



# Robert Luo 2020

From the time of his arrival to the Hilltop in 2016, Robert Luo has been a bright light who has been recognized by our Headmaster as “an immensely gifted boy – wickedly industrious and ever curious.” Since the fall of that year, this student achieved an overall average of A, placing him on our High Honors list for the past eleven consecutive trimesters, and he is surely headed for the twelfth. Never one to shy away from challenge, Robert’s normal course load has included seven classes and occasionally even eight. At last count, he had taken six AP classes and seven Honors classes. In addition to his love of the sciences, a special note may be made of his mastery of languages, which now include high-level Spanish IV Honors and AP English Literature as well as his native Mandarin.

The following are just a few of the comments submitted for Robert at the end of spring trimester:

Mr. Strauss, teacher of AP Biology, writes of his gratitude in having such a student in his class - one who invites intellectual discussion and shows tireless effort in all aspects of his work.

Mr. Colling, AP Chemistry teacher, tells of a wise and mature student who mentors younger boys and sets the very fine example of work ethic and attentiveness. He adds, “Simply put, Robert is a first-class student and individual.”

Mr. Weisman, Physics teacher, writes about a final project led by Robert that exceeded his teacher’s expectations in every way. It was thorough, detailed and included academic risk.”

Ms. Phillip, AP Spanish teacher as well as Robert’s advisor has this to say: “Robert is wise beyond his years and incredibly mature. He shows eagerness to learn about the world, history, languages – he simply loves to learn and gives 100% to everything he does.”

Mrs. Metcalf, Honors English teacher, says: “His writing is concise and consumed with higher-level thinking. “What I enjoy most,” she states, “is that although Robert is a serious student, he does not take himself too seriously. He is quick to joke and quick to be kind.”

Mr. Smith, AP English teacher, tells of other talents. Robert as actor/director during the Shakespeare project, gave an outstanding delivery of Hamlet’s soliloquy “To be or not to be.”

Mr. McEachern, Music teacher, worked closely with Robert, particularly in collaboration with the Jazz Ensemble. In their four years of working together, Mr. McEachern guided this student, whose talent, passion and respect for others have enriched the entire music program.” He will miss having Robert here.

The many talents and the hard work shown by Robert have led to his receiving a record number of awards in a variety of disciplines. To date, he has received the following:

Course Awards for Academic Excellence in AP Biology, U.S. History, English Honors, and, twice, Spanish Honors;

The Book Award for Jazz Ensemble, three times;

The Williams College Book Award, one of the major prizes given to fifth-formers by vote of the faculty;

And for Excellence in Sports, both the Basketball Coach’s Award and the Varsity Cross Country Coach’s Award.

Beyond the Hilltop, Robert has also worked on internships and volunteer projects. Last year he completed a research program on the subject of “cell signaling” and its application in the study of certain cancers. Leading the study was a Brown University Professor of Biochemistry who later wrote, “Robert was a top student who outperformed college students enrolled in the class. He showed remarkable ability to process and understand the material.” In other summers, there have also been trips to Ecuador to help build schools for the children there and an expedition to Sichuan, China, to study the biology of panda bears.

It is impossible to separate the character seen in the classroom and that of the young man entering the larger world. The same concentration, determination and care for others are recognized in all of Robert’s endeavors. His volunteer activities on campus have included going to senior centers to give piano concerts, being a donor during blood drives, joining the Crop Walk for Hunger, being a Peer Leader and a Dorm Prefect, guiding tours and helping new students settle into the new experience of boarding school.

Mr. Severo, Robert’s coach and college advisor, recently shared this story of recent events: “It was spring break on campus and Robert was team leader and point person for twenty-some students who were forced to spend their spring break on campus due to complications arising from the coronavirus. Many students were panic-stricken when they learned that flights were canceled and the School was moving them to a new dormitory. Robert was the one the faculty relied upon to keep a level head and provide guidance and emotional support for all the others, regardless of their age or country of origin. He stepped up when Salisbury needed him the most.”

But the story does not end here, as it took weeks and weeks for Robert himself to get home. He endured uncertainty when he was held over repeatedly. Even when he finally reached China, he was quarantined in a hotel room for two weeks and understood his responsibility for the greater good. It was during his isolation that Robert entered my Philosophy & Religion class on Zoom. Never missing an assignment, he has forwarded elegant papers relating his sensitivity to Life. I, too, am grateful for having had this student.

And now, though we miss all the people in the chapel, we might consider how Broad and Grand it is to sense Celebration of Goodness that comes from this community. May we draw infinite hope and gladness in the knowing of students such as these. Thank you, Robert, for all you have contributed to our School. I welcome you to the Cum Laude Society.

Lisa Sheble  
20 May, 2020