

**2021 PHILO4THOUGHT INITIATIVE
YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE MONTH**



Philo4Thought Hellenic Professional Mentoring Initiative is pleased to present this month's featured Young Professional, **Alexandros Zisimidis** of Limassol, Cyprus, who is currently a Junior at [Columbia University School of Engineering and Applied Sciences](#) in addition to being one of the [star members of their legendary Crew Team](#).

To those who are just joining our readership, preliminary criteria for YPM candidates is their active engagement in entrepreneurial initiatives, successful strides in their desired career path, etc. They are strong role models to the next generation and exhibit exemplary resilience, spirit and compassion, persevering in the face of life's challenges. Most importantly, all those selected for this feature share a specific Hellenic philosophy best described in a word...*Philotimo*. We are honored to share Alexandros' story with you today.

MENTORING: Alexandros is willing to serve as a *Philo4Thought* mentor to a younger member of the Hellenic community, particularly to (1) STEM/Engineering students and (2) student athletes who are juggling their academic and team commitments!

INTERVIEW

P4T Admin.: What is your formal and informal educational background and training?

Alexandros Zisimidis: "Something that rowing has taught me is to be adaptable, and I have developed the skills necessary to acclimate successfully to any business environment. As such, I can see myself ending up in a couple of different spaces.

"The foundation of rowing is the strategy: waking up early, every single day, to push yourself. During a race, there are also tactical decisions that must be made in an instant, and the ability to not react but respond, and respond well, to an adversary can alter the end results. To succeed in rowing, you need both long-term strategy and rapid-fire tactics up your sleeve. Any work environment requires similar skills when they face challenges in the business world. Sometimes everything is going as planned until something goes terribly wrong, and strong critical thinkers are needed not only to work hard, but also be able to problem solve when things become difficult and deadlines are near."

P.A.: What is your overall philosophy about work and life?

A.Z.: "As a student athlete I have developed the ability to pivot quickly between projects and responsibilities while still maintaining a high standard of work. The engineering course load is extremely heavy and difficult, but the option to let my teammates down just because school is tough, is simply not an option. I believe that it is important to lead by example, whether that is showing up to practice 15 minutes early, mentally prepared for what is to come, or consistently being the last person in the weight room, ensuring that the equipment is stored properly. Leadership comes from small gestures and I believe performing everything I do at the highest level is critical to the success of any team -- be it a professional or sport environment."

P.A.: How much of this Philosophy is inspired by your upbringing as a member of the Hellenic community and geographic region (America/Greece/etc.)?

A.Z.: “Lots of my teammates at Columbia had the privilege of rowing for prestigious rowing programs in high school. I am completely the opposite. I come from Cyprus, a Greek island in the Mediterranean, where rowing is pretty much unheard of. I discovered rowing because of my coach, Aristotle, who was trying to gather young kids to try out the sport. To get to practice, which was held out of a dam with an old shipping container housing the boats, I would ride my bike for 40 minutes. The boats we used were very old, and our coach was rowing with us in the boat, since we couldn’t afford gas for the launch. That’s how I learned to row. Regardless of the conditions that we were training in, we completely defied the odds and formed a team that ended up finding success and gaining visibility for rowing in Cyprus. Experiencing adversities definitely influenced my grit and motivation to help me reach to the point where I am today so I am really grateful for that!”

P.A.: Who were your favorite mentors?

A.Z.: “My favorite rowing memory may appear small, but for me it depicts the true heart of the sport and what a leader should be like. When I was 15 years old, I would come home from school at 2 pm, have a quick lunch, and then immediately get on my bike to go to practice. There I would meet with three other rowers and take out a quad to train. Our coach, Aristotle, would stroke the boat for us, teaching us the rhythm, the catch, and the finish. He would be right there with us, sweating more than we were, in a boat with a bunch of kids. He would push us to go beyond what we thought we could do. By the end of practice, the sun would be down, and since there was no electricity at the place that we were training, we would walk the boat back to the shipping crates slowly, carefully, already exhausted before the 10-minute walk with the heavy old shell. The fatigue took a toll on my body, and biking home in the dark for 40 minutes was sometimes scary. But all of this was nothing compared to the satisfaction we got and the memories that we will remember for the rest of our lives. As such, my coach, Aristotle was definitely my aspiration.”

P.A.: What are your primary hobbies and interests?

A.Z.: “I am a very active person so when I am not training for rowing competitions, I would usually hop on my road bike and go for long rides with friends on the weekends.”

P.A.: What advice do you have for today's young professional?

A.Z.: “Never give up no matter what. Sometimes life gets hard but when you keep pushing you will eventually get to where you want to be!”