

Alumni Profiles

Playing to His Strengths

What **Khalil Daya '96** learned at LC helped build a foundation for his successful business career.

By Chris Lenois

To hear Khalil Daya '96 describe how LC was helpful to him as he went on to earn his bachelor's and MBA degrees, it almost sounds like he discovered the cheat code for a video game.

"After leaving LC, my strength was as a writer. So I was able to navigate toward classes where grades were based more on take-home essays. If you took an exam, you never knew what they were going to ask, and also you have a limited amount of time to think through an answer. So my test scores in a class would typically be lower than grades on a paper where I could really take time to reflect and process."

Of course, it was not a life hack that took Khalil on a path from academic probation to Dean's List. His success was the result of the work he put into understanding his strengths and weaknesses as a learner while studying at LC, which has led to a 15-year career working in the consumer healthcare and pharmaceutical industries.

Before coming to LC, Khalil was not the type of student who sought out writing assignments. After being diagnosed with dyslexia and inattentive ADHD in the 8th grade, he met weekly with a tutor to help him get through his high school years in Connecticut. After accumulating a disappointing GPA in his first semester in college, that same tutor told Khalil to take a look at Landmark College.

Khalil admits to feeling skeptical about whether LC would work for him. He enrolled in the Summer Program for Visiting College Students as a way of testing the waters. By program's end, he was ready to stay on for his associate degree, saying "The full immersion during the summer gave me confidence that Landmark College offered me the best, and likely the last, chance at finally succeeding as a student."

In addition to learning the mechanics and analytical skills for writing college-level essays, Khalil said LC gave him the awareness of his strengths and weaknesses as a student, as well as how to advocate for himself. All three of these played a role in his GPA rising to 3.5 in the final term of his bachelor's program at Washington University in St. Louis.

"Landmark College's ability to transform a student should not be underestimated if the student comes in with the right attitude, sets realistic expectations for themselves, and works diligently at overcoming their specific learning challenges, which can be frustrating at times," Khalil says.



Photo by Tricia Stanley

Khalil Daya '96 returned to campus last spring to talk to LC students about career options.

The support from LC professors extended beyond the classroom, according to Khalil, who fondly remembers Professor Ken Gobbo taking students off-campus to watch fireworks and Professor Mike Hutcheson getting behind the wheel of a College van to drive students on a weekend excursion to a nearby museum.

Now going on 23 years since his graduation, Khalil is in the position of being a mentor to this generation of LC students. He was back on campus during the Spring 2019 semester at the invitation of the Alumni Relations office

to share his experiences. "My objective was to give current students renewed enthusiasm and motivation about what can be achieved," says Khalil. "I was also hoping I could outline general steps and missteps I took early in my career, which I felt could help them navigate their goals faster." (Khalil's father, Moaiz, served on the LC Board of Trustees from 2005-12.)

When asked if there's one thing LC students should keep in mind as they move along their path through LC and beyond, Khalil says, "Don't let the day-to-day distractions—whether that's a poor grade or negative feedback—affect your goals. Everyone at Landmark is there to support you. You're essentially rebuilding yourself as a student. It's going to take a lot of work and you're going to get stretched. So stay focused on that end goal and don't waver." ↩