

Aiming high and looking out for one another

As we celebrate the 30th birthday of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme at Salem, we asked Angela Gall and Suvd Tumenjargal, two former IB students that were leading in every sense, how they transitioned into a challenging academic community and what remains of the 'Salem Spirit'.

How do your Salem experiences live on at university or college?

Angela: In comparison to high school, one finds oneself in a much bigger community and a much bigger context. This means the freedom to explore many more opportunities, whether it is in the academic field, in a career context, or extracurricular activities. However, with all these choices, one needs to learn how to balance between these areas of life, which can be challenging. I personally feel that Salem and the IB prepared me very well in terms of study-life balance. Nevertheless, at university level, you have less of a framework. Whereas Salem and the IB establish requirements for activities and services, universities only provide you with a rough overview of the academic requirements. Another difference for me personally is that although you have similar or even more social involvement opportunities at universities, I sometimes feel that my impact is a bit smaller or more local, since I am part of a bigger community now.

“SALEM AND THE IB HAVE TAUGHT US TO BE LIFELONG LEARNERS

Suvd: There are certainly many parallels between my experiences at Salem and Yale. Much like at Salem, there are a lot of opportunities for active involvement and empirical learning beyond academics, ranging from research projects to internships that allow for a practical application of our knowledge. The residential college system here at Yale also mirrors the boarding school experience, bringing together students of all backgrounds and fostering a similar environment where diversity is not only accepted, but celebrated. We continue taking on responsibility for ourselves and

others, which is a hallmark of the Salem experience. As Salem and the IB have taught us to be lifelong learners, university has become an extension of this philosophy, offering an even broader landscape to cultivate our curiosity and personal growth.

How can you impact your current environment?

Angela: In terms of academics, there are limits to what a humble Bachelor student can do – we are still learning and have not specialized as far as to have real impact yet, especially when it comes to environmental issues at a global level. But we can sense that future. The Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich (ETH) is so eminent that research published in different fields will influence political decision-making, for example. The problems we are presented with in the lectures at ETH are very complex, involving different perspectives and stakeholders. They are so called 'wicked' problems that have no easily defined solutions. Therefore, it is always difficult to consider yourself an expert in such a field. However, this also highlights the importance of generating new ideas. Therefore, there are also many student projects and research groups with students only at Bachelor and/or Master level. The one student group I am involved in is currently looking at carbon removal technologies and working on environmental consulting cases.

In terms of extracurricular activities, I have found myself shifting from being active in school politics – which is mainly what I did in Salem and still possible at university level – to making university life more vibrant for my peers. This includes organizing dance events and parties. I find the events to be a good balance to the otherwise rigorous academic schedule.

Suvd: One of Salem's three pedagogical building blocks is the obligatory commitment to engage in social service, which enabled me to put my beliefs into practice and get involved with services

Foto: IB Coordination



The final round of applause for the 2020 TEDx, organized by Angela and Suvd assembling all team members on stage, with roses for the speakers.

such as Round Square. I continue to embrace this spirit at Yale, where I am involved with an organization that strives to eradicate period poverty in New Haven and occasionally volunteer at the community kitchen. In addition to service, I try to contribute to my environment by advancing new knowledge and confirm existing knowledge by engaging in academic research, particularly in the field of economics. I also try to share and spread knowledge I have gained through conferences and organizing events that foster dialogue on global issues. I am committed to these actions, big or small, because they collectively contribute to the endeavour of building a better world for all.

“ WHAT SALEM AND THE IB HAVE TAUGHT ME IS TO MAKE AN IMPACT

What 'Salem-qualities' remain constant, and what needs to be moulded to the context? How do new stimuli grow over 'Salem-conditioning'?

Angela: An important 'Salem-quality' that I learnt from my experience is to aim high and believe that "you are more than you think". Compared to many of my peers at university, I find that I have quite high standards for myself, not only regarding academics, but also regarding other social responsibilities. I have also noticed a trend that many fellow IB students share this same mindset.

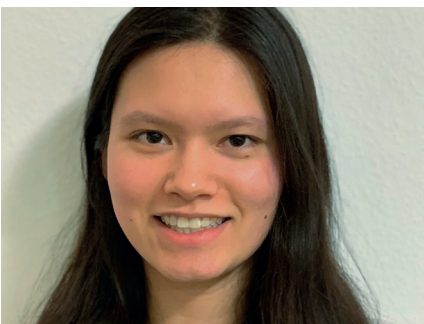
How I interpret "you are more than you think" is also that as an individual, you have many roles. You are a student, you are a friend, you are part of the local community, but also a citizen in the global community. What Salem and the IB have taught me

is to remember the various roles you have, thrive to make an impact in these different roles and become a more well-rounded personality.

At university level, especially studying an interdisciplinary field like environmental sciences, I am reminded of the importance to develop my skills in diverse areas. This does not only mean advancing in particular academic fields, but also developing socially and becoming a better communicator, better team player, better leader, etc. More importantly, I am reminded that I am a global citizen, and I can and should make a global impact.

Suvd: The 'Salem-quality' of looking out for one another is one trait that I took with me to college. I place a lot of emphasis on building genuine relationships and creating an environment where every individual could feel seen and valued. In a sense, I feel an intrinsic sense of responsibility towards those around me. The commitment to building a well-rounded character through empirical learning also stands firm. Currently, as I navigate through various potential career paths and engage in new activities beyond academics, I see the manifestation of this 'Salem-quality' – to constantly challenge personal limits with enthusiasm and an open mind. However, the transition to a new environment has revealed a need to improve upon certain qualities. For instance, the guidance that once readily came from mentors must now be internalized, as one becomes more independent and proactive in charting one's own path. Yet, although I am continuously refined by exposures to different environments, my appreciation for knowledge and respect for educators remain the same. These qualities continue to be a cornerstone of my identity, guiding my interactions and personal growth trajectory.

Constanze Schummer, IB-Coordinator



Angela Gall, IB Diploma 2021

Angela Gall attended Salem from 2017 to 2021 and completed her International Baccalaureate (IB) with 41 points. She is now studying for a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Sciences at Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich and is pursuing a master's degree.

Suvd Tumenjargal attended Salem from 2015 to 2020 and completed her IB with 43 points. After a gap year, she enrolled at Yale, where she is currently studying Economics.

Both Suvd and Angela were elected IB Speaker by their peers, bringing professionalism, empathy and organization to the task. Alongside this, and many other achievements, for which they both received the Große Auszeichnung, there is another area of overlap which saw them work together on a specific project: Suvd introduced Salem TEDx in 2019/2020, with Angela in the role as curator. Angela then took TEDx into its second incarnation in 2021.



Suvd Tumenjargal, IB Diploma 2020