



# THE GREEN PAGES

News from Christ School's College Guidance Office

Spring 2017



## *Q&A with Palmer Straughn Senior Associate Director of Admission Wofford College*

Palmer has been working in college admission for the past 13 years. Next fall he will take the reins as Christ School's Director of Admission.

### **What advice might you offer students and parents regarding scholarship searches?**

For juniors and seniors, I recommend starting the process with some serious self-reflection. Self-awareness is one of the most powerful tools throughout the college search. If you understand who you are and how you learn, then you are more prepared to make better choices about where to visit and apply. That same self-awareness will also allow you to better understand why a college is a better "fit" and increase the odds that you will know how to communicate "fit" through an essay or interview. The first question I generally ask in scholarship interviews is "Why Wofford?" You would be surprised how many students don't know how to answer that question with any real depth.

Freshmen and sophomores need to know that now is the time to do the heavy lifting. I encourage students to think of scholarship aid as an investment that colleges make in individual students. Would you rather invest in someone who displays consistent success over time or someone who has shown short glimpses of success? If you wait until junior or senior year to show what you are made of, then you are showing a lack of consistency and you will have to work much harder to explain why your weaker performance is the exception and not the rule. If you show consistency, then you have that much more time to talk about your accomplishments.

### **How has "Prior-Prior Year" in the early release of the FAFSA changed things on your side of the desk?**

It hasn't really changed things on our side as much as we thought (feared?). Prior-Prior (PPY) allowed us to push financial aid awards out a good bit earlier, which has given students and families more time to think of questions and process the responses. So far, it seems to significantly decrease the number of financial aid packages requiring verification of information. Anything that lowers stress in this process is good in my book, and I think PPY has done just that.

### **In your 13 years of doing admission, what recent changes have you noticed in the process?**

Recently, I think the biggest change has been the number of applications that each student is putting out there. My first couple of years in admission were the tail end of the days when you only applied to four or five schools. You had one or two reach schools, two or three solid schools, and maybe one safety school. Right around 2008, students started applying to eight or more colleges. This year, we had one student tell us that she applied to 15 colleges and universities. I think that trend is partially in response to the increase in published tuition costs and the larger discussion about student debt. Students want more options so they can shop for the best price. While I understand why students feel the need to do that, it makes it really challenging for colleges to know who is actually interested. As a result, more and more colleges are beginning to take "demonstrated interest" into account when reviewing applications. Who knows where that road will lead?

### **How do you think parents can best help their sons in the college admissions process?**

I think parents can help the most by encouraging their sons to take a risk from time to time. I think too many students play it safe and miss out on some really great opportunities to grow. I work hard to bring in students who succeed in a rigorous curriculum while finding deep and meaningful involvement outside of the classroom, but I will bend over backwards for a student who can combine that with an adventurous attitude. I think Christ School has a lot of that mentality built into its DNA, but it can help to have parents who nudge their sons to take full advantage of those opportunities.



# Alumni Profile: Blaise Dunsmith, Class of 2013

## One-on-One With Blaise Dunsmith '13 University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill Student

### What might you have done differently with regard to the college search and application process?

I would have asked college tour guides about clubs, organizations, and extracurricular activities. College can be overwhelming in the beginning. I adapted by taking part in activities.

### What advice might you offer a high school seniors about their future college experience?

I would advise all seniors to tour and spend the night on campus for the colleges of their interest. Surprises can be fun, but sometimes it's nice to feel extra prepared.

### How is college similar to/different from Christ School?

College has few things in common with Christ School. The academics are obviously the connecting factor, but the level of rigor is much more intense at college. The campus is more diverse and the student body is more active in both the community and the world. That's not to say that Christ School is negligent in any of those areas; just that college is a whole new world.

### Looking back on your Christ School experience, what will you remember most and in what ways did you grow as an actor?

I'll remember my fellow actors from my days at Christ School. It was an amazing opportunity to work with such talented people and to learn and grow by watching them. I grew the most by gradually understanding the need to let go of my inhibitions. I think that's a valuable skill not only in theater, but the world as well.

### Discuss your college theater experience so far.

The theater experience in college is wonderful and very different. With the plays that I have been participating in, my peers have directed me, which is an interesting experience. I think that the theater scene is extremely diverse in college, because there's not just one play per semester; there are multiple auditions per week and it's hard to choose just one!



Blaise Dunsmith with a friend at the Old Well on the campus of UNC Chapel Hill

### Looking back on your four year college experience, what might you encourage Christ School students to do?

Travel. I actually ended up taking a job in Italy last summer! I traveled in Europe this summer (Switzerland, Germany, The Netherlands, and Italy). Following my time in Torrita di Siena, I studied abroad at The University College of Dublin. Living for two months in Europe was a life-changing experience.

### What are your post-college plans?

I'm planning on working in publishing with my English major and Creative Writing minor, but my plans could change; the world is full of possibilities.

### What aspects of Christ School prepared you well for your time in college?

Time management and studying skills were the most valuable academic tools that I took away from my time at Christ School.

### Final Advice?

College is what you make of it. The most valuable advice that I can give is to tell students to join everything that they are interested in and to make the experience one of a kind!

If students have more questions, they can contact Blaise at:  
[blaisesb@gmail.com](mailto:blaisesb@gmail.com)

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*It's a Tool for Parents, too!*

# Using NAVIANCE

[www.connection.naviance.com/christschool](http://www.connection.naviance.com/christschool)

**N**aviance Family Connection is a vital part of the College Guidance process at Christ School. Students start learning about its features as freshmen and increase their usage every year. Eventually it holds their college list and helps them monitor application deadlines. We know that Naviance helps students feel organized, informed, and confident as they work through the college admission process. For parents, it can serve the same purpose.

You'll find Naviance on OnCampus.

Need help? Coco Parham would be happy to help you ([cparham@christschool.org](mailto:cparham@christschool.org), 828-684-6232, ex. 167).

*Once you've registered, you'll be able to view your son's personal information in **About Me**. Your son and Christ School will enter data in these fields. What can you do in **About Me**?*

- Review your son's profile, updated annually, and test scores, updated quarterly.\*
- Read through his resume. Has he overlooked awards or activities or summer experiences? If so, make a list and share it with him and his college counselor.
- Complete surveys as requested.

*Research numerous careers and career clusters in the **Career** section:*

- Read job descriptions.
- View tables with projected wages by state.
- Learn which majors support certain careers; view lists of institutions with these majors.
- Help your son generate a list of careers that interest him.

*Under **Colleges**, your son will do research and build his college list. When you login, consider doing the following:*

- Talk with your son about the schools he's listed under Colleges I'm Thinking About; if there are no colleges listed, work through a Supermatch College Search or College Search with him.
- Using Supermatch College Search, explore colleges by location, major, or academic profile, etc.
- Review the list of college admission representatives who will visit Christ School.

\*In case you're wondering, colleges do not have access to your son's personal information through Naviance.

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## Need to Know...

**Press Release From The North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority (NCSEAA):**

**North Carolina Rolling Out New Residency Determination Service, Raleigh, NC (February 22, 2017)**

A new online service to determine North Carolina residency for tuition purposes and eligibility for state grants will soon be available to all NC colleges and universities. [This plan will be phased in] for all NC public colleges and universities over the next two months. Upon implementation, new undergraduate residency determinations will be conducted centrally through <https://ncresidency.org>.

More information about the Residency Determination Service is available at: <https://ncresidency.org/residencyInfo/>.

## SENIOR FEEDBACK TO UNDERCLASSMEN ON THE COLLEGE PROCESS



Jake Johnson

1. Find a school that is all about YOU. Don't go somewhere just because you are a fan or your parents went there. Figure out what size of school you want and geographically where you want to be for the next four years before singling out colleges.
2. Always do the "optional" essay.
3. Find the one thing ALL colleges want to know about you and make sure your Common Application covers that.
4. Visit the school in person. Get lots of people to read your application.
5. Interview with colleges if available. Take advantage of the mock interviews Mrs. Mahoney and Mr. Blackard offer.



David Lopez

1. Do not simply apply to a college because it is widely known.
2. Make an organized list of everything a college requires so that there will be no confusion.
3. Develop a timeline for completing the process with Mr. Blackard and work each day to complete one or more pieces of the application with the internal deadlines you set with him.
4. If you submit an application electronically, that does not mean a school receives your material the minute or day you send it. Work well ahead of deadlines.
5. Keep a level head throughout the process.



Vance Stiles

1. Do all you can over the summer.
2. Make sure you check multiple times with your recommenders.
3. Stay in close communication with your parents and the College Office.
4. Keep a good timeline with lists of due dates.
5. Remember to take a break.



## Noteworthy College Trends

From NACAC's State of College Admission Report  
Shared With College Counselors and by Mary Stegmeir, December 16, 2016

**Grades Matter Most:** *Students' grades and the academic rigor of their course loads weigh more heavily in decisions to admit than standardized test scores, high school class rank, or demonstrated interest in attending.*

**Colleges Accept Nearly Two-thirds of First Time Freshmen Applicants:**  
*The average selectivity rate at four-year colleges for fall 2014 was 65.8%, edging up from 64.7% in fall 2013 after reaching a low of 63.9% in fall of 2012.*

**Application Growth Continues:** *Between the fall 2014 and fall 2015 admission cycles, the number of applications from first time-freshmen increased 6%; applications from prospective transfer students increased by 4%; and international student applications increased by 23%, on average.*

## College Guidance Contact Information



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