



Dear Alumni, Family, and Friends,

On behalf of the Cornell Fencing Team, I would like to thank you for your generous support on Giving Day! We are so grateful for all of your gifts and our Giving Day expectations were truly exceeded! My name is Maddy Limb and I am currently a sophomore in the saber squad. I am a pre-med majoring in Classics. As a sophomore, it is hard to believe that I am nearing the halfway point of my college experience.

I think the phrase I most commonly hear from my teammates and coaches regarding my fencing is, "Slow down!" I have a bad habit of rushing in my fencing. The second I hear, "Ready? Fence!" I blast right off the strip. No matter how many times my coaches and teammates have reminded me to slow down, I have always struggled to slow down my steps when I fence. This semester, I put more effort into slowing down my fencing and I have noticed a difference. The difference was quite stark. Suddenly I started doing actions I had never attempted before and I started noticing the actions of my opponents more closely. I started to wonder why there was such a distinct change in my fencing. I soon realized that it had to do with some momentous life events that have happened in the past year.

It all started at our fencing meet at Northwestern. It was early February, right before the pandemic began, and I was extremely excited to compete. When I woke up on the first day, my eyes were completely swollen. There was such immense pressure in my eyes, it felt like they were going to explode; I had woken up with an extremely severe case of pink eye. As a result, I had to miss the first day of fencing. However, on the second day, I was determined to fence. Even though I was about 80% blind, I fenced about three bouts until my team convinced me to stop. After returning home to Ithaca, I hoped to get back on the strip the following week. Little did I know that it would be nearly a month before returning. Unfortunately, I was not able to fence much in March due to the pandemic.

Fast-forwarding to sophomore year, I decided to apply to the Mount Sinai Icahn School of Medicine Flexmed Program. This program grants early admission to medical school for sophomores and exempts them from intense pre-med requirements such as physics or even taking the MCAT. I was determined to get into this highly selective program, but unfortunately, I was rejected. I was very upset about this rejection since it seemed like my plans for my future had to be reworked. However, this rejection has not discouraged me from applying to medical school in the future.

These major events all have something in common. They indicate times in my college life that I like to call "un-catalysts." Catalysts are substances that increase the rate of a process, so an un-catalyst would be classified as something that slows down a process. Not only do I tend to rush in my fencing, but I also rush into a lot of things academically and personally. Without thinking

about the consequences of completing something quickly, I speed to accomplish a goal. The un-catalyst of pink eye was to help me appreciate the relationships I have built within my teammates and coaches. They have truly been with me through the thick and thin. I took for granted the fun times we spent traveling and practicing together. The month-long break helped me realize how much I loved fencing at Cornell and gave me a newfound enthusiasm for the team. My medical school rejection un-catalyst taught me how to not settle for the easy way out. Up until the rejection, I had a very detailed, specific plan for my future. In my eyes it was perfect. I was going to have my "dream career" and "dream life." However, this rejection forced me to halt these big plans I had made for myself. The day I received the news, I became a person with an uncertain, unknown future. Initially, it scared me. I then realized that it would perhaps allow me to enjoy the process of applying regularly to medical school and enjoy the little things that I might encounter during this process. I decided to take a gap year in between undergrad and med school, which I hope will help me to "slow-down."

In the end, there is a correlation between the slowing down of my fencing pace and my personal life. I hope in the next two years of college I can truly slow down and not rush both in my fencing and in life. I hope that at the end of college I am able to fence without rushing and look back at all the small victories and failures I experienced that would normally be disregarded if I had not slowed down. I hope to enjoy the process of being a student-athlete in the remainder of my time at Cornell. I would like to thank my teammates for always being there for me, especially during my pink eye problems. I am always encouraged by them to be a better fencer, student, and person. I would also like to thank my coaches Ariana and Susan for always wanting the best for our team. I want to commend their passion and dedication to our team.

Thank you so much for reading my story. I hope that we may be able to reunite in the near future, but until then, I hope you stay safe for the time being wherever you might be. Go Big Red!

Sincerely,  
Maddy Limb