To my younger self, discredit yourself no further – and certainly do not let that academic advisor from your Associate’s degree discredit you. Little did she know that your “pipe dream” of getting into the University of Washington was just a reality yet seen. To those of my future: I am not done improving. My skills and my perseverance have done nothing but improve thus far and I am excited to share my journey as well as the current path I walk. This essay is a flourish of my work, my achievements, my improvements, and why not only am I better than ever – I am poised to sling forward, and I will do just that.

Since I was young, my drive to make a difference in the lives of those around me has been an active consideration. My original intent going out of high school was to be a police officer. I wanted to be involved in my community, help those around me, protect those who cannot protect their selves, and make a positive difference in the lives of those around me. My father had a similar feeling at my age, so he told me, and also started down the career path of a police officer. For reasons, he did not join. When I told him of my plan to join the academy right out of high school, he pleaded with me to do what he did not and go to college – even just for my associate’s. He was, and is, an excellent father to me so I heeded his plea begrudgingly and worked for a year to afford a car, to afford to travel to a better job, to afford to start my time with Bellevue College. At first, I took a handful of random classes pertaining to criminal justice to follow my desired career path of a police officer. However, as I took more classes and became better educated, I learnt some valuable lessons. I learnt first that I cannot juggle a 50-hour work week, full time school, and a romantic relationship; none of which are still standing (lesson learnt). Moreover, I learnt that being a police officer is *not* the most effective way to create positive change in my local and greater communities. This epiphany came with time, challenges, and reflection. Reflection is a critical piece for personal, academic, and professional advancement. The time spent at Bellevue college reflecting on my previous ideas was a personal advancement. A piece I felt proud of and the research of which had shifted my focus and beliefs is *Public and Private: Broken Promises and Misleading Information* written Spring of 2017. A research paper done to write on the privatized prison system in the United States – both a history of it and why it is poor. I did not include why it might be morally wrong as I wrote in the abstract and wrote instead on why it is poor in “cost, recidivism, and mistreatment of both employees and inmates”. This piece was a critical advancement in my self-discovery as it re-wrote my beliefs on the effectiveness and righteousness of the American justice system ([1](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pTLQWdgECa0Xa47uBlwtGzcOgIEAE3_1/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109982952859758672163&rtpof=true&sd=true)).

After reflecting on my work and research at Bellevue College, my goals shifted. I no longer wanted to graduate with my Associate’s and become a police officer; I instead wanted to further my education to make genuine and impactful change. A primary school of focus was the University of Washington – a well-decorated and relevant school for what I wanted to do. The academic advisor I met with noted that with my grades at the time (~2.5), my goal of getting into UW was a mere pipe dream unless I did phenomenally well in every class until I finished my degree. With passion being my fuel, I worked strenuously to improve my grades and improve myself. My grades still were not quite at UW’s “minimum” level, but I applied anyways to enter the school of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences, majoring in Law, Economics, and Public Policy. To my surprise, I got accepted and while I celebrated – I knew my journey was far from over. About the same time as my acceptance, was the beginning of a “two-week quarantine” for a new virus, COVID-19. Two weeks turned into much longer and further political and civil unrest shook everyone in my life, including myself. I protested for what was right, I stayed up discussing with my family and friends *why* I was doing what I was doing. At one point, I was front line pushing against police officers and their shields, dodging pepper spray. In that moment I reflected to myself that once upon I time, I wanted nothing more than to be that man in uniform holding a shield, fighting for what was “right”. I do not regret the decisions I have made up to this point as the skills that I find most valuable to myself have been improved upon in my time since my old dream past. My critical and interdisciplinary analysis skills and my data interpretation and communication skills have skyrocketed.

A personal favorite piece of work I have written was in my paper *Health Maintenance Organizations and The Damages Caused During the COVID-19 Pandemic* that I wrote in Spring of 2021 under Dr. Walsh in a Special Topics class. This paper is representative of my significant increase of interdisciplinary analysis skill, as well as my professional writing skills. The paper talks about the privatized healthcare system that the United States subscribes to and the damages it has caused – focusing on its damages through the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper wrote on medical care, medical expenses, unemployment rates, former and current policies related to healthcare and the uninsured, as well as economics to argue that, “The privatization of healthcare through HMOs is neither the socially nor economically efficient form of healthcare coverage for American residents”. I offer evidence in my paper to back up this claim and even offer a proposed solution in page 7. ([2](https://docs.google.com/document/d/12ht6yMT_vbGi4hEQHdVyK7B6e_-CgXlS/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109982952859758672163&rtpof=true&sd=true))

Further evidence of the advancement of my professional skills is my work is a fun piece I wrote of a fictional legal briefing, *Abercrombie v. Fitch*, which was written also in Spring of 2021 under Dr. Walsh in the same Special Topics class. This fictional briefing not only strengthened my legal writing skills, but also advanced my data analysis and interpretation skills. Data is not always graphs and numbers, but facts and quantities. I utilized related (actual) legal briefings as precedent in deciding the outcomes of a multitude of issues brought up in the case. One instance I used such is in relation to unintended consequences after a crime. With “M. Abercrombie” having contacted a disease after being assaulted with a dirty guitar string, “The court looks to U.S. case of *Vosburg v. Putney* 80 Wis. 523, 50 N.W. 403, 1891 wherein a child assaulted a teenager by kicking them in the shin …” or in the case of parody suits in this fictional case between “Fitch” and “Abercrombie”, I used a relevant quote by SCOTUS Judge Alex Kozinski in a legal briefing on *Mattel v. MCA Records* (9th Circuit., 2002) having said, “The parties are advised to chill” ([3](https://docs.google.com/document/d/197-c41o0zMxrjSPD-m_I8PV12rGNiuSk/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109982952859758672163&rtpof=true&sd=true)).

The last piece of evidence of my data analysis skillset is my paper, *Balance of Payments Analysis of Costa Rica, 2007-2012*, which was written Autumn of 2020 under Professor Danby in my International Political Economy class. This paper wrote on Costa Rica’s finances through the global economic slowdown of 2008 and how those in Costa Rica managed to offset a deficit. Utilizing data from the WTO and others, I analyzed the raw quantitative data and cross-referenced other articles originating from Costa Rica in Spanish that wrote on their expansionary period, their businesses, and where their money was coming from and going. I created my own explanatory graphs, found at the bottom of my paper, and had analyzed and communicated the raw data into a more digestible form. The paper details a complicated process of how the government and its peoples stayed afloat during a very strenuous economic turnover. ([4](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uzSXEn8dnNIPKjZM33YMMCnkbkc8U6I1/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=109982952859758672163&rtpof=true&sd=true))

My skills have done nothing but improve and I am not yet finished. This work currently read was an opportunity for me to further reflect upon my former goals, my former beliefs, and the former quality of academic and professional skills I held. I hold true that I have not stagnated, and I do not believe I am near a plateau yet – which is fine by me, I am not yet fatigued. My hope in reading this is that the reader, who might be a recruiter, friend, or potential employer, may see that my skillset - in the time between my Bellevue College papers and my more recent University of Washington papers - has improved significantly. Unless something were to change, I will be finished with my Law, Economics, and Public Policy major in March and I look forward to the challenges and changes I will be presented with and hopefully a positive part of.