Brian Marcial's life story illustrates the power of persistence. After excelling as a student in middle school and 9th grade, Brian struggled through much of grades 10 and 11, failing several classes and putting his graduation in jeopardy. Reflecting on this experience, Brian says that his perfectionist tendencies often got in the way of his success as a student. “When my work didn’t come out the way I wanted, I would throw it away and start over. That often put me behind.”

It didn’t help that at home, Brian’s family was in crisis. They could no longer afford the monthly payments on their home, and in the spring of Brian’s junior year, their house was foreclosed upon. This was a wake-up call for Brian. “After my family lost our house in 11th grade, that really opened my eyes that I needed to work harder, not just for myself but for my family.”

In 12th grade, Brian passed all of his classes and earned a spot at San Francisco State University. “I really wanted to go to a UC, but my grades weren’t good enough. My original plan was to transfer from SF State after two years, but I ended up falling in love
with the campus and the culture at SF State,” Brian remarked.

At San Francisco State, Brian said that he was nervous at first but soon discovered that Lighthouse had prepared him well for college. “I remember one of my college advisors telling me that I seemed to adjust to college really easily,” he said. Above all else, Brian credits Lighthouse with helping him develop self-confidence and perseverance. “Lighthouse gave me the strength I need to believe in myself and push myself to what I wanted to do. There were multiple times I wanted to give up, but I knew that I wanted that degree!”

Brian also shared that many of the soft skills he learned at Lighthouse helped him immensely in college. “I used my agenda to manage my time. I’d find people to study with. When I struggled, I asked my peers and teachers for help.”

Brian decided to study computer science at San Francisco State after being introduced to programming in his senior year at Lighthouse. Even though this was a competitive major with many challenging classes, Brian stuck with it; technology was his passion. “I’ve seen a lot of people who switch their majors and life goals and then aren’t happy later on,” Brian commented. “It took me five years to get my degree, but I made it!”

Since graduating from San Francisco State in 2017, Brian has worked for the IT Department at Sutter Health hospitals, for Facebook, for Google and now for Ross Department Stores Corporate Headquarters. He specializes in security engineering, specifically in stopping hackers from accessing sensitive data like personal information and credit card numbers.

The best part of his job, Brian says, is “you learn something new every day. Technology and cyber-attacks are constantly evolving, so I feel like I’m always learning to keep up.”

Brian’s professional career has also brought stability to his family. After jumping from one rental place to another since they lost their house eight years ago, Brian
recently purchased a home that he will be moving into together with his parents and younger sister when they get the keys.

As good as things are for Brian these days, he still looks back on his time at Lighthouse with nostalgia. “Honestly, I miss high school a lot. That connection I had with students and teachers there really felt like a family. If I could go back to high school, I would in a second.”

**And his advice for other Lighthouse students?** “Even if you struggle, there is always a way to overcome your challenges. Find a mentor, or a group of friends that can help you. And whatever you do, don’t take school for granted. Appreciate that your teachers are really trying to help you.”

This is the first edition of our new Alumni of the Month series at Lighthouse. What do you think?

Do you have ideas for other alumni we should feature?

Please respond to: joshua.weintraub@lighthousecharter.org.