Dear reader,

My name is Simon and a few years ago, I was entering my first year just like you! I want to tell you about a book called "Flowers for Algernon" as well as impart some advice. Flowers for Algernon revolves around a character whose intelligence is increased via a medical procedure but begins to deteriorate later on. It has had a profound influence on my academic career.

I think the protagonist Charlie is very relatable—at first he is greatly challenged by learning and believes his problems may be solved by increasing his intelligence. Unfortunately, he faces even more adversity after this procedure. This can also describe the pursuit of academic perfection, where one strives to improve but has difficulty achieving satisfaction even as they approach perfection. This book has helped me with contextualizing my academic challenges as well as accepting some pride for my accomplishments. The pursuit of academic perfection leads to stress, as it is always easier to go from 70\% to 80\% but not as easy to go from 90\%-100\%.

I would recommend that you get involved in extracurricular activities that interest you this year and learn time management. This will help you greatly in terms of becoming an excellent well-rounded student. Actively go out of your way to help others when possible as it can increase your understanding of a subject as well as help you make new friends.

Finally, please remember that a grade is just a number. Some medical, professional and graduate schools are conflating it with your self-worth. A low grade does not mean that you do not necessarily understand the material, that you are not a well-rounded student or that you are unworthy of these programs. A grade can be a culmination of many uncontrollable factors—feeling ill, needing to work to support oneself or simply just a bad day.

I wish you luck in your endeavors,

Simon Spicik