



THE GREEN PAGES

News from Christ School's College Guidance Office

Spring 2012

Alumni Profile: Gabe Dunsmith, Class of 2012

During his four years at Christ School, Gabe Dunsmith was an exceptional student, writer, actor and community leader. This past fall, he carried his passion for learning and activism to Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York.

Why did you choose Vassar?

I chose Vassar because I knew I wanted to go to a small, liberal arts college with a focus on writing. In a lot of ways, Vassar is reflective of Christ School: a small student body (at least compared to most colleges—Vassar's population of 2,400 is ten times larger than Christ School's and seems huge to me), small class sizes, and a large campus (Vassar has 1,000 acres of farms and woodland). I knew Vassar was renowned for its English Department, and, as I've always envisioned going into journalism as a career, I knew it would be a perfect fit for me.

When I visited, Vassar's beautiful campus helped win me over. The library is this gorgeous neo-Gothic structure that dominates the college. Vassar's proximity to New York City (it's a ninety-minute train ride away), its lack of a graduate school, and its prohibition of Greek life also influenced my decision.

What have been your most memorable experiences to date at Vassar?

I've helped lead a religious and spiritual community on campus called Wholistic, where we meditate and share poems and prayers. It's been a wonderful, uplifting group to join. With other student groups, I've gone to an anti-nuclear rally in New York City and have protested twice on Wall Street. I've also traveled to Washington, D.C., to demonstrate against the Keystone XL oil pipeline. So, some of the most memorable experiences have been with other student groups! Getting involved in social life and activism on campus has been a great way to get to know people.

Other than these events, exploring Vassar's vast tracts of land and walking down to the lake with friends have been among my most outstanding experiences.



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Was the transition from Christ School to Vassar easy or difficult? What obstacles did you face?

Academically, I felt very well-prepared transitioning from Christ School to Vassar. At Christ School I always knew I was getting a great education, but I didn't realize how valuable it would be until I got to Vassar. Having challenged myself academically at Christ School, I had already adopted beneficial study habits; and I knew how to take notes and compose essays. In the classroom, the greatest obstacle has been that there is a lot more reading than I ever had for classes at Christ School, and I have to know the material to be prepared for class.

I suppose the largest transition for me was adapting to a new social atmosphere! As I was a day student at Christ School, I had to acclimate to living in a dorm—and not only that, but a dorm with co-ed halls and co-ed bathrooms! From a social perspective, Vassar is very different from Christ School, but that difference has helped me grow.



What advice or words of wisdom might you offer underclassmen about their first year in college?

Try to balance academics with having fun. There's a lot that you can learn outside of the classroom, whether that's in your dorm or in various student groups that might appeal to you. Classes are very important, yes, but so are concerts, sporting events, guest lectures, political rallies, art exhibits, and dozens of other events that occur on campus. It's just as important to me to have friends with whom I can hang out as it is to take invigorating classes.

Fortunately, a lot of boarders at Christ School will probably transition to the social scenes of college relatively smoothly. Boarders already know how to live with roommates; they know they can walk down the hall and talk to friends; they can start a snowball fight on a winter afternoon. I would imagine that the residential life of Christ School makes the transition to college all the more painless.

Regarding academics: almost all of the classes I took at Christ School were excellent, but the ones that most echoed my experience in the college classroom are Ms. Tillett's AP U.S. and European History courses and Mrs. Morrison's AP English Literature. I highly encourage underclassmen to take classes that will push them and allow them to reach for new heights.

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What advice might you offer Christ School students about the college search process?

When I first arrived at Vassar's campus on a tour, I knew that it was the school for me. So I would highly encourage students to visit schools that interest them; experiencing college campuses myself was the most valuable part of my search process. Find the school that excites you, the one that feels like home. Knowing what you want in a college (size of student body, emphasis on science/math/history/English, campus acreage, Greek life, rural/urban setting, political atmosphere, proximity to home, etc.) can greatly help you narrow your search.

What are your plans for the future?

Right now I plan on majoring in Environmental Studies. My ideal career would be one of investigative environmental journalism, and I'm hoping that an Environmental Studies major would endow me with greater awareness of environmental issues about which I could write. After college I'd like to dive right into investigative reporting and see where it takes me.

Financial Aid 101:

Surviving and Thriving with FA

In January, Laura Misner of the College Foundation of North Carolina conducted a financial aid seminar for our parents in Pingree Auditorium. Whether your son is a senior or an eighth grader, the information she shared will be helpful.

What is Need-Based Financial Aid?

- Scholarships (merit and athletic awards; gift aid that is not repaid)
- Grants (federal, state and institutional; gift aid that is not repaid)
- Work Study (federal program; students are paid for work done on campus)
- Loans (federal, state, institutional and private; must be repaid)

What are the basic assumptions behind need-based aid?

- Families will contribute to the extent that they're able.
- Income and assets reflect a family's financial strength over time.
- Unusual circumstances will be considered; similar treatment for similar circumstances.
- More will be expected from those with greater resources.

How do colleges determine my family's financial need?

	Cost of Attendance (COA)
-	Estimated Family Contribution (EFC)
-	Additional Financial Assistance (outside resources)

Cost of Attendance (COA): The total cost of attending an institution for one year. In addition to the largest components – tuition, fees, room and board – this figure should include other necessities such as food, transportation, books and other personal expenses. All colleges offer Net Cost Calculators to help families predict the full COA.

Estimated Family Contribution (EFC): The federal government determines this based on information provided on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA, www.fafsa.ed.gov). Some colleges also use the College Scholarship Service Profile (CSS Profile, www.collegeboard.com) to allocate need-based institutional funds. Note: The FAFSA is free,

while there is a fee associated with each CSS Profile sent to schools.

Additional Financial Assistance

might come in the form of scholarships or gifts from outside organizations or individuals. Look for scholarships early; applications take time and deadlines are firm. These outside awards may reduce the family's demonstrated financial need so it is important to discuss this with your financial aid counselor at each school.



Laura Misner of the College Foundation of North Carolina.

Demonstrated Financial Need (DFN): Some colleges meet 100% of DFN for all four (or five) years of college, while others do not. This is an important question to ask when applying for aid.

Where do I go from here?

- **Do your research.** Know each school's policies, procedures and deadlines.
- Collect relevant documents such as W-2's and the previous year's tax returns.
- Complete and submit all forms **prior to your schools' deadlines.**
- Contact your financial aid counselor at each school **early in the process.**
- When financial aid award letters arrive, compare packages. Ask questions such as:
 - What is the proportion of grants, scholarships, loans and work study?
 - Does the school guarantee it will meet your full need for all four years?
 - Does the school guarantee housing for all four years?
 - What is the bottom line?

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Financial Aid... continued

Useful Resources for Financial Aid

FastWeb (www.fastweb.org): A free online scholarship search.

The Smart Student Guide to Financial Aid (www.finaid.org): Links to financial aid and scholarship information, a FA glossary, an extensive bibliography, free online scholarship searches and calculators to help students compare FA packages.

College Foundation of North Carolina (www.cfnc.org): Another good site with general information plus a wealth of resources for NC residents.

On Two Wheels...

Director of College Guidance Kirk Blackard continued his journey to colleges on two wheels this past summer. He and 15 high school counselors from across the US pedaled to schools in three southeastern states: North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia. Here are his notes on a few of the schools and some interesting trends on college campuses and in college admissions.

It was a brutally hot and humid bike ride through the Carolinas and Georgia last summer, but extremely worthwhile. We learned quite a bit on our 400 mile tour of schools. We found some colleges intent on helping their students become more aware of the world around them with student-centered sustainability and renewable energy projects such as the one at Guilford College as well as a myriad of service-learning and volunteer experiences offered at a number of other campuses as well.

At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, our two student tour guides shared with us that their campus is



Blackard with Christ School alumnus and Board member George Berger '83 who escorted the group from Catawba College to Davidson College.

among the top “most engaged campuses” in the country, with a majority of students participating in multiple community projects during their four year collegiate careers. In fact, last year, through the Carolina Center for Public Service (www.unc.edu/ccps), 2200 members of UNC’s undergraduate student population completed over 300 hours of service per person in nursing homes, hospitals, public schools and a wide range of non-profits throughout the state, country and world.

We discovered other schools that are expanding their curriculum with unique majors or concentrations within a major. At High Point University, students can major in Game

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Design. At Presbyterian College, there is a School of Pharmacy, and at Catawba College, they offer a concentration in Popular Music. It was obvious to all of us that schools are looking for innovative ways to add value to the educational experience.

High Point University's Vice President for Enrollment Management, Andy Bills, spoke with us about a "Four Hour Core Curriculum," something he says eight of the top 10 private universities in America now offer. With High Point, this "fourth hour" of credit in a course is built around the idea of providing students with hands-on or "real world" experiences that allow them to apply what they have learned in the classroom. Elon University offers a similar experiential learning component through its domestic summer programs

(www.elon.edu/e-net) in New York and Los Angeles. There, students take an academic course on Mondays and participate in internships the rest of the week in their areas of interests. The idea of experiential learning extends to Elon's new optional Gap Semester Program designed for incoming freshman.

Research, internships, service-learning and overseas experiences were common at most schools, but one statistic caught our attention. At the University of Georgia, we were surprised to learn that over half (55%) of University of Georgia undergraduates have completed research for credit prior to graduation. How so? Their Center for Undergraduate Research matches students who would like to do research with appropriate faculty across disciplines.

In terms of admission trends, we met with two schools, Wake Forest and Furman University, that are test optional (see "Terms Defined" for more information). According to Brad Pochard, Furman's Director of Admission, "We want to 'admit to our mission' and to attract students who are hungry to learn—those who have energy, excitement, passion, grit and who bring multiple talents to our campus. We are no longer playing the "arms race" of higher SAT / ACT averages for our new classes." To aid them in their assessment of prospective admission candidates, Furman will add an essay supplement to its application while Wake Forest strongly recommends that rising high school seniors interview, either face-to-face or via Skype.

While the 2011 bike tour was a physically challenging one, the Carolina and Georgia schools will forever be on our minds.

Immersed in Language and Culture

Did you know that students who study a language have better mental flexibility, are more creative, and earn higher scores on standardized tests? Have you considered how, in our global economy, the ability to communicate in multiple languages and function in different cultures might affect a student's career opportunities? Belinda Walters, Director of Wofford College's Language Academy, posed these questions to a group of more than 25 Christ School students and faculty in early February.

Wofford's language immersion program, like others in the country and abroad, combines formal classes with cultural enrichment and collaborative projects. Encouraged to use the language almost 100% of the time—in dormitories and dining halls, on soccer fields and at concerts – high school students can make huge strides forward in language comprehension and proficiency. "In just one of our four-week sessions," Walters explained, "students get as much exposure to the language as they would in a full year of high school classes."

Wofford's Language Academy offers courses in Spanish, French, German and Mandarin Chinese. For more information about sessions, fees and application deadlines, visit the Language Academy website (www.wofford.edu/languageacademy).



More programs recommended by our faculty:

Christ School Study Abroad in Salamanca, Spain

(June 16 - July 7, 2012) For more information or to reserve a spot, contact Spanish Teacher Marshall Baltazar (mbaltazar@christschool.org).

Middlebury Monterey Language Academies in VT, OH, CA or PA (Summers) Programs offered in French, Spanish, Arabic, German, Mandarin Chinese. www.mmla.middlebury.edu

Concordia Language Villages in MN (Summers) Programs offered in 15 languages including Finnish, Portuguese, Japanese and Russian. www.concordialanguagevillages.org

Spanish House in Oaxaca, Mexico (Year Round) Intensive work in Spanish with housing on campus or with host families. www.oaxacaspanish.com

Scanning the Horizon:

Promoting College Awareness

– Emily Pulsifer, 9th and 10th Grade College Counselor

Each year, I invite freshmen and sophomores to meet with me during the fall and winter. When we start our conversations, I try to stoke their enthusiasm and allay their fears. Information and encouragement, I've found, can transform an anxious student into a confident, eager college applicant.

With that in mind, here are some ways all of us – family members, teachers, administrators and friends – can help younger students prepare for the college search and application process.

1. **Urge him to seek academic challenges, not settle for what's easy;** colleges want to fill their classrooms with students who are willing to test their limits.
2. **Encourage interests and activities that nourish his mind, body and soul;** colleges want to fill their clubs, teams and service organization with enthusiastic, talented individuals.
3. **Expose him to the vast array of opportunities that lie ahead in college;** in addition to formal tours and academic programs for teens, take him to games, social gatherings and cultural events on college campuses.
4. **Avoid judgment about the colleges and careers that pique his interest;** your reaction can dampen his enthusiasm for the whole project. There will be plenty of time to assess the pros and cons of every option.
5. **Encourage him to read;** not only is reading the best test preparation out there, but good readers also become better writers.
6. **Help him make good decisions in school, out of school, and online;** students must be aware that the decisions they make today could affect their college choices in a few years.



Emily Pulsifer

Juniors on the Move

November 16, 2011



Clemson University



Georgia Tech University

College Admission Vocabulary: Terms Defined

Test Optional - In Kirk Blackard's article "On Two Wheels..." he noted that Wake Forest and Furman have gone "test optional." Both of these institutions, along with more than 800 schools across the country, do not require that test scores (SAT or ACT) be submitted with applications. If a student feels that his test scores are an accurate reflection of his academic ability, he can submit them; if not, he can withhold them without penalty. According to the Wake Forest website, the university has welcomed its strongest, most diverse classes since it became test optional in 2008. At Furman, they are confident that they can determine students' unique "interests, backgrounds, personalities, and passions" without test scores. For a full list of test optional schools, visit FairTest.org (www.fairtest.org).

Common Application (CA) – This standard application has grown in popularity since its introduction in 1975. More than 450 institutions accept this form (either in paper or online) in lieu of a school-specific application, and the list of "CA schools" grows every year. When students submit the CA to multiple schools, it saves time and energy. Member schools can tailor the form to their institutional interests using supplements. Go to the Common Application website (www.commonapp.org) to view the form, member institutions, and other documents and resources.

Estimated Family Contribution (EFC): The federal government determines this based on information provided on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA, www.fafsa.ed.gov). Some colleges also use the College Scholarship Service Profile (CSS Profile, www.collegeboard.com) to allocate need-based institutional funds. While the FAFSA is free, there is a fee associated with each CSS Profile sent to schools. The CSS Profile can be filled out anytime after October 1 for the following academic year; the FAFSA is available online after January 1. Note: All financial aid forms should be submitted two weeks before the EARLIEST priority filing date specified by your colleges or programs.

Juniors on the Move



Wake Forest University



Emory University

College Guidance Spring 2012 Calendar

- January-February – FRESHMEN Meetings with Ms. Pulsifer
- January-May – JUNIOR Meetings with Mr. Blackard
- February 18 – Essay Blitz (JUNIORS)
- April-May – SOPHOMORE Resume Sessions with Ms. Pulsifer
- April 14 – ACT (JUNIORS)
- March 26-April 27 – Career Speaker Series (ALL STUDENTS)
- May 1 – College Deposit Deadline (SENIORS)
- May 5 – SAT (JUNIORS)