

As the school-elected House Prefect, I have learned that it is essential to balance both the virtues of accountability, drive and integrity and the virtues of courage, humility and humanity, and to walk a fine line between being a leader and a friend. Our House System is not simply a part of UTS, it is the lifeblood of the school. Your house becomes your identity, your family, and your support system as you navigate the twists and turns of high school.

One way in which I serve my school community is by organizing school-wide events. Whether it is planning track meets or ensuring that all 700 students arrive on Toronto Island safely, I have learned to be organized and accountable. This fall, the Prefects organized a two-day school trip to welcome 100 grade seven students into their respective houses. We spent hours planning the agenda, brainstorming possible orientation ideas, and prepping materials so that everything would run smoothly. Although it was tiring, it was rewarding to witness the results of our hard work, fostering an environment where new relationships blossomed among grade seven and grade twelve students.

Prefects represent not only their houses but also embody school values. I am incredibly grateful for having been chosen as a student leader, but it was daunting to think about the fact that my every move was being judged by both teachers and students. At first, I tried to be what I thought was the “perfect” leader: attempting to please the school administration and carefully curating everything I said and did. While persistence and accountability were essential to my success, my tunnel vision sacrificed my being genuine. It was not until I was a mentor at an overnight camp for grade eight students that I realized being a good leader is also about being your true self. Bonding with the students made me realize that being mechanistic and “perfect” was less important than building trusting relationships. To be an effective advocate, it was vitally important that I be their friend. While my overnight trip was over six months ago, the connections I made with students outside my grade and the lessons I learned about what it means to be a leader have changed how I approach new roles: humility and humanity.

Acting as Prefect has taught me the importance of balancing both emotional and intellectual virtues. Whether it is working with the school administration or organizing school-wide events, I have learned that striking the right balance between these seemingly opposing virtues will enable me to apply a more holistic approach to life.