

Lillian Maxwell

Never in my life have I known greatness to be a gift. A thing served on a golden platter, placed in the mouth as a silver spoon. For sixteen years my understanding has been that a person of distinction is not born, they are crafted. They work their way through life with a willingness to strive, and above all else, learn. Emberle Pearson, an engineer specializing in workforce development, offers three pieces of advice to achieve prowess. One, keep pushing. Two, separate yourself. Three, work hard. To be specific, perseverance, nonconformity, and determination.

“That biggest, scariest thing is probably there because you need to push yourself towards that thing,” Pearson asserts in an interview on the Naval Horizons website. “Nothing great is built in a comfort zone.” Although a daunting statement for any young person wishing to pursue a STEM career, having been hit with the knowledge that they’ll have to face what frightens them the most to succeed, Pearson also divulges she never did it alone; “I worked really hard but there’s a lot of people whose shoulders I stood on.” After having been encouraged by others to persevere for so long, she is now able to do the same for other young engineers, thrilled to “have that opportunity to give back” as a workforce developer. Pearson advises young STEM students through the beginnings of their careers much like “guidance counselor”. She pushes them to achieve what they never believed they could, while also ensuring they have all the proper training to enter the workforce. In my own life and future career as an architect, I will always seek to push myself to my limits. To endure past the impossible and into a reality I designed for myself.

Nonconformity means more to Pearson than standing out or uniqueness, to her it also represents a drive to look past what people around you expect and to instead do what you value most. “You’re working, you’re working really hard, you’ve got studies, you’ve got exams while your friends are out, they’re having a lot of fun right. There’s a lot of things I had to sit out of because I was preparing, I was studying,” she elucidates, recounting her experiences as a young STEM student. Pearson understands that despite the difference in time, this occurrence is something many students still struggle with, “That’s part of something a lot of engineers, our stem majors, can relate to in college,” in a campus culture where most students would rather spend time going out and having fun with friends over prepping for a test, it can become difficult for one to unapologetically chase knowledge in the form of deadlines, essays, and assignments. The fear of losing friends or a social life altogether is deeply set in students who simply do not have much time to kill with peers. Ignoring this fear and buckling down on homework is courageous, and shows a great deal of willingness to stand out. I am unashamed of what I want and who I am, I know I am often unconventional and protrude from those around me. But, as Pearson says, nonconformity is part of the process of triumph, and in a world where no person is the same it is impossible for a person to never be unique.

I believe the final tip Pearson offers is the most crucial for students, it is the idea that “nothing great is built in a comfort zone”. A person must work hard to achieve what they want, and there is no room for comfort in determination. After years of resolve, Pearson states, “I’ve gotten to a place where I put the hard work in upfront,” so even after a lifetime in boldness, she still remains vigorous. I take pride in everything I do and work hard to make it the best I can.