

Student Biographies

Matthew Lee Brown, class of 2005

Matthew Lee Brown, 18, will be a freshman this year at the University of Vermont (UVM) in Burlington, where he plans to major in biology.

“Right now, I’m thinking about becoming a biology teacher,” he said. “But whatever I become, it will have something to do with the environment.”

Brown may be his name, but his philosophy is most definitely and wholeheartedly green. “It’s a passion that I have,” he said.

Matt graduated from the Vermont Commons School, a small private school in South Burlington, where he pursued an academic curriculum and received the school’s first Naturalist Certification. He lives in nearby Richmond with his mother, a University of Vermont professor, and 15-year-old sister.

Over the past two summers he has worked as a counselor at a local camp, teaching youngsters about organic farming and how to care for animals great and small, as well as going hiking, canoeing, and working on craft projects.

During his last year of high school, Matt worked with his biology teacher, Peter Goff, to design and teach a course for seventh through twelfth graders that revolved around Living Machines, a type of water purification system. Waste water is poured into an input cell and then pumped through a series of cells that contain various microbes. “It’s a natural method of water purification,” Matt said. “The microbes that cannot feed on the pollutants die off, but the microbes that do feed on the waste thrive. In the end, you have clean water.”

Several commercial companies, including Vermont ice cream maker Ben & Jerry’s, have used similar systems, Matt says. He learned of the Living Machine concept when he heard that one of the school’s board members, Dr. John Todd, had invented the system.

Matt was selected as a Vermont Scholar Leader this past June, in recognition of his outstanding scholastic, leadership, and personal qualities.

“That was an honor,” he said. “However, what really convinced me to attend UVM was being invited to join their Honor’s College, which includes research opportunities and a residential learning program. I’m not sure what the selection process is, but I know only 100 students were invited to join the Honor’s College this year, so it was quite exciting.”

He took the SAT® in his junior year and stated that he thought the addition of a writing section to the SAT this year seemed to be a good idea. “You’re not limited to answering multiple-choice questions,” he noted. “You can express yourself in an individual way.”

Eugene Byuen, class of 2006

This fall, Eugene Byuen, 17, will take four Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) courses because he has found that they work: “AP really goes into depth and makes you think differently,” he said. “It takes adjusting to, but it’s rewarding in the end.”

“I was attracted to AP Calculus BC and English Language and Composition because of the teachers’ reputations,” Eugene said. “My peers said they were really fun. But in the classes it’s more than just the teachers; it’s how they show you how to get into the material. It’s more about what you get out of the course.”

Eugene’s love of writing has inspired him to enter essay competitions. He also writes poetry and was a staff writer on *The Highlander*, the school newspaper, during his junior year. Eugene has not overlooked his aptitude for numbers, however. As a senior, he will be the publication’s business manager.

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Eugene keeps busy on his high school's campus, splitting his time as Co-Captain of the Junior Varsity Tennis team and as a mentor for the school's Math Club. "I love mentoring because there is no reward quite like teaching and helping people to succeed," he said.

When not in school Eugene is a messenger at Overlook Hospital, a large institution in nearby Summit where his work involves relaying blood from a blood bank to patients, and escorting discharged patients to their waiting families or friends.

He is the elder son of Ben and Helen Byuen, who emigrated from South Korea before he was born. Eugene's brother, Thomas, is a member of the incoming junior class at Governor Livingston.

Although Eugene is looking forward to his last year in high school, his eye, like most seniors', is set on college. He has already visited Cornell, Stanford, and Georgetown. Why those three? "All have strong law programs," Eugene said, explaining that he hopes to become a patent lawyer after majoring in biology. It seemed the right kind of ambition for someone equally gifted in words and numbers.

Deborah Francois, class of 2006

Deborah Francois, 17, will be a senior at Brooklyn Technical High School in Brooklyn, New York, this fall. However, she is already thinking ahead to the fall of 2006 and eventually to the dream job she hopes to have at the United Nations.

Her family has given Deborah a head start in international relations. Born in Seoul, South Korea, Deborah moved to Brooklyn when her father, a Haitian diplomat, was transferred to the United Nations. She was 3 years old. Deborah's father and mother met in Seoul. Although Deborah is not yet an American citizen, she says she already feels like she is: "This is definitely the culture I feel most

comfortable with. I am fascinated by American history, government, and politics."

Deborah works hard to make her dream come true. She graduated from Mark Twain Intermediate School for the Gifted and Talented and went on to Brooklyn Tech, which has a competitive admissions exam. In high school, Deborah enrolled in a rigorous curriculum. She took three Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) courses in her junior year—AP United States History, French Language, and Psychology—and plans to take four more this year. Her schedule will include United States Government and Politics, Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, and English Language and Composition. Deborah took the SAT® in her junior year and will take the SAT with writing this fall, glad for the chance to demonstrate her writing skill.

Outside the classroom, Deborah has actively participated in her high school's Leadership Club and in Student Government. She is a member of the Mentoring Committee, the National Honor Society, and the Drama Club. For the past two summers, she has volunteered at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Brooklyn. "I am fascinated by my conversations with the veterans. I am so impressed with their knowledge of American history and their sense of national pride," Deborah says.

Not all of Deborah's challenges have been academic. Growing up biracial and bicultural has not always been easy, and losing her dad right before she started high school was very difficult. Deborah relies on her family and the support and guidance of her AP teachers who inspire her to succeed. Teachers "care for students not just when they are teaching, but at all times," she says.

Since Deborah is not yet a U.S. citizen, she cannot depend on her academic success to help her earn scholarships or obtain financial aid. For now, her family in Seoul plans to help fund her school expenses. "Education is extremely important to my family and to me. I am confident that, with their support and my commitment to my future, many doors will open."

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Right now, Deborah is considering applying to Harvard, Yale, and Georgetown because of their strong programs in political science and international law. She wants to make the most of her talents for the benefit of society. “My dream job would be to become a United Nations diplomat, just like my father.”

Alejandro Gac-Artigas, class of 2005

Alejandro Gac-Artigas, 16, was brought up around books and plays so it is not surprising that he is a writer. What is surprising is that he had just turned 12 when he published his first book, *Yo, Alejandro: My /Our Story; Mi/Nuestra historia*.

Although he has spent most of his life in suburban Fair Haven, New Jersey, Alejandro also has lived in the Netherlands, where he was born; Puerto Rico, his mother’s birthplace; and Georgia, where his mother, a professor, taught. Alejandro feels lucky to be bilingual and bicultural and says he is comfortable moving between cultures. His travels have helped him understand what it is to be culturally different from those around him.

Alejandro’s parents taught him to work hard to get what he wants—“especially being who I am.” Asked what that means, Alejandro says there is a lot of “adversity in this country.” Because of it, “I have to go above and beyond to achieve what I want and really prove that I deserve what I get.”

A quick review clearly shows that Alejandro has accomplished quite a lot and deserves what he has earned: Alejandro took 17 honors and 8 Advanced Placement Program® courses in high school, including AP European History, English Literature and Composition, United States History, Chemistry,

Calculus AB, Biology, Physics, and French. He was named an AP Scholar with honors, a finalist of the National Merit Scholarship Program, and a Scholar of the National Hispanic Recognition Program. He received the Hispanic Heritage Youth Award Silver Medal for Journalism and was recognized as the Edward J. Bloustein Distinguished Scholar in the State of New Jersey. Princeton University honored him with the Princeton Prize in Race Relations 2004 for his work to promote understanding among people of different races.

Because of *Yo, Alejandro*, he has been asked to speak at schools and conferences about discrimination. Alejandro says he “mostly” talks about the book and answers questions. But he uses the experience to encourage minority and underprivileged students to achieve academic success in high school and to go to college.

Alejandro also participated in clubs and sports in high school. He was a member of the school chapter of Amnesty International, the Diversity Committee, the Model United Nations Club, the Math and Science League Teams, and a member of the school track team. Alejandro cofounded the School Debate Club. He has been a member of the Monmouth Ocean Soccer Association traveling soccer team for the last seven years.

As part of the college application process, Alejandro took the SAT® in his sophomore year and again as a junior. He also took SAT Subject Tests™ in Writing, French, Biology-M, and Math 1C. The easiest part of the application process, he says, was the essay. “The hardest part was figuring out where to go to school. Where I want to be next year.” In the end, he chose Harvard because “I went there to visit and I thought I fit in. I really liked how it felt.”

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Addison “Addie” Kemp, class of 2005

Addie Kemp, 18, graduated from Holy Name Central Catholic Junior and Senior High School in Worcester, Massachusetts, and will attend Mount Holyoke College in the fall. She enjoyed taking both calculus and physics in high school. “I like to work with numbers,” she explains. “Everything is really concrete and logical. I can see why things happen, the way the world works.” Addie also excelled in subjects on the other side of the spectrum—English because she enjoys reading, and history “because I think it’s interesting to see what causes major events to take place.”

In her senior year, Addie took on an independent study in environmental politics. Her AP® history teacher agreed to supervise her. “I got to structure my own class and choose the books I wanted to read. I had always been interested in nature. I love to be outside,” she says. Addie has worked for the last four summers at the Massachusetts Audubon Sanctuary as a naturalist-in-training, a counselor for younger students at the sanctuary’s day camp. “Halfway through this course, in reading books by Rachel Carson, Bill McKibben, and Lester Brown, I realized that you could actually have a career doing something like this. It was something I was really passionate about, and I didn’t worry about not wanting to do my homework.”

Addie is thinking about majoring in environmental studies or biology at Mount Holyoke and may also pursue a double major with philosophy or political science. She became interested in going to a women’s college after attending a general information session at Wellesley College. Though she says she was originally resistant to the idea of a women’s college, she was drawn to the sense of community, the academic rigor, and the mood of the women’s

colleges she visited. Addie competed on her school’s swim team for five years and practiced synchronized swimming at her local YMCA. She plans to take advantage of the Five College Cooperative and compete for Smith College on its synchronized swimming team. While in high school, she worked as a lifeguard and volunteered at the YMCA in a program called “Swimming Is for Everyone,” where she worked with children with cognitive and physical disabilities. The volunteers worked one-on-one with the children. “For some kids, the goal was to just get them in the water, a chance for them to do something different and develop a level of comfort,” she says. “Some of the kids actually learned how to swim. I had a lot fun doing that the last three years.”

Addie took the SAT® in the spring of her junior year. Though she was happy with her score, she was advised by her school counselor to take the test a second time, and her scores improved. She studied by herself, using a study guide that every sophomore at her school was required to read. Addie lives in Holden, Massachusetts, with her parents.