



SENIOR SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW

Johnny Yu Hao Lin

You've been at Pinewood since kindergarten. How has that shaped who you are today, and what's your story?

Yes, I've been at Pinewood since kindergarten, so **it's basically my second home.** I've grown up here, so Pinewood has shaped almost everything about me. I've learned how to build strong relationships, stay open-minded, and take risks. **Pinewood gave me the space and support to grow into who I am.**

How would you describe your relationship with Pinewood?

I'd say I've built a very strong relationship with Pinewood. **Over the years, I've spent more time with my classmates than with my parents!** After 15 years of spending about eight hours a day here, I've done a lot and built some really close relationships with both classmates and teachers.

What's your favorite thing about being a Pinewood student?

It's definitely the small community and how close everyone is. You really get to know your classmates and teachers, and it makes **everything feel more personal and supportive.**

What's a lesson or value you'll take with you from Pinewood?

Definitely the power of support. Even when I didn't want to try something, like MUN — I used to be really scared of public speaking — my teachers and classmates encouraged me. Their support really pushed me to do things I was uncomfortable with, and that's something I'll always remember.



What IB classes did you take, and how did you feel about your choices?

For Higher Level, I took **Math: Analysis and Approaches, Economics, and Business**. For Standard Level, I did **French, English Language & Literature, Literature, and Environmental Systems**. The classes are definitely challenging – some I enjoy more than others – but I think I found a good balance overall. Not too hard, not too easy.

You've done so many extracurriculars. What made you get involved in so many different things?

Honestly, I just did things I liked. I never really thought about how they'd look on my college applications. I played **volleyball** in and out of school for three years and really enjoyed it. I also took part in **MUN**. We traveled, debated – I found it really fun. Same with **business and sustainability competitions**. I just liked doing stuff.

You've been involved in competitions like The Earth Prize, Foodathon, and GA Greece. What stood out to you about those experiences?

After watching documentaries, **I realized how real and important the issue of our environment is**. That's what made me want to explore it further. We came up with things like using a special rock to help with rainfall for farmers, biodegradable masks, and solar filters for developing countries. I was usually CFO and did the financial modeling.

You're also musical. What's the role of piano or music in your life?

I've been **playing the piano** since I was around seven or eight. At first, I wasn't sure I liked it – my parents encouraged me – but over time, I started playing on my own and found it relaxing. **It helps me focus, clears my mind, and it's a good break from studying**.

How did you manage to balance school with all your activities?

I honestly don't have a specific strategy. I procrastinate a lot. After school, I'll nap or take a walk. **But I try to study a little every day**, which helps things stick. That's important – to separate your studying. Since I wasn't studying constantly, **I used that time to do other things I enjoy, which also helped me a lot to stay motivated**.



Where have you been accepted, and what are you planning to study?

I received offers from **NYU, UCL, and Warwick**. I'll likely go to one of those. If not, I'm also considering **Bocconi in Italy or the University of Amsterdam**. I applied mostly for a Bachelor of Science in Economics, except at Bocconi where it's International Economics and Finance.

What's a dream or goal you have for the future?

I don't have a set path yet. Maybe something in public policy or a research-oriented job that also involves leadership. But personally, **I want to keep growing and stay close to the people who matter to me, especially the people from Pinewood.**

What advice would you give to younger students just starting high school or IB?

In 9th grade, **don't focus too much on your grades — try out different things.** That's how I found the activities I enjoy most now. For IB: **study every day**, just a little, and don't cram. **Try to do things outside of academics** that keep you motivated. And if you procrastinate, **try to procrastinate productively.**

Do you have a favorite Pinewood memory?

One of my favorites is **from a Halloween event at school while I was still in Elementary.** We had this game where you fished candy out of a giant pumpkin. I didn't understand English well at the time, so I just dove in to grab candy — and ended up falling head-first into the pumpkin. That was memorable.

If Pinewood were a person, how would you describe them?

I'd describe Pinewood as a small dwarf wearing a really big coat. It's a small school, but that coat represents the supportive, protective community we have here. It might sound silly, but that's how it feels to me. Pinewood has been super supportive for me.