Sydney Hunt:
Something my mom has really, I guess, prioritized in my upbringing was exposure in the idea that you
don’t have to do everything. You should, at least, know what’s out there. And you want to have a lot of
things in your basket, so you get to be the one who picks the egg, rights? Not letting someone else pick
that egg for you. Hi, my name is Sydney Hunt. I use she/her pronouns and I’m a first year Knight-
Hennessy scholar, and a PhD student in electrical engineering. I imagine a world where you see
someone who looks like you doing what you would love to do.

Taylor Goss:
Welcome to the Imagine A World Podcast from Knight-Hennessy Scholars. We are here to give you a
glimpse into the Knight-Hennessy Scholar community of graduate students spanning all seven Stanford
schools, including business, education, engineering, humanities, law, medicine, and sustainability. In
each episode, we talk with scholars about the world they imagine and what they're doing to bring it to
life.

Willie Thompson:
Today you'll be hearing from Sydney Hunt, a PhD student in electrical engineering. During our
conversation, you'll hear Sydney's experience growing up in upstate New York, building environments
that allow historically underrepresented groups to reimagine life’s possibilities, dad jokes, and so much
more.
Hey, what’s up y'all? Welcome to another episode of the Imagine A World Podcast. I am one of your co-
hosts, Willie Thompson. I am a member of the 2022 Cohort at the business school right now. I'll be at
the Ed school next year. And as always, I am joined by my amazing and phenomenal cohost, friend, all
things podcasting, and music engineering, Taylor Goss.

Sydney Hunt:
All of the above.

Taylor Goss:
I think that was my favorite lead-in you've done for me.

Willie Thompson:
Thank you.

Sydney Hunt:
Of course.

Taylor Goss:
And I am indeed in the 2021 Knight-Hennessy Cohort, doing a Master's in Music Science Technology and
a Master of Arts and Public Policy. Soon to be done, soon to be graduated.

Willie Thompson:
Soon to be done, to soon to be completed. Soon to be kh-ompleted, with a "kh."
Taylor Goss:
That's correct.

Willie Thompson:
And today, as you heard in that intro, we've got the one, the only, the inimitable.

Taylor Goss:
Inimitable

Willie Thompson:
Inimitable.

Sydney Hunt:
The SAT vocab.

Willie Thompson:
GRE.

Sydney Hunt:
GRE vocab, excuse me. Excuse me.

Willie Thompson:
Sydney Hunt.

Taylor Goss:
Sydney.

Sydney Hunt:
And the crowd goes wild.

Taylor Goss:
You've heard her voice before as a co-host on this podcast, but we are turning the tables today.

Willie Thompson:
We are. And so the tables turn.

Sydney Hunt:
How the turn tables.

Taylor Goss:
Yes.

Willie Thompson:
Sydney, how are you doing today?

Sydney Hunt:
I'm doing great. It's a beautiful day outside. I was telling Taylor earlier, just got back from a weekend in San Diego, so I'm feeling refreshed, ready to get back to the grind, and no complaints overall. Good day.

Willie Thompson:
What'd you do in San Diego?

Sydney Hunt:
Had a family event. But my sister was there and this was her first time visiting California.

Willie Thompson:
Oh, sweet.

Sydney Hunt:
And so she got to see all around. And then she flew back up here with me. She's staying with me through the weekend. And so I'm going to take her around, show her SF, show her Stanford, this new area that I call home. And it's weird to feel like I know this area now a little bit since I've been here almost a year. The feeling I get when I know a place is when I can turn the GPS off before I go home.

Willie Thompson:
Yep, that's it.

Taylor Goss:
Yep.

Sydney Hunt:
Once I see on the GPS, it says, "Okay, next exit you'll take is the 402," I'm like, "Oh, I know where I am." And so yeah, just vibes, excited to show her around and no complaints. Beautiful life.

Taylor Goss:
I've been three years and still turn on the GPS.

Willie Thompson:
Taylor, you're just as a foolproof.

Taylor Goss:
 Seriously, as a foolproof, I could get myself back home, but I like to have my robot friend guide me.

Sydney Hunt:
Right.

Willie Thompson:
You live off Cal Ave.

Taylor Goss:
If I'm driving back from San Francisco, man, that's what I need it.

Sydney Hunt:
Right. Right.

Taylor Goss:
I mean, it's just like-

Willie Thompson:
Okay, all right. Anyway. You know what, I won't shame you. I won't shame you. It's all love here.

Taylor Goss:
Yeah, please don't.

Willie Thompson:
Okay. Turning back to Sydney. I'm curious, with your sister in town, with being the tour guide, what do you think is most important for her to see? That's the question.

Sydney Hunt:
Absolutely. I mean, I think the classic is the Golden Gate. I think it's so beautiful. And I just wonder, when you think of California, I feel like most people, maybe this is naive of me to think of more like LA, SoCal, the beaches, et cetera. And the Bay is beautiful and wonderful. The beaches are not nearly as hot, and so we will not be swimming and diving in all these different things. But I think the views here are insane. The Golden Gate is beautiful and wonderful. And actually, I think the best view we got in the fall, Bruno, who is in Knight-Hennessy, organized that was at the sailing event where we were able to go on a boat and sail around the Bay or on Alcatraz under the Golden Gate, and it was really beautiful. And so I think I'm also a bit biased because that was one of my favorite scholar-driven events that was organized. I would say Golden Gate for sure. Zareen's. Oh, my gosh. I'm obsessed. I'm obsessed.

Willie Thompson:
Oh, Zareen's.

Taylor Goss:
We go from Golden Gate to noted restaurant in Cal Ave.

Sydney Hunt:
Mm-hmm. Yes. I'm not sponsored by Zareen's, but if they would like to sponsor me, I would happily take any free meals they would they would give me. Zareen's is this, what is it, Indian and Pakistani, right, fusion cuisine that is... There's multiple locations around the area, but there's one very, very close to Stanford, and I go there very often. It's where we're having dinner.
Willie Thompson:
The one in Cal Ave?

Sydney Hunt:
Yes, correct. Correct. We're having dinner there tonight actually, which I'm very excited about.

Willie Thompson:
Delicious food.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah. Then of course, Denning, right? I have to show her where I spend pretty much all my days here working. So, I would say those are top three. And then she of course has her input, and so whatever she wants to do, I'll put that in the itinerary as well.

Taylor Goss:
She has some say.

Sydney Hunt:
She has some say.

Taylor Goss:
Not much, but...

Sydney Hunt:
Not much, just a little bit.

Taylor Goss:
That sounds lovely. Oh, you're going to have a great time.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah, me, too. I'm excited. Thank you.

Taylor Goss:
Well, maybe we'll see y'all around Denning, maybe?

Sydney Hunt:
Yes. Yeah, she's coming to lunch tomorrow, so 12:30, she'll be there.

Willie Thompson:
Dope.

Taylor Goss:
You're heard it here, folks. Thursday, May 23rd.
Willie Thompson:
Well, I mean, before we talk about the world you imagine, let's talk about the world you're born into and have experienced thus far. So, for the folks who are listening, Sydney, where are you from and what was your journey here to Stanford?

Sydney Hunt:
So, many different steps. Oh, my goodness. So, I was born and raised in New York, and I say upstate because it's not New York City, but it's not actually upstate. It's like an hour and a half from the city, maybe.

Willie Thompson:
Cornwall.

Sydney Hunt:
Cornwall, yes. Cornwall, New York, which is in Orange County and it's near West Point for, I guess, context.

Willie Thompson:
Okay, yeah.

Taylor Goss:
Cool.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes. And yeah, I was born and raised there. I had a really, really fun childhood, I think, reflecting on it as I prepared for this episode of, what do I want to talk about? And I grew up there with my mom and my dad and my sister. My sister's younger, as you've heard on this episode, or I guess you heard earlier about her, but she's four years younger than me. And we also had a puppy, my doggie, the love of my life. Her name was Tootsie. Tootsie Roll was her full name. Because she was a Maltese and Yorkie mix, and so she looked like a Tootsie Roll when we got her. And she's passed away now about two years ago. But goodness, she was the heart and soul of my family. I love her deeply, and I don't know that I'll love anything else as much as I loved her.

So, she was my favorite. So, I only had one sibling, right? It's just me and Shelby. But a cool fact, I guess, I think it's cool, is my parents' closest friends when they were in their twenties. So, my mom met this woman named Brenda when they were in college, and then my dad met this person named Ray, I believe, playing volleyball when he moved here. So, my dad's originally from, he was actually a military kid. So, he was born in Kansas, but has went to every state except Alaska. He lived in Taiwan for a while. So, he was traveling all over 'cause my grandpa was in the Air Force, but they eventually settled in North Carolina. And then my mom is from El Salvador, and she came to the United States when she was about 11. And they met in New York City. And they lived in Queens and got married, and then they moved out to Cornwall right before they had her.

But anyways, back to, sorry, my point before is so the three families, the Hunts, me, and then Brenda, her family, she got married, and the Buluzen, and then the Chins was Ray and his family, the three families basically, we all grew up together, so it felt like I had, what is that, seven siblings. We did
everything together, so much so we even came with a group last name. I think it's really fun. So, our group last name is Hubuchi, which is HU for... I know, it's fire, right?

Willie Thompson:
Yeah.

Taylor Goss:
Yeah.

Sydney Hunt:
Hu for Hunts, and then Bu for Buluzen, and then Chi for Chins.

Willie Thompson:
Oh.

Taylor Goss:
That's amazing.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes. And so the Hubuchi Gang, shout out to all of you. I love you dearly. The cool thing is all three families had a daughter my year in 2001. And so I literally grew up doing...

Taylor Goss:
Squad.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah, squad. So, Bella, Kenzie and I, we experienced everything together, and we're all the oldest as well. And then the Chins have two kids. We have two kids. Not me, gosh. My parents have two kids and then the Buluzens have four kids. And so we all live five minutes from each other. And so we would just bounce around different houses growing up, playing outside. We would love to do practice driver's tests on the driveway. So, we would draw chalk on the driveway, then we'd have to maneuver a scooter or something around and stop. And we would have people stationed and grade you and stuff. And so a lot of capture the flag, a lot of the stairs game, it's like a elevated hide and seek game that we-

Taylor Goss:
Elevated hide and seek.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah, that we made up. Yeah. And so it was really fun. Cornwall's a very small town, and so you definitely got to know everyone pretty well. And yeah, I was very fortunate to have had consistently, always food on the table, always a roof to live under, et cetera. So, I feel very lucky. Thank you, parents, for that. I appreciate it.

Taylor Goss:
Yeah. Wow. It seems like such a "it takes a village" situation.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes, absolutely.

Taylor Goss:
And really vibrant. And I'm sure that you were exposed to a lot of diverse careers, ideas, or ways of play or ways of work.

Sydney Hunt:
Sure, yeah.

Taylor Goss:
Is that accurate?

Sydney Hunt:
Absolutely. I think, honestly, yes, that's very true. But I also think just fun activities, how you can just make fun of almost nothing. I think something that was really beautiful is growing up, we couldn't drive. We weren't old enough to drive. We had, gosh, this is going to date me, but iPod touches some people had. And so that was, like the texting. Before you got cell phones, you could text then, but there really wasn't... Gosh, I feel so old now, being like, "The kids these days don't know how to play." Yeah, but fun things to play outside. Bella's house had a pool, and so we would always... I feel like what it exposed me to, yes, a lot of different ways of thinking, but a lot of different ways to have fun from basically nothing. We would come up with so many different games to play in the pool or in the yard or inside the house.

And something that was really fun was during Covid, which was a really, really difficult time for us, we ended up all being home and would hang out outside, and I felt like a deja vu, relearned to have fun doing nothing. And so, I remember one time, we just went on a walk, all of us together, massed around the neighborhood and would just go and say yes or no, if we would buy each house with no context. Don't know anything about it, simply from the looks.

Taylor Goss:
Real life Zillow.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah, real life Zillow, real life Zillow, which sounds quite boring and lame, but it's one of my favorite core memories. And to do that, I feel like at that point, it had been at least five years from when all of us had just hung out and done nothing together because we went to college or high school. You get older, you start to drive, you have different priorities, and yeah, it was really fun. So, I think that was my favorite exposure, was how to make fun out of almost nothing.

Willie Thompson:
Yeah, absolutely. And I was snickering earlier you said you feel dated 'cause... Yeah. I also started feeling dated 'cause I remember the iPod Touch came out me in high school, and so the big thing for me was the Nano or the iPod Mini.
Sydney Hunt:
Oh, yes. The shuffle.

Willie Thompson:
Yeah, the shuffle. Yeah. I had the Nano back when four gigs was like, you thought, "Oh, my God."

Sydney Hunt:
Like, "Oh, my gosh. Insane."

Taylor Goss:
I mean, we were talking before the podcast about me growing up watching VHS tape, so it feels like a slap in the face.

Sydney Hunt:
No. I'm sorry.

Taylor Goss:
I suggest that iPod Touches are really old right now. Thanks, Sydney.

Willie Thompson:
Yeah. Well, I mean, I really admire you talking about how close you and your friends are, because that's something that I could see as the spirit of friendship and community, like in how you engage with Knight-Hennessy, too. So, it definitely shows up in how you show up here.

Sydney Hunt:
That's so sweet. Thank you. Yeah, chosen family. There's blood family, then there's chosen family, and I very much believe in both of those.

Willie Thompson:
Absolutely. You go through school, you're in high school. From our research, you're also at hurdle phenom.

Sydney Hunt:
I did hurdle back in the day.

Taylor Goss:
We have a great majestic picture of Sydney booking it.

Willie Thompson:
Yeah, majestic picture booking it.
Cornwall and the Hunt.

Taylor Goss:
400 meter hurdle. Yeah.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes. Yes, that is correct.

Willie Thompson:
What's interesting in that article that we were looking at was this quote where, I'm going to paraphrase because it's a long quote, but basically it talks about how you balanced your athletic schedule with 21 college applications. You wrote 90 essays in total.

Taylor Goss:
90 essays.

Willie Thompson:
90 essays. You got acceptances to Yale, Brown, Cornell, Dartmouth, Johns Hopkins, Northwestern, a lot of others. But it was Duke at the end of the day, that one, the Sydney Hunt wanted. And you were also Reginaldo Howard Memorial Scholar. And so the end of that scholarship has been in the news recently 'cause it just ended at Duke. And maybe we'll get a chance to talk about that a little bit, but I'd love to hear from you, what was it like to be on that journey to college and to have the level of grit to muster up being a phenom on the track field, and also to do well and perform well academically?

Sydney Hunt:
Gosh, I forgot about that article. That's crazy that you found that. It's so weird to be on the other side 'cause I remember doing all these deep dives.

Taylor Goss:
Yeah, shout out to Times Herald Record.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes. I think for me, something my mom has really, I guess, prioritized in my upbringing was exposure and the idea that you don't have to do everything. You, at least, know what's out there. And you want to have a lot of things in your basket, so you get to be the one who picks the egg, not letting someone else pick that egg for you. I think when it came to college applications on top of the many, many things I was doing in high school with athletics and extracurriculars, et cetera, I think that was actually the first time I reached this almost burnout level where I had been working at this ascent of maximum efficiency, and then something has to go, right, at some point. In that point, it was sleep. I think definitely did not sleep enough, and I now prioritize that a lot. But for me, a reason I applied to so many colleges was, where I was going to go to college was going to be whereever gave me the most money, like plain and simple.

Taylor Goss:
I feel that.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah. And my mom is a high school teacher, and so she's written letters of recommendation before. She knows a decent amount about the college application process. And she kept on saying how private
schools are able to give a lot of money through scholarships, et cetera, oftentimes more than public schools. And so I decided to try for those schools. And I, I guess, put my eggs out there, and a lot of them came into my basket, but that definitely was not my own doing. My mom was up very late with me finishing all those essays. She had pushed me to take on leadership skills in high school that maybe I was a little bit nervous and shy to want to take, but once I took them, I was very, very grateful.

But I ended up at Duke, yes, because you mentioned the Reginaldo Howard Memorial Scholarship, and that was a full merit scholarship. So, full tuition from where I paid $0 for undergrad, which is a huge, huge privilege. Duke is very expensive. It's almost 90 grand a year right now. And to be able to graduate debt free, I didn't understand what that meant in high school when I was a senior deciding where to go. But now I'm like, "Oh, my gosh, that's huge. That's insane." And to me, I also really wanted to do that because I felt like my parents have worked so hard to give me the life that they did not have growing up, especially my mama, my beautiful mother. And for me, I felt like when you're 18, there's not really much you can "do" for your parents because you're just a kid.

Yes, you can clean the house, blah, blah, blah, et cetera. But then once you go off to college, you're not really there and not really present. But I felt like, I guess the self-imposed pressure to want to get a full ride, so that I could at least take off the pressure of them having to pay for college or worry about finances. And I was very, very lucky and fortunate that it worked out for me. And I went to Duke. It was very hard. I'm not going to lie. I was not ready for, or I guess I just didn't know what to expect from going there. I didn't know anyone who had gone there before. No one from around where I lived was going. And so I was just plopped into this new environment where I had a quarter life, fifth life, sixth life, whatever you want to call it, identity crisis, where I was so used to performing very well academically. I felt like anything below maybe in 96 was bad, which is not true by any means. Please, know that's not true.

But in high school, that's what I thought. I was identified as someone who performed well academically and who was an athlete. I played three sports for Cornwall year round, and then I also danced outside at a local studio. And then I'm going to Duke and all of a sudden I'm not playing for Duke anymore, so I don't have the athlete identity. Yes, I joined club sports and I went to the gym, blah, blah, but it's not quite the same. Not nearly the same. I was trying to learn how to make friends again. All my friends had been my teammates for the past, what, four, six years. And so I was like, "Oh, gosh, I haven't actually made a new friend in so long. "And especially with Hubuchi, they also all played the same sports as me. And so I was just always seeing them around. And then I think academically, I just, gosh, I remember the moment that sticks in my head the most was my calculus one midterm, my first midterm.

Taylor Goss:
Wow. It was like first semester.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes, first semester of college. I was very good at math throughout all my K-12 years. I remember in third grade, Mrs. Lauch would have these minute math exams. It was a full worksheet, and you had to try to finish the entire worksheet in under a minute, but there were too many problems for you to finish in under a minute. And the goal was to have as few as possible, and I would always get so excited and really, really want to finish it before the minute ran out. And then through high school, Mrs. Palumbo was an amazing calculus teacher. And I took AP calc with her, but I got a 4 on the AP, and Duke only took 5 for credit, so I retook calculus one at Duke.

Taylor Goss:
That's crazy, they only took 5.

Sydney Hunt:
No. Yeah. And my first midterm, I got a 36. This was a class I'd already "taken," right? And I was like, "Golly, if I can't even do well in a class I've already taken, how am I supposed to do six more classes of math that I haven't seen before to be that engineering degree?" So, I definitely felt a lot of imposter syndrome. It was no longer true that if I didn't know what was happening, other people in the room also didn't know what was happening. I didn't have that core community of study buddies. In high school, there's about 250 kids per grade, but pretty much the same 30-ish kids took advanced classes. And so you all went through school together, and they all went off to their own places. So, I didn't have that either. And yeah, just a lot of things happening, a lot of identity crisis. That really forced me to define how do I value myself outside of my academics, outside of being an athlete, because those chapters are starting to close in my life. And I think the best thing Duke gave me was not like the degree was, I guess I've learned a lot in engineering and made friends, but it actually was learning to value myself in ways that I didn't even know were possible. Being forced to have to prioritize your mental health, so you're sane and you feel loved by yourself. You love yourself and understand that nothing good ever comes from tying yourself to academic achievements. And if I get this, then I'm good. If I don't get that, then I'm a failure at everything. I don't like failing often. I'm not afraid to admit that. I feel like sometimes, gosh, it's hypocritical for me to say this as a Knight-Hennessy Scholar at Stanford now, that don't tie yourself to academic achievements, but I really do believe that when you're in college, you're pretty much only responsibility is to learn, right? Duke catered to every single thing I could possibly need. Even through Covid, where I always had food. There's a mobile app where you could order your food ahead of time, and so you just had to go in to dining and pick it up. We have a food court, we don't have a scoop system. And so it was a lot of different mini venues. Delicious, delicious food.

Willie Thompson:
That's where the 90 Ks are going, right?

Sydney Hunt:
Yes. Yeah, salmon poke bowls, I would recommend, ginger and soy. Anyways, so yeah, all my food are covered, whether it's a gym, everything's clean, et cetera. And so all I had to do was learn and to have that, I guess, privilege of being able to try different things with the security that I'm not in a job where I have to pay for my kids' college, and so I can't take any risks right now. I have a mortgage, or I have a partner, or I'm in debt, whatever. This is the time to do that. And so I tried a bunch of different things. Again, going back to my mom's idea of exposure and my process of elimination ended up in electrical and computer engineering and computer science major. And then I also minored in gender, sexuality and feminist studies, which that was like a me thing. That was something that I was, yeah, just for me.

Taylor Goss:
Was that from, you entered Duke and you were like, "I want to have this combo", or was that something you arrived at by...

Sydney Hunt:
No, no, not at all.
Willie Thompson:
'Cause I think you were going to do initially a minor in Spanish, right?

Sydney Hunt:
Yes.

Willie Thompson:
Okay, switched.

Sydney Hunt:
I was. I did nothing actually. That was all my common up. I'm sorry to say. So, for all those out there who were thinking of switching majors, know it's totally fine. And it's all going to work out in the end. I applied to Duke biomedical engineering, pre-med, wanting to be a pediatric oncologist because in high school I did a lot of fundraising for St. Jude. And then I also wanted to minor in Spanish because my mom speaks Spanish. That was her first language. And it was important to me, still important to me, even though I didn't major in it. But I ended up switching to ECE and CS for various reasons. I could talk about another time. But the gender studies thing was actually all creds to my high school teacher, Mrs. Chastin, in 11th grade, AP English Language and Composition, I think, the class was called.

And that class, gosh, was so difficult. I'm telling you probably still to this day, one of the hardest classes I've ever taken because I think it was the first time I had to question the world and question society. Mrs. Chastin was brilliant. Oh, my gosh. I don't even know how to put it into words. And I did this project on critical theory, and my assignment was queer theory. And let me just make sure I say this definition correctly, but queer theory is a critical theory that basically challenges the ideas of sexuality and identity and how much humans adhere to this binary and everything is socially constructed. And I remember just sitting there like, "Whoa." Your just whole world just takes a 180 of being like, "Oh, my gosh, everything's a social construct, and I had no idea." I feel like up until that point in high school, I was just taking things as it is.

I never questioned it. And I only did that project for a couple weeks, but it always stuck with me. And then in college, I just wanted to learn more about that. And so that's why I did the minor. And I think it tied well into a lot of other future things that ended up working out with my work with STEM retention and diversity. But no, that was just a me thing that I was interested in. And I was really grateful to have learned a lot from there. And I took cool GSF, gender sexuality and feminist study classes abroad actually, so to also see it how those classes worked in different areas was a really phenomenal experience.

Taylor Goss:
So, you briefly mentioned your work in STEM retention and diversity. Could we dive into that a little bit more? I believe you founded a couple of nonprofits associated with these spaces. And specifically how did your concentration, or excuse me, your minor in gender, sexuality, and feminist studies, how did that come to play in these nonprofits and work you do?

Sydney Hunt:
The biggest project I did with that STEM retention diversity was this nonprofit called CS Sidekicks. So, that is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that I founded with some friends from Duke who were all CS majors as well. And long story short, what it was, it was this program where at the time it was, gosh, that was my
sophomore year, so that was 21, I think. So, everything was still virtual at that point. We got sent home from college my freshman spring, and we started this virtual afterschool program for kids in Durham. Durham is a town that surrounds Duke, where they would be exposed to computer science, because at the time, there was not a computer science in their core curriculum like math, English, et cetera. And I think as just technology advances, knowing computer science is going to be something that I hope one day will become a core subject, like English, math, history, et cetera, all those different things.

And yeah, it was just a bunch of Duke students who just cared about empowering the next generation of computer scientists. On Zoom, we would teach these kids computer science through scratch or code.org, et cetera. And I think something that I really liked about the program was we understood that there’s a limit to how much we know, and we’re not afraid to say we are not the experts in everything. And so we used companies who actually are experts in creating CS curriculum, like code.org, like Code Academy or Code HS, et cetera. And the idea was that once these kids become comfortable with these platforms, once the program end, 'cause we ran it every semester and we didn't run it over the summer, then students can go on and continue to do those programs on their own because those websites have hundreds and hundreds of different projects, different languages that you can use.

And our theory was that we want to empower the next generation to want to become independent learners and realize that computer science can be something for them. I think my favorite part of that was we did a little surveys to see what student mindsets were pre and post the program. And there was one little girl who is, I believe, in sixth or seventh grade. And one of the questions was, what does a computer student scientist look like to you? And her first answer in the beginning before the program was an old fat guy who's living in his mom's basement eating a bag of potato chips. And then by the end of the program, they retook that same survey. She had said, "Computer science can be anyone, even I could be one."

And that to me was like a, "Ah," the aha moment of, yes, you can. And then she even went on to apply to North Carolina High School for Math and Science, I believe, it's called. And so I don't know. I think it's so beautiful to be able to see that the impact you have on people can last forever. And even if you don't necessarily, she definitely has no idea who I am. I was not her instructor, but I still think about her and her journey. And she's in high school now, so I'm like, "Oh, I wonder if she's still interested in STEM, et cetera." And so, yeah, that was I guess the biggest project that I worked on, and I'm really proud of that. And shout out to everyone on that team who made it happen. And also shout out to Reagan who's going to be the incoming president. She's continuing that. So, thank you very much.

Willie Thompson:
That's an amazing story about imagination. I feel how the exposure to people, the principles, the concepts, can give you the space to think about the world differently.

Taylor Goss:
It almost changes the way that you imagine the world.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes.

Willie Thompson:
Yes.
Sydney Hunt:
Yeah.

Willie Thompson:
Yeah. So, something that I've noticed in your background that we've noticed rather, is you've got this interesting mix of two fields of study that seem to be framed as diametrically opposed to one another. So, you're doing the STEM stuff, but you're also doing humanity stuff as well. Where did that come from? How do you think about the work you're doing now at Knight-Hennessy, and even just your Imagine a World statement and being able to fuel greater imagination for people? Because even just thinking about your background, a story of mine that popped up was of a dean in my undergrad who used to always talk about the tension between the humanities and STEM. And she would say, "People like to think of them as opposites, but I like to think of them as different parts of a flower." I feel like Will would like that.

Taylor Goss:
Will would love that.

Willie Thompson:
Where STEM is the stem of the flower and the humanities are the actual thing you look at, the beauty that exists in the world. And so I feel that image when we look through your background, I'm just wondering to the question of how does that flow through to Knight-Hennessy and now, and even just the birth of your Imagine A World statement.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah, absolutely. I think for me, something that really stood out was I did this Bass Connections project. Bass Connections is this program at Duke where you can enroll in a class credit, but it's just research. And my project was on the girls' math identity, so the gender gap in STEM. So, this is from a paper, 2016 paper from Coswon that said, "If women persisted in STEM at the same rate as men starting in calculus one, the number of women entering the STEM workforce would increase by 75%." That's a huge number. Huge, huge number.

Willie Thompson:
Whoa.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah, absolutely. I think for me, something that really stood out was I did this Bass Connections project. Bass Connections is this program at Duke where you can enroll in a class credit, but it's just research. And my project was on the girls' math identity, so the gender gap in STEM. So, this is from a paper, 2016 paper from Coswon that said, "If women persisted in STEM at the same rate as men starting in calculus one, the number of women entering the STEM workforce would increase by 75%." That's a huge number. Huge, huge number.

Willie Thompson:
Whoa.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes, a big whoa. And that to me was like, "I'm sorry, was that a typo?" Like, "What?" And so I guess to answer your question, I ended up doing a senior thesis project that tied in what I learned through that Bass Connections class because yes, part of it was research, but part of it's also running on Saturdays, middle school girls would come and do fun math problems with us. I guess turned that research into a senior thesis that was looking at examining the impact of introductory mathematics on an undergraduate student's desire to pursue a STEM major.

And from there, I think that ties into what I'm aiming to do now at Knight-Hennessy is I really, really, at this point in my life, I would love to become a professor. I think that teaching is one of the most powerful tools in the world, and teaching well is really, really difficult. I myself am not perfect at it, but I really try hard to do that. And a lot of my research that I've done in this area has shown that classroom
environments really are the make or break of whether or not someone feels that they can do something. I was really fortunate that Rebecca Simmons, shout out to Becky, Dr. Simmons, I love you so much. Oh, my gosh. She's a mechanical engineering professor at Duke who everyone is obsessed with. She was my first engineering professor, and she just celebrated every single little thing that you did, whether it was compiled code that said, "Hello world," and she was like, "Oh, my gosh, you're so amazing. You're so awesome."

And yeah, she taught me a lot. And she, I think, has been a huge mentor in my life. Even though I ended up not choosing mechanical engineering as a major, she wrote all my rec letters for grad school and for my scholarship applications. And she has always made me feel really seen and really heard in engineering. Same with Polina Anikeeva, who's a professor, MIT, I intern with her. My mentor in that program was Nicki Driscoll as well. I want to give those three women specifically a huge shout out because they make me feel really seen and heard as a woman in STEM. And so, now, in Knight-Hennessy, it's a weird feeling to have to be like, "Okay, my next step is not actually to continue running this nonprofit." No matter how much CS Sidekicks means for me, my goal right now is to be the best researcher that I can possibly be, earn that PhD, maybe do a postdoc after, still to be determined, so that I have the qualifications to become a professor right now.

And every now and then you can still dabble in little areas of, I still tutor on the side. I like to do a lot of ambassadorship for Knight-Hennessy, through that. And I still help out a little bit with CS Sidekicks every now and then. But understanding that taking a step back is really important and focusing on what you need to do right now is the end goal. And I think with Knight-Hennessy, I've been really fortunate that... you know, a PhD is super long, super, super long. You won't really see the impact of your work until probably 5, 10, 15 years down the road. But right now, something tangible that I can see is like Knight-Hennessy, for example, funded a pediatric wheelchair build party, that I did with another scholar, Gabby. Thank you, Gabby, for all the work with that, and all the scholars and friends who showed up to help build a wheelchair.

And so we built a wheelchair out of just pretty printed and laser cut wood parts, CNC'ed right here at Stanford. And the idea was to show people that you actually don't need a whole lot of STEM skills to be able to have an impact. You can make a wheelchair for little kid who can now use it. If you build one on the side... We didn't donate that chair, I want to make that clear. By using very little STEM knowledge and STEM skills because there's a lot of templates online that walk you through every single step that you can possibly do. And the beauty of that is a lot of insurance companies don't cover wheelchairs for kids under three because they grow too fast, and so it's not worth the investment. But by running this little event, you can increase that exposure to prosthetics or whatever for kids, for people who are unable to access them or afford them.

And then you on your own can go and take that and run with it, if you would like. And so, yeah, long answer. I know I jump around a lot with this whole podcast, but there's a lot of things that come together. And I think the beauty of Knight-Hennessy is everyone who's involved in this project also come from so many different backgrounds. I do believe humanities are super valuable within engineering. It doesn't make sense for people to make devices... For people, we don't actually understand people. I think that that's something, I think engineers should be required to take more humanities, in my opinion. I feel like I've always been a big advocate of that. And here at Knight-Hennessy, you have people in humanities literally right next to you in the chair at Denning lunch. And so you can talk about and get perspectives of things you never even thought of and never even came across of. And that to me is really beautiful, and I love how we can blend all of that together really easily in Knight-Hennessy here on a daily basis.

Taylor Goss:
How has your vision of what you're able to do changed over time? And how has that been impacted by the Knight-Hennessy community?

Sydney Hunt:
What's changed for me is, I feel actually really capable to make that Imagine A World statement come true. I feel like, it used to be very farfetched of like, "Oh, I would love to see more women in STEM." For example, I had one professor that was a woman in ECE throughout all four years at Duke. And there were many, many semesters where I was the only girl in my classes. And that can be very, it's fine, I don't mind it. I make a lot of friends, and I don't necessarily have complaints about that, but it can be very lonely, very isolating. There's also that, "Oh, do femininity and engineering come together?"

And yes, they do. Lina, there's a quote she said that said, she told me about being confident and expressing your femininity within engineering was, "Stilettos and a red dress are fine, weakness is not." And that to me is huge. And so now at Knight-Hennessy, going back to similarly, what Duke gave me is, your only responsibility, in my opinion, here is to just live your life and to learn. Knight-Hennessy is this leadership program where it's really important to recognize the privilege we have as Knight-Hennessy Scholars, and that's what makes me feel like I can make this statement come true.

I feel like I actually have a responsibility to make that come true because I have access to resources that very, very few people in the world have. And so if I'm never worrying about my basic needs because they are not only met but exceeded, what am I doing with my time? I feel like that's when you're able to focus on making this dream, this vision come true. And by not having to worry about all the everyday little things, it makes me feel like you can do that. And the biggest thing I've received from it is, one, peace of mind, and two, the feeling that I can do this and I will do this, and I have a responsibility, too, because if this much is being invested in me, how can I not pay it forward?

Taylor Goss:
I think it's hard to see it as deserved, nor do I really think that it's important for any of us to feel like we deserve it because it's such a special and outsized gift that it's, as you're speaking about, it's an opportunity and maybe a challenge to rise to the level of gift that it really is to our lives. I mean, I don't know about you, but I find myself walking around campus some days and just realizing in meta-moment where I am and the situation in which I'm in, not just physically, but financially and otherwise. And I'm in awe of the privilege and of the gift.

Sydney Hunt:
Right. It's a huge gift.

Taylor Goss:
It's a huge, and keeping it at the forefront of our minds, I think, is really important.

Willie Thompson:
When I was an undergrad at Morehouse, there was a quote, it's a couch full of quotes. And one of the quotes that was often said to us was that, Mother Morehouse has placed a crown over the head of each one of her students, and she challenges them to grow tall enough to wear it. Right? And it's like that imagery that I think, that obligation of there is an expectation of, and we expect you to get there.

Sydney Hunt:
And you will get there, right? I mean, even without Knight-Hennessy, as a PhD student here, I wake up every day in this country club and get paid to discover what I find interesting. That in itself is a privilege. When you add Knight-Hennessy on top of that, my goodness.

Taylor Goss:
Yeah.

Willie Thompson:
Yeah, absolutely.

Taylor Goss:
Especially, given the implication with what all we're talking about, grad school, PhDs, it's hard.

Sydney Hunt:
It's hard.

Taylor Goss:
It's hard. And we've had a lot of people talk on this podcast about the difficulty of that, both just in terms of work and also just in terms of mental health and emotional wellbeing. And it does get really hard.

Sydney Hunt:
It does get really hard.

Taylor Goss:
Despite the gift and alongside the gift, it certainly... I was in a Knight-Hennessy event recently, and we were talking about just how special it is that we're in a place and a situation that allows us the time to sit and get to know each other, and even have the time to ruminate in the situation.

Sydney Hunt:
I know. It's ridiculous. I mean, I can just come in. Like this morning, we had storytelling class, which I've talked about in other episodes, which I love.

Willie Thompson:
Shout out to Annalisa.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes.

Taylor Goss:
Shout out to Annalisa, maybe the sixth or seventh shout out.
And it's like you get fed during breakfast, you are just bonding, doing improv workshops and doing presentations with each other. And then after, you just want to take a 10 minute break, you take your tea or hot chocolate or coffee, whatever you made, just go sit on the deck, and I caught up with Will because I hadn't seen him in a week since I was traveling.

Willie Thompson:
He was off-grid.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah, and he also was off-grid. He also was off-grid. And it's like, "Wow, this is a beautiful, beautiful life." We are incredibly privileged, incredibly lucky. And I thank Knight-Hennessy for all it's given to us. And I promise that I'm going to work hard to pay forward. And yeah, I'm going to make sure that I do the best I can in my research and more.

Willie Thompson:
Absolutely. We love to hear that. And yeah, we believe that you'll do all those things, too.

Taylor Goss:
No doubt in my mind.

Willie Thompson:
Yeah, absolutely. Something that I find very unique about, I don't know how other schools do this, but on Duke's board of trustees, there's always a student who serves on the board. And this board has got some heavy hitters. And I just shout out a friend of mine, Amy Kramer, who I believe she was also the student board of trustees person for Duke as well. And I'm at the business school recently. We've been talking a lot about boards and the importance of boards and what you learned from being on a board. And I would like to build an opportunity for some cross school learning about your experience on a board of trustees that features folks, like, I'm pretty sure Adam Silver is on the board.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes. He's actually the incoming chair, so he'll be the chair starting this year.

Willie Thompson:
Incoming chair. Adam Silver is the guy who runs the NBA, the National Basketball Association. So, just clearly, and I think the managing director of BCG is on the board. But I'd love to just create a clear out for both of those experiences and where you are now as a Duke alumna.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes, I know. I am a Duke alumna. Wow, that's crazy. Duke has this thing called Young Trustee, where every year they pick one undergraduate student and one graduate student to be the incoming young trustee, and we serve a two or three-year term. But I was selected last year as a senior to serve a three-year term. And that to me is, oh, my gosh, I knew there was so much work that goes into running a university, but getting insight into how much work that takes, it's like, "My goodness. Oh, my goodness." And it's not like Duke has so many different schools as well. There's a whole hospital system as well, and there's a million graduate schools. And I'm on the undergraduate committee, which I love.
And it's my favorite, and I feel like I also have the most insight to give to that. I went straight to my PhD from undergrad, so I don't necessarily have work experience to bring value with other stuff. But for me, that has been a way of giving back to Duke after it has also given me so much, like I mentioned before, I was on a full merit scholarship there. And just like Knight-Hennessy pretty much only had to live my life while I was there, which is a huge privilege. And I feel like being able to have that perspective heard and not only heard but listened to is out of this world. I mean, you said it, you're sitting in rooms with Adam Silver, who is the chair of the NBA. And Duke is a basketball school, right? We're all geeking out over that. And he also played at Duke.

And Grant Hill is also on it, and he was also involved in the championships as well. So, I feel like as someone who tented, which you should Google if you haven't, don't know what that is. That's actually what I did for my Knight-Hennessy video, my interview video--you had to teach something--I taught how to tent, which is also a fun fact. But anyways, these people are just people. I feel like we put so many people, celebrities, whatever. Even some people I feel like have approached me to talk about Knight-Hennessy in a way that I feel like they're putting me in a pedestal, and I'm like, "Whoa." I'm really not that special by any means. I just happen to do a lot of things that were valued by Knight-Hennessy. And Knight-Hennessy based on society is a program at university that is valued and considered elite, whatever that means. And so I really don't think anyone is particularly pedestal worthy. We're all just people.

And I think that's what I love about the board so much is that you're just people. You're just hanging out, you're just chatting. Everyone's super nice. Everyone is really, really passionate about making Duke the best it can be. Everyone understands they don't know everything, but they do know and have some expertise in some area. And yeah, I really love the experience. I go four times a year. So, it is definitely a commitment to have to fly across for a couple days every quarter, but it's worth it for me without a doubt. I love it. It makes me feel like while I'm perhaps not in the financial stance right now to be able to donate to Duke financial aid, et cetera, 'cause I would like to do that in the future since that's what allowed me to go to college, I can help by giving insights and perspectives into what change I would want seen.

And also it's cool people talk about your research, where you could talk about, a lot of people are older and they're interested in what you're doing. And I get to explain to them what is a brain computer interface and what am I doing at Stanford? How it's like living on the West Coast? And you can Google anyone's success stories, accolades, whatever that you wanted, define those things to be. But you can't Google, "What makes them happy? What makes them sad? What makes them cry? What do they like for breakfast? How old's your dog?" Random things like that, you're just hanging with people.

Willie Thompson:
Amazing. One quick thing, because I've also been talking a lot about you and you just mentioned computer brain interface, and just quick blurb, quick just insight into what you're researching, what you're studying as a PhD student before we head out.

Sydney Hunt:
So, I work in a field called Brain Computer Interfaces or BCIs. And this term can actually mean a lot of different ideas, but for me, my research is most interested in answering the question, "How can we restore functions such as movement or speech for people who are severely paralyzed?" And at a high level, the way BCIs work is your connecting brain activity to a machine. So, we use sensors that are surgically implanted into an individual's brain. When these sensors are connected to a computer either through wire or a wirelessly, that electrical activity of the brain is being measured at that moment. This
neuronal information is then used to control an external device. Maybe you want to use a robotic arm, for example, through what is called a neural decoding task. And this neural decoding task is a machine learning algorithm that basically programs your robotic arm, that external device, to perform a specific function, maybe like reaching, when the computer is reading specific electrical activity.

Maybe that's the thoughts of someone who is paralyzed wanting to move their arm in a reaching position from the brain. And so the first BCI experience I had was when I was interning at Caltech through this WAVE Fellows program. And I just was like, "What? This feels fake." You have this person, JJ, oh my gosh, lovely. He was father, or is father for love stake, beautiful artist, interior designer. And he became paralyzed, all four limbs, in a flying go-kart accident. And so he hasn't been able to move his limbs in many years, but he had the surgery where he had two sensors implanted in his brain. And then through a lot of engineering and CS stuff, he's able to think, "Go pick up that water bottle," and a robotic arm will literally just go and pick it up for him and take it to wherever he's thinking.

It's ridiculous. It's insane. And I think for me, it's incredibly fulfilling to see people who had independence and then something happens whether it's a stroke or an accident or whatever, that causes you to not be able to have a level of independence. How can we help you to regain some sort of independence in the world? I think there's a lot of work to do, a long way to go to make it practical, to make it commercialized, I guess. A lot of systems are really tailored to the individual. And so it's like a gosh, many year process for you to be able to just do that. And so yeah, that's what I work on. I think it's super cool. If anyone ever wants to chat about it, let me know. But yeah, I'm really interested in how BCIs can help people feel less isolated, more involved in the world and just regain some independence. Can you do anything? You can do so many things with it. I'm so excited to see what I end up doing with it over the next couple of years.

Taylor Goss:
That's amazing. And it's so connected to your Imagine A World statement, too. People being able to do despite a barrier.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes, exactly. Exactly. Yeah. You should never take no as the final answer. There's always a way around. If there's a will, there's a way. I very much believe that that statement is true.

Taylor Goss:
That's lovely.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah.

Taylor Goss:
Okay. Wow, that's so impressive. And I can't even imagine the multiplicity of applications that BCIs would have. What was the path to you not only encountering but deciding to work in BCIs?

Sydney Hunt:
Sure, yeah, great question. There is someone that I cherish very much, and I think it was later either late middle school or early high school when they were diagnosed with MS. And multiple sclerosis is basically a disease where your immune system is eating away at the protective coverings of your nerves. So, as a
result, that connection between your brain and the body gets disrupted. So, for me, over the years, it's been difficult to watch the slow deterioration of someone's independence. You didn't necessarily do anything wrong at all. Yet somehow you're having to face the consequences of very slowly losing control over your limbs. And I think it's emasculating. I think it's frustrating. And it makes me sad that there's no cure for this disease, at least right now. And my parents would always emphasize this idea that you have to work and earn things.

Things aren't just handed to you. And I agree that you have to put an effort to achieve the outcome that you want. But what happens when no matter how much effort you put, in this case, maybe through medication or physical therapy, you don't get the outcome that you want. That disease isn't going away, and there's really not much that you can do to stop it. So, I wanted to work on something that was meaningful to me and that can benefit the people that I love. I find working in BCIs very fulfilling, but it's definitely not an easy path. We mentioned before that the PhD is hard. There's a lot of failure, a lot, a lot of failure. Most of the things that I do don't work. And I feel like the PhD is an ultimate test of not giving up. Even though I've only been in grad school for a year, I oftentimes find myself questioning if what I'm doing is even valuable. Is it actually going to help someone? What is that impact that my work is going to leave?

Taylor Goss:
Yeah. I think that we have a lot of people on this podcast and clearly in this community who are doing amazing things, but nevertheless, have these uncertainties. I know I myself worry all the time, is what I'm doing actually impactful? Is it meaningful? Is it what I set out to do when I first came to Stanford? So, experiencing those feelings, what's your response to them? What's the motivation?

Sydney Hunt:
I think the way that I remind myself that every little step that I'm doing is actually adding value to that field is actually through another person that I deeply love and cherish in my life. So, they recently beat stage four breast and bone cancer in about a year, year and a half, which is just ridiculous. And it was not easy by any means. And I personally will never understand that physical, mental, emotional toll it takes on you. I had already looked at them as the strongest person I know, and now I can't even put into words how much I admire them. But when they were diagnosed, almost immediately there was a plan of what we're going to do. You're going to have this amount of radiation, you're going to have these surgeries, you need these infusions and injections, immunotherapy, and you have to go to physical therapy for this amount of time.

And the list continues to go on. And so for me, I think about that situation and how many PhD theses had to be complete, such that when they were diagnosed, immediately there was a call to action of what we're going to do. There were products out there in the world that were ready to get rid of this cancer. So, to me, that's a great motivator as I try to learn to play the long game and work on reducing my need for immediate gratification because that's not the way science works. There is a light at the end of a tunnel within in science, and it's going to be a long time, I think, before I see it. But I do have a feeling that once I see it, it is hopefully going to be one of the brightest lights that I've ever seen.

Taylor Goss:
Well, thank you so much for sharing.

Sydney Hunt:
Sure. Thank you for listening.
Taylor Goss:
Yeah, of course. I think we've talked a lot about the place and value of Knight-Hennessy in the community in your life. So, I think as we sort of land the plane, as I usually say, we'll talk a little bit about your application. As you are well aware, Sydney, having been on the other side of this many times, we always ask about people's experience writing improbable facts, these facts, we provide eight of them on every Knight-Hennessy application, things that people might not expect about you. What was that experience of writing that like for you? And would you share one with us?

Sydney Hunt:
Of course, I'll share. I think the Knight-Hennessy application is super fun because I applied, right, the same cycle as my PhD applications. And those are so, oh, gosh, boring and dry in my opinion. They are just, "What research did you do? What research do you want to do?" And that's it. I feel like there's zero personality. Knight-Hennessy is where all your personality can come out. I don't think I talked anything at all about my research in that application. One improbable facts, actually I'll share two. One is really quick. It's a hot take and I know some people are probably going to cancel me because of it, but I think water tastes best at room temperature. Willie's looking at me like, "Huh?"

Willie Thompson:
Get out of here.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah. I don't put ice in any of my drinks at all.

Willie Thompson:
Any of your drinks?

Sydney Hunt:
Any of my drinks, yeah.

Willie Thompson:
Oh, it goes beyond water. Okay.

Taylor Goss:
It goes so much deeper, Willie. You don't even know.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah. Yeah. So, that's one. Another one was I guess a little bit more, I don't know if serious is the right word, but I do agree. I mentioned that we have a food court system. We don't have swipes. And so you have points that you use to buy food. One point needs equal to $1, and at the end of the year, if you have extra food points left over, they just go to waste. They don't roll over to your next academic year. They're just there, and you paid for them already before. And so I can't take credit, full credit for this, but during finals week of my sophomore year, someone put on their story like, "Hey, if you have any extra food points, you should consider buying food in the campus convenience store and then donating it to local food pantry." And I swiped up being like, "Oh, is there a program that does this?"
And he was like, "No, it's just random idea I had." And I was like, "Okay, cool." And I was like, "What if you made this a thing?" And literally it blew up beyond what I imagined it to be. But I took an hour to just make a very quick Instagram, Wix website, and a Google form, and that was it. And I put a giant bucket in the Duke campus store and spread on social media like, "Come buy extra food and put it in this bucket. And then we'll drive it and take it to the food pantry." And this was in maybe six days, we got, I think it was like, I don't know, three 5,000 pounds of food, something to that effect, which is like...

Willie Thompson:
Over two tons, right?

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah. 4,400 meals was donated in six days. Ridiculous. Insane. And that was something that literally I thought that was going to be, like, we get maybe three grocery bags worth. It blew up, and now it's an annual thing, and people are still running it. And so it's awesome, and it's amazing. And I feel really grateful and lucky for all the people who helped me out with that, who transported the food to and from the Duke store to their room or to the pantry, et cetera. So, yeah, those are my fun facts or my improbable facts. And I feel like there's a lot you can do with them, right? Some are dumb and silly like I drink water at room temperature.

Willie Thompson:
All drinks at room temperature.

Taylor Goss:
Right. Yeah. Let's be clear about that. Yeah.

Sydney Hunt:
And some can be more serious. And it's whatever you want to take away. There's no right or wrong answer. It's just what is something that your friend would know about you and is like rolls your eyes at like, "Oh, my gosh. Like, really?" Don't be ashamed to put anything out there. Be that weird quirky self. And that's what I would suggest about that.

Willie Thompson:
So, you've done something that I don't think we've had someone do on the pod this season. You basically gave the improbable facts and you gave advice to people who are applying to Knight-Hennessy, which...

Taylor Goss:
Two birds with one stone.

Willie Thompson:
Which is massively done. And it's also interesting because it shows your expertise on the pod.

Sydney Hunt:
Oh, you're so sweet.
Willie Thompson:
It's also great because we're going to be having you on the pod as a recurring co-host next season. So, y'all will be hearing Sydney much more frequently next year for the '24-'25 school year. And just that wonderful synthesis was a small snippet of what you could expect from the brilliant Sydney Hunt and where she brings to this team. So, yeah.

Taylor Goss:
That improbability. She's good at this. I remember the first interview session we did together. I forget who it was.

Sydney Hunt:
Johnny.

Taylor Goss:
Johnny Powell. Johnny Powell. You sat in on Johnny Powell and the session ended. I was like, "Sydney's made for this."

Sydney Hunt:
Oh, no.

Taylor Goss:
Which we'll probably include this in the show notes. But yeah, she ran a podcast before.

Willie Thompson:
This engineering life.

Sydney Hunt:
This engineering life.

Willie Thompson:
This engineering life. Yeah.

Sydney Hunt:
Yeah. Shout out to Dr. Simmons again. She's the one who got me on podcast stuff. But I mean, I've learned from the best.

Willie Thompson:
It's on season nine.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes, that is correct. It's wonderful. You should go. Listen, I've learned from the best. I mean, Taylor and Willie are phenomenal, amazing at what they do. I think something I was nervous about was like, is it going to be awkward and weird. We're in Denning in this room, and you're asking people to share their life story. And false, completely false. They just make the vibe so good, so comfortable. You feel like you
can just spill. And I've talked for too long, I believe. But thank you for teaching me your ways, and I'm excited to carry it on and forward as you all go onto your adults lives, and I'll be here not adulting that much.

Taylor Goss:
That's very sweet. Thank you.

Willie Thompson:
Well, Sydney, this has been great.

Sydney Hunt:
Thank you.

Willie Thompson:
We're so privileged to have had you on this episode and to have you long standing with the team next year. And yeah, I mean, we hope the audience has enjoyed this 'cause we definitely got a lot out of it. So, thanks for showing up, and we will see you later. Yeah.

Sydney Hunt:
Thank you.

Taylor Goss:
Thank you, Sydney. Do you have a dad joke that you could throw us out on?

Willie Thompson:
Yeah.

Sydney Hunt:
Dad joke. Oh, my gosh.

Willie Thompson:
And crazy thing was, she said she could win an Olympic medal in Dad jokes. I've seen this, so the bar is high here.

Sydney Hunt:
Okay. I won't take credit for this because I actually saw this on someone put on their Instagram. So, this is because I love the show Bridgerton on Netflix.

Willie Thompson:
Bridgerton. They're on season three now.

Sydney Hunt:
Yes, of course. I'm all caught up. I'm all caught up. But the dad joke is, "Bridgerton fans, grab your tissues. Pollen season is upon us." Pollen because it's pollen season, but also Pollen is the ship name of
Penelope and Colin, who are the main love interests, I guess, of this show. And I thought that was so funny and so hilarious unnecessarily. Also I'm allergic to pollen, really allergic to pollen. It also feels like every day I wake up with these bug eyes and, my gosh, it's terrible. And so it hit my heart in many different ways. But yeah, that's my dad joke is, "Bridgerton fans, grab your tissues. Pollen season is upon us." And I think it's cute. And you should go watch Bridgeton if you haven't already. But yes, that's my concluding statement.

Willie Thompson:
Well, what a dad joke to go out on.

Taylor Goss:
I know.

Willie Thompson:
You'll be hearing from Sydney and more dad jokes in season two of the Imagine A World podcast. Hee-haw.

Taylor Goss:

Willie Thompson:
All right, y'all. We're out. Peace.

Sydney Hunt:
Thank you. Bye.

Taylor Goss:
Thank you for joining us for this episode of Imagine A World, where we hear from inspiring members of the KHS community who are making significant contributions in their respective fields, challenging the status quo, and pushing the boundaries of what is possible as they imagine the world they want to see.

Willie Thompson:
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