

## On the College Search

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Beloved Mounds Park Academy Class of 2010: We'll probably never see most of each other again. While we branch off in our own directions, just know I'll probably Facebook stalk you instead of keeping touch. Don't worry about it, though.

This school year, we've all had the same thing on our mind: college. Just when you thought choosing a college was the hard part, you realize you actually have to apply. When I was younger I asked, "Why don't you just apply to every college and then choose from all of them?" I was so naive. But for me, the hardest step in the college process was deciding on a college after hearing back. Luckily, although challenging, it was pretty stress-free for me. Most things are stress-free for me, which is a trait I'm proud to take to college. However, along with it comes a "don't worry about it now if I can worry about it later" attitude. Check in with me after the end of next year and we'll see how I'm doing.

I don't know about all of you, but I had no idea the college process would be so lengthy. Again, the younger, naive me thought I would have to look for colleges in the summer after high school graduation. I learned I was so wrong when in Junior Seminar. We had to put a handful of colleges into Family Connections. I had no idea where I wanted to go, so first I put in all the schools I knew: the U of M and Madison. But since I'm a Cheesehead, I have mixed feelings about Minnesota. And Madison is just as cold as Minnesota and I was told over and over that only jocks go there – so, not for me. Really anywhere with snow and not on a coast wasn't doable. And because I didn't have the preppy outfits to fit in on the East Coast as seen in *Gossip Girl*, the West Coast it was. Or let's just say California, because Oregon and Washington are probably as cold as Wisconsin and who would fly across the country for more cold weather? Not me. So as a junior, I ended up entering about 10 schools I've never heard of – but all in California – onto Family Connections. As my dad analyzed these schools and edited a few, he came up with the schools I would apply to and visit. So before I knew it, my dad had scheduled a Spring Break trip spanning only five days long to visit about a dozen schools. Okay Dad, let's calm down. It's not like my future career depends on it or anything.

So we went. And it was okay. But I forgot about all of the schools except for one: Loyola Marymount University. It wasn't bad. Here were the perks: located in downtown LA, about the prettiest campus I'd seen, it has a psychology department, and you can see the Hollywood sign from the dorms. At the time, I knew where I was going. Later on however, I realized these were not the foundations of a great education. And while LMU was still a contender in the University search, I knew the search had to continue. And that "must be California" condition? Well that changed too. Besides, California is just way too vacuous for me - Sorry, Maggie Wood.

By the end, Santa Clara University was the only other school in California I applied to. Funnily enough, it wasn't one of the many I visited and I still to this day know hardly anything about it. I'm actually not sure why I applied. However, since it was the only school at which I was wait-listed, I think I've decided not to like it.

As the majority of the California schools had vanished off my Family Connections, I had to look for more. Strangely enough, I developed an interest for marketing and communications early in my senior year. I still wonder to this day if my dad convinced me I liked this because he's in the business and I "have the right personality for it". I'm sorry Dad; I'm giving you a bad wrap. You know without you I would be working full-time slicing "Boulder River All-Natural Turkey" at

County Market next year, instead of quitting in the fall which I can't wait to do! So my magical dad found a school no one's ever heard of, in a city no one's ever heard of: Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois. I was definitely opposed. I love the city and the lights and the action and not cornfield after cornfield. And if you recall, I'm against the Midwest climate I've lived in for all of my life. But to my surprise, after visiting the small school during my senior year spring break, I grew attached to its bubble within Peoria. The one thing that spooked me a little was that EVERY single person I asked who had attended or was attending Bradley absolutely loved it. No, not just absolutely loved it, they were obsessed with it – obsessed with a small, middle of nowhere private school in a less than admirable city with a surprisingly high cost. Nothing but good reviews should help though, right? Not for me. I just pondered whether Bradley's strongest department was brainwashing or hypnosis. Then I feared that I was a victim of it because I bought a Bradley University lanyard while deep down I knew, I didn't really want to end up there. So although I applied and was accepted, I looked on.

As I mentioned to my dad, as he desperately continued to interrogate me, I love big cities. One day I logged onto Family Connections and on it appeared "Boston University - added by parent". Really, Frank? Another school to research? But as I was running out of options, I didn't have much of a choice. I learned that Boston was the most urban you can get - all right, not too shabby. It also was very large, something I want badly after being tortured with a decreasing class size of 50-ish since 5th grade. And when my parents and I visited a couple months ago, it was decent. But I can always find the negatives. I didn't feel like I belonged. Ultimately, my gut decided no the second we arrived. I had applied before I visited and it was a disappointment that I couldn't groove with the campus vibe.

The fifth school I applied to was a tech school: Rochester Institute of Technology in upstate New York. I wasn't happy about the location; however it was perfect for what I want to study. They offer a major in both advertising photography and biomedical photography. Sounds like I should be sold, no? After being accepted, my dad and I visited. He wants me to follow my dreams and knew this school would be one of the best for what I want to study, so you know he put all his effort into convincing me to go to college for the education, not the campus. Unfortunately, he knew I made up my mind after the campus tour. To avoid criticizing the school, I'll quote a review of RIT on Studentsreview.com, "If you're a guy coming into engineering or computing there will be VERY FEW WOMEN. I don't get why people complain about that while here. This is a pretty nerdy college abound with WoW players, anime lovers, and gamers. There are people who do not shower. That's just how it is. If this isn't your cup of tea, look elsewhere." So, although there's nothing wrong with that, let's just say it wasn't my "cup of tea."

Since none of the colleges I applied to turned out to be a good fit, I've decided to join the military. No, just kidding. I applied to six schools - Loyola Marymount, Santa Clara, Bradley, BU, RIT, and one more. Remember how I said that I'm a loyal Wisconsinite? I've slightly matured during my senior year and I figured going to the U of M wouldn't be the biggest betrayal I've committed. And so despite over 10,000 miles of travel, 20 nights of hotel stays, and all the school visits, I plan on attending college a half hour from home. I'll be a Gopher next year. I think it's hard to feel like you don't belong there - with such huge diversity and culture, almost anyone could fit in. Hey, go down the list: I love big cities, check. I want to be in a big school, check. I can feel the vibe, check. And it can be below 0 degrees in the winter... oh crap. I guess I'll deal with that when I get to it. At least it's not as cold as Duluth. I know I'll receive a good education and I'm glad to be close to home and close to comfort, while at the same time I can explore countless new things in the city and college. The most important thing I'm excited for is the friends. My goal is to have 40,000 new friends by next summer! Well, 39,999 because I'm unfriending Liesel when we go there because she is SUCH a clothes hoarder. Regardless, I'm

more than excited for the U of M and know I'll have lots of fun. But when I'm gone I suppose I'll miss this class more than I'm willing to admit today. But that's okay. I'll find you on Facebook.

Thank you.