

Zavier Cheek

Year 10

Wasatch High School

Utah

What Drives Me

I get out of bed every morning and give my absolute 100% every day for one reason; I want to learn. For as long as I can remember, I have been thoroughly fascinated by the intricacy and beauty of the world we live in. I would (and still do) wonder endlessly about questions regarding the everyday world. Questions that seemed obvious and trivial but still intrigued my six-year-old brain.

This curiosity was only fueled when I discovered my love of aviation, specifically astronautics. The fact that on top of this already indescribably complex world, there exists, and entire universe of other indescribably complex stars and planets combined with the fact that people figured out a way to explore it inspired me to want to become an astronaut.

I remember watching footages of the crew of Apollo 11-17 step foot on the Moon. Even though those footages were recorded decades before I was even born, it was still awe-inspiring, nonetheless. I saw the Saturn V and Space shuttle at the Kennedy Space Center, and I simply could not comprehend that fact that people *built* those. The fact that people fearlessly piloted multi-hundred-foot tall stacks of explosives and delicate electronics into the single harshest environment possible, careening around the globe at nearly five miles-per-second further

inspired me. It's a little embarrassing telling people I want to become an astronaut, as to some, it may seem childish. After all, the odds are impossibly low; The 2013 class had more than 6000 applicants, and only 8 were chosen. The 2017 class had over 18,000 applicants, and only 11 individuals were chosen. Even still, it's been my dream, and I want to see through to it. I have lost probably hundreds of hours of sleep in total, just thinking about what it would be like to be in space, weightless, endlessly falling around the beautiful globe we call home.

I'm already taking the steps to become an astronaut. I'm looking at becoming a licensed scuba diver, and getting a pilot's license. I have a steady 4.0, taking several AP and Honors classes, and I'm planning on majoring or getting a PhD in aerospace or mechanical engineering. I am fully prepared to make sacrifices for this dream, and I accept that it may never come true. I have backup options in mind, but I won't let them distract me from my goal. Overall, my dream of becoming an astronaut comes from two major factors: my love of exploration and my love of discovery, both of which can be attributed to my curiosity. There is no way I can truly describe or put into words my fascination of this universe, and my desire to explore and learn more about it. I thoroughly and fully understand that the road ahead of me is will not be an easy one, but the idea that one day, there is a tiny chance that I will be able to go where no one else has gone before excites me - it motivates me to do better every day, and it drives me to succeed.