As an art major, Kaitlyn Grant ’20 of Somersworth, New Hampshire, is, in some ways, learning the same things over and over — but not out of redundancy. Instead it’s part of an arts education that allows students to hone their skills and develop their personal style. It’s why art students can sometimes take the same course twice — where one professor focuses on composition and light one semester, another who teaches a different section might focus on imagination and self-discovery. It requires a particular curiosity and self-motivation from a student to take full advantage of every class — two traits Kaitlyn has made hallmarks of their UNH career.

“I have learned something different from every professor I’ve had here, in every class,” they say. Even classes where they struggled taught them the life-lesson of the importance of perseverance that will stick with them for a lifetime and set them up for success in the post-UNH professional world.

Kaitlyn was naturally inclined to stick-to-itiveness, possessing a sense of determination and work ethic that they brought with them when they arrived freshman year. But they also brought the anxiety and depression they’d dealt with from a young age. So when Kaitlyn arrived on campus, they were a bit freaked out, they say. It’s no exaggeration to say they struggled with time management — while so many fall victim to the “Freshmen 15” weight gain, Kaitlyn lost weight “because I literally forgot to schedule times to go to the dining hall to eat,” they recall. Kaitlyn also dealt with “imposter syndrome” their freshman year as the first in their family to attend college, wondering if they deserved to be here. It can hit students studying the arts particularly hard, as they compare their creations to the person painting, sculpting or performing right next to them, and wondering, as Kaitlyn did, how they will measure up to others.

Fortunately, Kaitlyn had some connections at UNH from when they attended UNH Upward Bound as a junior at Somersworth (N.H.) High School. There they connected with Josh Gagnon, director of the program at UNH. Kaitlyn counts Josh as one of their mentors who has encouraged them to seek help when they needed it, especially academically, using support systems like the Center for Academic Resources, where tutors and staff helped them set up study strategies and gave them encouragement.

From there, steady work, a supportive roommate, faculty and friends have helped Kaitlyn find success. They also credit their own coping mechanism to deal with the highs and lows of college life. “Anxiety is like having a pet. Sometimes it’s just there, lying on the couch, napping for a whole day, and you don’t really have to think about it. Other days, it’s always under-foot, trying to get your attention, and you’re tripping over it all day,” they say. “And so sometimes you need time alone to deal with that, and then you get through it.”

The thing that grounds Kaitlyn most is work — they spend roughly 15 hours in the MUB each week, working in either the Mail Room or the Games Room. Kaitlyn shows up early and stays late, is the first to pick up a shift when someone else can’t make it in and has steadily sought out increasing responsibility and higher leadership positions through both of their MUB jobs. While part of that is out of financial need, MUB Manager of Operations Theresa Faist notes that in her 21 years of working with UNH student employees, “I have never witnessed this amount of dedication.” The hard work has been recognized by the university: For the past four years, Kaitlyn has received the coveted Beaupre Entrepreneurial Scholarship, given to students from Somersworth High School (SHS) who best exemplify the entrepreneurial spirit so necessary for personal and professional success. Donor Andy Beaupre ’75, himself an SHS grad, has said his scholarship is about “drive, working hard, not giving up, being self-motivated, taking risks, being a doer, and earning — not expecting — success.” “We wanted to support someone who was working hard in school, who was caring, who was building a positive culture wherever they were. GPA wasn’t as important to us as character,” explains Andy. And while he and his wife noticed Kaitlyn was pretty shy when they first met them, they soon realized Kaitlyn is “a real sparkplug, a creative force.”

Kaitlyn’s artistic medium is illustration, and they will pursue a career as a videogame artist when they graduate. Kaitlyn says their UNH journey has brought them better control over their inherent scatterbrain and nervous nature by allowing them to learn organizational and study skills. Kaitlyn is also a more confident person, thanks in many ways to the leadership positions earned through their MUB jobs and attending Leadership Camp.

“I feel like I’ve gone through a lot of growth at UNH. I’m the same person, but a lot more externally chill. I’m a little more weathered, but for the better.”