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# College Supplemental Essay

I come from the land of the silver medal—a world of second place. Since a young age, I have been living in the shadow of my older sister. Due to her many accomplishments, it hasn't always been easy to live up to the expectations of others. Despite my best efforts, my sister consistently outperformed me. In our grade school talent show, she played the lead melody while I was stuck playing the harmony in our violin duet. In the eighth grade, I ran for student council president, just as she had, but unlike her, I ended up losing to a more popular candidate. No matter how long and intently I combed through the textbook, I could not top her AP U.S. History grade. When my sister got accepted into a prestigious university, family and friends asked me whether I could get into a college of that caliber. That was the peak. I would think to myself, Wow! I'm so proud of my sister, but why did she have to set the bar so high?

Although falling into second place has been a recurring theme growing up, when it came to math, I significantly outshone my sister. I excelled at math, specifically fast computation and algebra. One day, my sister came home from school and was struggling with a geometry problem for twenty minutes. I looked at the problem and said, "Can't you just multiply these variables and cancel them out?" Her eyes bugged out in shock. Whenever she would drag me to shop for clothes, I could always tell her the sale prices of something on sale, what the better deal was, and how much we'd be paying after tax. She was always amazed that I could mentally compute so much so quickly.

Math gave me bragging rights. But beyond that, I've also used my knack for math to assist teachers with class problems, and to help my peers understand challenging math concepts and exercises. As I became increasingly aware of my mathematical aptitude, so, too, grew my enjoyment of it. That I could surpass my sister was just the icing on the cake. Encouraged by earlier successes, I honed my math skills.

Through the process of elimination my "world of second place" brought me to math, highlighting the area where I routinely come in first. Now, I aspire to rigorously study mathematics at a world-class university, so that I may eventually begin my career as an actuary. The most important thing I've learned from living in my sister's shadow is that we each have different talents and characteristics; we can either take the short-sighted approach and view these differences as invitations to superficial competition, or we can use them as springboards to improve ourselves and channel our passions into achieving our individual goals. Being second best is not so bad after all, and is made all the more palatable when the first place spot is occupied by my sister, the person who has been most instrumental in my development, and someone whom I love and respect. I might come in second place from time to time, but that only fuels my desire to improve, and will never deter me from trying.

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