



# THE GREEN PAGES

News from Christ School's College Guidance Office

Fall 2016



Duncan, Emma, Ells, and Coco at home with Remi

## Parents' Perspective on the College Application Process

by Coco and Duncan Parham P'13

*At Christ School Coco works in the College Guidance Office as the Administrative Assistant and Testing Coordinator. Duncan is the Assistant Director of Athletics.*

**How were you feeling prior to Ells enrolling at Appalachian State University (ASU)? At the end of the first year? Now?**

To visit colleges as far away as New Haven, CT, and have him end up less than a two-hour drive away was a bit of a surprise. However, by the end of his first year, we knew it was the right choice. Ells was performing very well academically, earned a position on the track team, met many great people, and was enjoying his area of study. And now, after completing three years at ASU, we are absolutely thrilled! He is really coming into his own and enjoying all aspects of college. ASU has really been a wonderful choice for him.

**Did you notice differences between your children's approaches to the application process?**

Ells's younger sister, Emma, attended a boarding school where she directed her college search more independently. Because she knew that she wanted to major in psychology and live relatively close to home, she was able to narrow down her search. In the end, she applied to only three schools, with all but one in North Carolina.

**How were Ells and Emma feeling during the process?**

In the beginning, it was a bit chaotic. We watched our kids trying to navigate their senior year responsi-

bilities along with application work and testing. Both of our kids were intent on finishing the application process by November so they could focus on their other activities and classes and not have to work on college applications over breaks. In the spring, when they made their decisions, a huge feeling of excitement replaced all the angst of not knowing where the next year would take them.

**Please share anything else you might think helpful for parents.**

As a mom who also works in the College Guidance Office, here is what I would have done a little differently with our kids:

- Trust the process more. It really does take from August to April or May to know where your son or daughter will enroll for college. So many things change over the course of the senior year.
- Don't constantly talk about college. It's hard to stop talking to your children about what their plans are so far in the future. Add to that, family, neighbors and acquaintances are peppering them with college questions, and, quite frankly, they get tired of it. Instead, talk about how the week went or a game and your son or daughter will be happy to answer those questions!
- The most important thing we learned is—it always works out in the end!



### Must Do/Try Recommendations Mentioned by Tour Guides on Mr. Blackard's Western Tour of Colleges

1. CU Boulder—Go to Stampede on Pearl Street before a home football game.
2. Colorado School of Mines—Hike South Table at sunset.
3. Regis—Go to Red Rocks for an outdoor concert.
4. United States Air Force Academy—Hike to the top of Eagle Peak or parachute from a plane your sophomore or junior year.
5. Denver University—Attend a Broncos football game.
6. Colorado College—Hike “The Incline.”
7. University of Northern Colorado—Hike a “fourteener.”
8. Colorado State University—Go tubing in the Horseshoe Reservoir.
9. Boise State University—Go tubing on the Boise River.
10. University of Montana—Hike “The M.”

# THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED TO COLLEGES...ON TWO WHEELS

by Director of College Guidance Kirk Blackard

This past summer I pedaled 260 miles on two wheels to eight colleges, some known, others less well known, all with the hope of finding *that* college which might propel a Christ School graduate to his dreams. I rode on routes that varied from noisy and heavily trafficked thoroughfares to quiet country roads and rail trails with majestic views of the Rocky Mountains.

The “friendly factor,” as I like to call it, was evident at all eight schools—University of Northern Colorado, Colorado State, Naropa, CU Boulder, Colorado School of Mines, University of Denver, Air Force Academy and Colorado College.

On some of our routes, five other high school counselors and I were joined by admission officers who escorted us to their respective campuses. They literally went the extra mile for us on their own bikes.

Once on campus, tours of each school were provided along with lengthy conversations with students, professors, admission office personnel, and one president (Naropa College). Each showcased impressive facilities,

which at times resembled an arms race among the schools. When we mentioned how impressed we were with Colorado State’s rec center, which included an indoor ice rink and a climbing wall, CU Boulder’s tour guide smiled and said, “OK, but do they have four tennis courts on the top of their rec center which overlook the Flatirons?”

Tour guides at both small and large universities shared stories of close-knit communities, adding personal stories of professors coming to their rescue. A cadet at the Air Force Academy mentioned professors who respond to emails at 3:00 a.m. and teachers who come back to the Academy on the weekend to help a student. Other tour guides talked about visiting professors during their office flex hours, sometimes held in the evenings, or meeting a professor over coffee to develop a better understanding of valence electrons (CU Boulder), when ideas or concepts failed to stick with them in the classroom.

Schools were quick to mention their support servic-

es—writing and quantitative (math) centers and learning resource programs. Of particular note, the University of Denver’s Learning Effectiveness Program boasts one of the top such programs in the country. New resources such as mental health counselors were frequently mentioned on our tours. Colorado College offers students six free sessions, while Naropa offers free counseling all year long.

As a way of getting a better feel for campuses, we enjoyed eating meals in school dining halls and sleeping in dorm rooms. I kept track of which schools had the most comfortable beds, powerful shower heads, and tastiest breakfasts (it was a tie between CU Boulder and Colorado College where steak and pork chops were regular menu items with eggs).

Some admission officers took us on extended tours of the surrounding area to experience what students might do in their spare time or on weekends. Among those adventures was a private tour of the New Belgium Brewery offered by Colorado State University. Colorado College took us just minutes from their campus to the national landmark Garden of the Gods to experience the great outdoors.

Almost all schools mentioned some variation of their internship, living/learning communities, travel abroad or travel away programs, and research opportunities. All schools seemed to have outstanding outdoor programs.

Unique offerings distinguished one school from another. Colorado College, well known for its block program where students take one course at a time over a 3 ½ week period, shared that with that extra free time students can take additional short trips such as a bike ride from Colorado Springs to Aspen or a rafting adventure down the Western River. Fermentation Science is a unique major at Colorado State University. At Colorado School of Mines, Engineering students are able to simulate previous real-life situations such as the

BP Oil Spill Disaster and thus demonstrate how they might fail, but ultimately succeed, in working through real-life problems. The end goal for these students is to develop critical thinking skills that become second-nature when applied in the real world.

Aware of parent concerns about mounting costs and graduating on time, CU Boulder guarantees that

each student will graduate in four years and that the price will remain the same each year. In terms of job placement and graduate school attendance rates six months after graduation, most schools report percentages in the seventies, eighties, and nineties.

For parents concerned with getting the biggest bang for their buck, famous alumni were mentioned. Who would have known

James Michener, the Pulitzer Prize winning author of such books as *Hawaii* and *Chesapeake*, received his master’s degree in education from the University of Northern Colorado? Apparently, he was so enthralled with the school that he donated his dentures to the school, which now reside for all to see in the school’s library! Few might know that Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice earned a BA in political science from the University of Denver.

When I asked student tour guides for final advice for high school seniors, they seemed in agreement; it’s less about the reputation of a school and more about the people you meet and the life-changing experiences you have or seek while you are there. More specifically, one guide offered, “Step out of your comfort zone. Get involved in a club or activity; get to know your professors and enjoy life away from school on occasion.” Do this, they said, and the sky really is the limit.



Left Photo: Kirk Blackard on the outskirts of the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs

Above: Kirk Blackard with Tour D’Admission guidance counselors on their way to Colorado School of Mines



# TALK TO ME



You might find that some of your schools require an interview or give you the choice of an optional interview. This is a great chance for you to make the application process a little more personal. Below are some tips to help make your next interview successful.

- ***Call the school and schedule your interview in advance.***
- ***Research the school prior to the interview. Be prepared to ask some questions about the school.***
- ***Practice with teachers, parents, alumni, etc., before the interview.***
- ***Dress appropriately. You want to be remembered for what you are saying, not what you are wearing.***
- ***Make sure you're on time...in fact, be EARLY!***
- ***Remember your manners! Make sure to turn your cell phone off and don't call the interviewer by his/her first name.***
- ***Be prepared to answer beyond one word responses. Remember, this is a conversation and the interviewer wants to get to know you better.***
- ***Be honest. Don't exaggerate or fabricate your answers.***
- ***Don't be afraid to have a question repeated. If you can't understand the interviewer or want clarification on the question, ask.***
- ***Relax! This is a chance for a school to learn more about you than they can get from the application. Be yourself!***

*Revised from the "Talk to Me" presentation at the 2016 Southern Association of College Admission Counseling Annual Conference*

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