing that can happen is you end up having to trim your schedule back, or you learn something about yourself that sets you up do better in the future.

Is there anything related to Clemente, college, or being a first-generation student, you would like to share?

Clemente was really cool and a great opportunity for me. It was really eye-opening. It's good to start challenging yourself while you're still in high school, where the stakes are a bit lower. For all would-be first-generation college students, I want to say it is possible and to dream big. And even for those who are not first generation, dream big. Apply for internships, seek new experiences, go big. Don't regret missing opportunities, take big steps. The only negative thing I remember was a professor who asked for our opinion but was really just looking for a certain answer. I thought this made things a bit tough at times. But I guess you get some of that in college, so in a weird way it still prepared for what could be ahead in college.