

INS & OUTS

GRINNELL SUMMER '07

Editor's View: Love in the Time of Dengue

• Erin Sindewald '08 • Orland Park, IL • English Major

Before going abroad, Grinnell students must attend an informational session about all the terrible things that can happen to you (but probably won't) in order to prepare you to deal with the worst-case scenarios you will most likely never face (but then again, you might).

So long before setting foot on an airplane, I listened to Richard Bright, the director of off-campus study, lecture on the dangers of rape, AIDS, armed robberies, kidnappings, murders, freak accidents, natural disasters, and potentially fatal tropical diseases. By the end of the presentation, my head overflowed with so many "what-ifs," I began to wonder if I really wanted to spend a semester in Costa Rica and Nicaragua at all. After all, Iowa has corn. Central America has malaria.

Luckily, I got over my initial anxieties about crossing U.S. borders, because I ended up having one of those clichéd, amazing-life-changing-I-now-see-the-world-in-a-new-light-and-will-never-be-the-same-again experiences. Last spring I spent a month studying Spanish and globalization in San José, Costa Rica, and while there, I mastered the fine art of crossing the street without getting plowed down by towering buses and aggressive taxis (pedestrians do *not* have the right of way).

Then it was on to Chagüitillo, Nicaragua, where I volunteered for two wonderful months with a nonprofit community development organization. I spent



my days teaching at the local high school and preschool, working in a museum, and learning lots of risque Nica slang words. My nights were spent with my incredible host family, talking, dancing, and rocking chair-ing. And it was in Nicaragua, amidst all the rice-and-beans-eating and sunset-appreciating, when I unexpectedly came face to face with one of Richard Bright's "what-ifs."

I got sick.

I woke up one morning with an upset stomach, and assumed I was being punished for drinking a soda chilled with ice made with unfiltered water. I figured the discomfort would fade as the day

passed, and went through with my plans to travel with other students in my program to a beautiful organic farm situated way up in the mountains, several miles from paved roads.

As it turns out, I had more than food poisoning.

After a night in the hospital, a shot in the bum, an IV, two blood tests, having to poop and pee into separate cups, and explaining all of my symptoms to Dr. Rosado in my Gringo-accented Spanish, I was diagnosed with dengue fever—a pesky mosquito-borne illness with malaria-like symptoms that make the seemingly impossible expression "constipated

diarrhea" possible — as well as a rockin' intestinal infection.

Bummer.

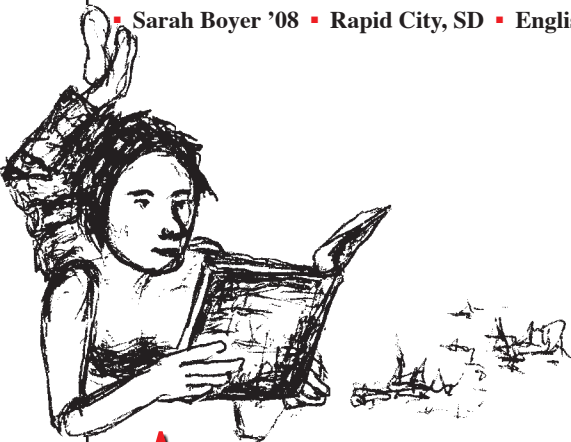
But I'm pretty stoked to know that one day I'll be able to tell my future grandkids about the time Grandma Erin fell violently ill while visiting an isolated organic farm in Nicaragua and then had to hike three miles through the mountains in 90 degree weather with all of her travel gear to get to the nearest bus station, and then spend another two hours using a combination of public transportation and hitchhiking to get to the nearest health clinic.

Even though my travel guidebook claims that contracting dengue fever "will put a stop to your fun in Central America like a baseball bat to the head," getting sick didn't detract from my time abroad — it enhanced it. True, I was bedridden for quite some time, I got terrible headaches behind my eyes, and my bowels were doing some pretty freaky things I didn't know they could do. But my, oh, my. What an experience. So many stories to tell! And isn't that what it's all about?

Overall, Grinnell has been good to me. I'm appreciative of my five semesters here, and of the two remaining. But my advice to the young 'uns (and the advice that more than 50 percent of all Grinnell students follow) is this: go abroad. Some experiences just can't be had in Grinnell. Iowa does have corn. And Nicaragua, along with its gorgeous lakes and volcanoes, has dengue. And I'm grateful that in my stint as an undergrad, I've had both.

Once Upon a Time

• Sarah Boyer '08 • Rapid City, SD • English Major



As soon as I learned to read, I was never without a book. Often the characters were just as real to me as my siblings. When my father took me and my cousins out on forced-march hikes to some middle-of-nowhere place in rural South Dakota, I invented elaborate families, lives, and conversations for these characters. Due to my wild imagination, my cousins dubbed me "that kid."

Aside from my own imaginary stories, I remember sitting around the oak kitchen table at my home, listening to my father tell the story (for the 15th time) of how he climbed the Matterhorn in Switzerland as a 20-year-old college kid. His guide drank an entire bottle of wine on the way up. I can still hear my

mother tell me about the boy she beat the tar out of in elementary school because he stole her jacks. Bedtime at my house was usually enforced — except when my Aunt Marge was over yakking about the latest drama at her vet clinic, or when my older brother Frank was home from his most recent crazy endeavor in the Marine Corps. When there were stories to be swapped, I was allowed to stay up as long as I wanted, listening.

Having been saturated with storytelling as a child, an English major seemed a logical choice for me at Grinnell. It would allow me to read and discuss stories while I did my homework. But I was happy to discover that stories weren't relegated only to the academic sphere. Nowadays, I hear less about my father's ability to blow smoke out his eyes and more about the friends I have made in the larger Grinnell community.

I met most of these people at a wonderful event called Community Meal, which takes place every Tuesday at Davis Elementary School. Sponsored by the chaplain's office, along with community and student groups, the Community Meal brings people together to cook a free meal available to anyone who wants to come. Usually, about 100

people show up. Last week's menu consisted of meatloaf, mashed potatoes, green beans, grilled cheese, assorted cookies, lemonade, and milk.

I would never call the skills I've acquired at Community Meal "culinary." For while I am now able to chop many, many onions, open numerous cans of fruit cocktail, and make 12 boxes of Betty Crocker brownie mix, I spend most of the meal talking and listening to the stories people tell me about their lives. While we sit at folding lunch tables under bad fluorescent lighting, surrounded by colorful crayon artwork, I tell community members about the French exam I have on Friday and how I don't think I will ever truly understand the subjunctive tense. In exchange, Dave will tell me stories about his time in Germany during World War II. Later, I will

move to a different table and sit in on Erlene and Rose-Marie's reoccurring and rather heated discussion about George Bush and Wal-Mart. Moving yet again, I will sit down next to a 95-year-old retired minister who sings me songs and tells me about his long-ago trips to Israel and Palestine.

As a result of these conversations, when I am sitting on the park bench in front of Wells Fargo or getting tea at Saints Rest, I feel less like a student from out of town and more like a part of the community at large. Grinnell, the school, is intense in many wonderful ways, and there is no point in denying that it can be stressful. That is the way of college. But it has been crucial to my perspective and my sanity to remember that a five- to seven-page paper pales in importance to a good story about someone's life.



COMMUNITY MEAL



The Midnight Flight of the Mattress Riders

• Adam Barrett '08 • Norman, OK • English Major

Beneath Grinnell's academic veneer, there lies a secret world. In this world, shadowy figures converge by a signal known only to them, unleash weeks of pent-up glee, and vanish in the haze. It is a world we hear of in legend and rumor, a world that keeps its secrets.

Mischief is always best kept secret.

Many tales are told of revels conducted in the dark of night: roller chair races, steam tunnel spelunking, naked kite-flying. Among these, only one brings the giddy thrill of downhill motion to the academic sanctum of the Alumni Recitation Hall: mattress sledding.

The story goes as follows: when the stars align and the wind is right, and when the scent of 10-page papers lies on campus like a slab of rancid butter, a band of rogues assembles. With bravado as their only armor, they leave the dorms with a mattress hefted over their heads. They send out a silent call. In ARH, the fun begins. Moments later, young students chancing to leave the computer lab will be invited to experience delight in its purest form. They will be offered a seat at the top of the stairs, on a mattress going down.

The mattress descends only half a flight, but oh, what a flight it is. Alone or in tightly embracing knots of friends, silent or whooping with joy, the riders dive like falcons down the stairs and glide to a gentle stop in the



hall below. The moment a rider dismounts, waiting arms grab the mattress and haul it again to the top, where the next rider will step on.

As with any legend, the revelation opens the door to deeper mystery. Who are these midnight riders? Do they not have homework? Are they the same who run naked in the fields, who roll in chairs down the tile halls of Noyce? Why a mattress, and not a sled or plastic tray? Can more than four safely ride? Perhaps one day the revels will be observed and recorded, and we will know for certain. But certainty brings control, and if the legends are true, the revels thrive on freedom. Perhaps it is best, then, that they remain cloaked in shadow, a mystery to be explored and explored again by each coming generation.

Think Locally (But Bring a Sweatshirt)

• Colette Boilini '08 • Bloomington, IN • Sociology Major

It's a balmy summer morning in San Francisco, and I can feel the sun cascading across my shoulders as I stroll down the sidewalk. As I gently flip my hair off of my shoulders, a figure in the distance catches my attention. He moves with unbridled confidence and even from a distance I can feel the connect — BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

Ahh! I'm awake, I'm awake!

Cut to reality: it's a cold, dark San Francisco morning and I'm *cold*.

Like many a San Francisco newcomer, I foolishly assumed that the great state of California had a lot of DE-lightful weather in store for me. True, I had been warned to pack as though I were getting ready for an Indiana (my home state) winter. But, as I had just finished a semester with the Urban Studies Program in Chicago, where I had survived my harshest winter yet, I wasn't exactly feeling intimidated by a California summer.

So, off I went with my tank-top filled suitcase and my Midwestern swagger (oh, just go with it), leaving my "I" states existence behind for the land of chilly summers, big hills, and cool green compost containers. So why, besides the (false) promise of warm weather, did this Indianan-Iowan trek cross country for a two month adventure in California?

Well, my friends, I found love. Not the you-smell-good-I-feel-good-let's-slow-dance-and-change-our-facebook-status love. No, more like the oh-my-gosh-you-are-the-coolest-nonprofit-ever-I'm-totally-inspired kind of love. Oh, come on — stay with me, I'll explain.

Last semester, thanks to my then-internship supervisor, Ellen, I was introduced to an organization I could have

sworn had walked straight out of my dreams: the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE). BALLE connects local business networks from all over the United States and Canada, and believes that strong local living economies are crucial in creating healthy and happy communities. Their member networks, of all different sizes and locations, work tirelessly to educate their communities and business owners on the economic, environmental, and social benefits of thinking and acting locally. Their member businesses, all independent and locally owned, span the economic spectrum and range from retailers to zero-waste manufacturers to green builders. Together, the BALLE staff, networks, and member businesses represent a body of individuals who believe there is more to life than the (traditional) bottom line.

So there it was, my dream organization — enlightened, committed to local businesses, and, oh baby, it had 501(c)(3) status! Well, that was it for me. I had to make it mine (so to speak). With as persistent an effort as I've ever mustered, I e-mailed, faxed, e-mailed some more, and interviewed my way into an internship with BALLE. And, because Grinnell has an awesome summer grants program, I also applied for and received a grant through the Wilson Program to fund my (unpaid) internship.

Combined, these processes required a great deal of time and committed effort. But, as I sit here (sweatshirt-clad) in San Francisco, sipping coffee and mulling over everything I have already learned, I can say with great confidence — it was all totally worth it.

At Home in a New World

• Will Cummins '10 • Grinnell, IA • Undeclared Major

I remember pulling up in the car to Lazier Hall on the first day of New Student Orientation. Lazier, the white-stone residence hall where I was going to live for my first year of college, was not an unfamiliar sight, nor was any other part of campus. Because I had been born and raised in Grinnell, the town and campus were like second nature to me. On top of that, both my parents had been professors at Grinnell College for as long as I had been living, and as a result, the College was a fixture in my life. Yet, when we pulled up in the car, the campus felt totally different. I didn't really feel like I was going to a familiar place at all. I was going to be living with a roommate from Nepal and I was leaving behind the classmates with whom I had spent the last 12 years. I was just like any other first-year college student — anxious and worried about making new friends.

My anxieties weren't limited to my social life. I was also apprehensive about the academic scene at Grinnell. I was fortunate enough to take a couple of courses at Grinnell College when I was a high school senior. Yet, to me, that experience was not reassuring. I didn't have a lot of confidence in my academic abilities, and my worries were compounded by the fact that I was well aware of Grinnell's reputation for academic rigor. I still remember clearly how nervous I felt on the first day of each one of my classes as I scanned the syllabus.

One course, however, was especially intimidating. On the first day of beginning Spanish, my professor informed us that only Spanish would be spoken for the rest of the semester. Although I had taken Latin when I was in high school, I'd never spoken a foreign language conversationally, and the all-Spanish rule made me feel a little panicky. Eventually, though, as my first semester progressed, I became more used to what was expected, and I developed a routine, allowing me to relax a little and enjoy my classes.

Socially, too, things started to even out during the semester, due in large part to a group of guys I had met my first week. Since my roommate was from Nepal, he

had arrived on campus long before I had, and he had met a great group of international students and upperclass students who were also on campus early. A couple of his friends invited both of us to join "Friday Night Lights," a pick-up basketball game on Friday nights. Even though I had not played organized basketball since seventh grade, FNL immediately became the high point in my week — a chance to play and blow off steam. As a result, I became friends with a large, diverse group of people. It was hard to believe that I was having an international experience playing basketball in my hometown.

Music offered yet another way for me to pursue something familiar, yet have many new experiences. Although I had played the euphonium in my high school band, I decided to play trombone in the orchestra in college. I had never played with strings, nor had I played any basic orchestral repertoire. Yet, in my first semester, the orchestra played a piece, "Dona Nobis Pacem," by Ralph Vaughan Williams, and the Grinnell Community Chorus — a large ensemble of college students and townspeople — sang with the orchestra. With both ensembles crammed on the stage of Herick Chapel, there were easily 100 people working together to perform the piece, a novel and exciting experience. During my second semester, I even played in a contemporary piece in which the notes and dynamics were not actually written for the players; instead, the players decided what notes to play and at what volume to play them. This innovative style was a big change from the usual John Philip Sousa march.

At the beginning of the year when I was meeting new people and talking about my background, many people believed I must have had an easy transition to college life. Not true. I struggled a lot at first. Although I was in a familiar setting, I was surrounded by new people and challenged to take new approaches to what I thought were familiar activities. I was receiving a worldwide experience only four blocks from my family home. I was at home in a new world.



An Alternative to Flipping Burgers

• Lindsay Dennis '08 • Beaverton, OR • Psychology Major

After spending last summer working as a cashier for a Safeway grocery store in Portland, Ore., I was very adamant about finding a more intellectually stimulating (and less customer service related) occupation for the summer of 2007. From the beginning of my third year, I had been planning to apply for summer research in psychology at Grinnell. I waited for an e-mail from the psychology department notifying me how and when to apply, but no such e-mail was forthcoming.

I got impatient and started trying to look up said information on the school's website. To my absolute horror, I found that the deadline to apply for summer research was the previous day. I frantically e-mailed my adviser, asking if it would be possible to get an extension, only to be told that the psychology department wasn't actually hosting any research assistants this summer because of the Noyce construction. My heart sank, and I began to mull over alternate possibilities for summer employment. Perhaps I could wait tables or make pizzas (I do have an extensive background in food service). None of these options sounded very appealing, but I had promised myself that I wasn't going to spend another summer watching TV at my parents' house.

In a stroke of tremendous luck, I received a different e-mail the next day saying that psychology professors were, in fact, hosting researchers, and that the application deadline had been extended to the following Monday. Alone in my room, I squealed with joy

at my renewed possibilities for academic employment. I quickly but carefully filled out applications for each available research position.

Then, I waited. And waited. And, just for good measure, I waited a little bit more. By the time spring break rolled around, I had pretty much resigned myself to flipping burgers or sprinkling cheese on dough once again. Just as I was about to hit the maximum freak-out point — stuck in April with absolutely no summer plans — I received an e-mail from Professor David Lopatto offering me a position as a summer researcher. In less than a day, I had managed to go from intense stress and disappointment to ecstatic joy. I was going to get paid to do psychology!

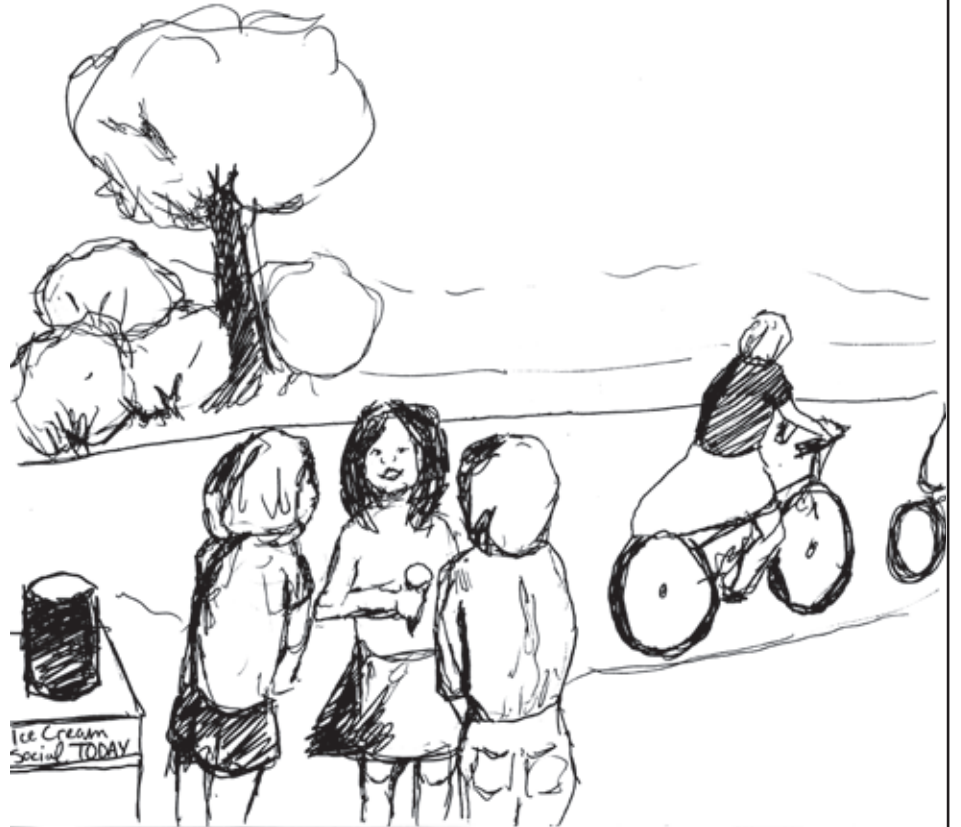
Throughout the course of this summer, I have been working with Professor Lopatto and another student, studying the epistemological and vocational impact of the summer research experience on undergraduate students. Yes, you read that correctly. My summer research project is to study other summer research students. We began by reading a series of articles on previous empirical studies in this field, which was a very strange experience. My first day as a summer researcher, I was reading about how the research experience helps students solidify their graduate school plans, increase their sense of belonging to the scientific (or, more broadly, academic) community, and improve their research and communication skills. I had to wonder, would I be receiving all of these same benefits, even though my project

was somewhat more unorthodox? Or, would knowing these were the things that were supposed to happen to me prevent them from actually happening? (I mean, a watched pot never boils, right?)

I became more and more interested in the topic. I've even caught myself referencing articles about the various stages of epistemological development in casual conversation with my friends. Fortunately, they are all Grinnellians and are willing to put up with my massive nerdiness (with the implicit agreement that I won't judge them when they excitedly

bring up obscure historical details about the Civil War Reconstruction period).

Summer in Grinnell does have the occasional setback. Hot, humid days without air conditioning, the responsibility of having to pay rent and feed myself, and the lovely task of researching in the science library as the cacophony of construction occurs not 20 feet away spring to mind. However, I am still extremely grateful to have been offered this opportunity, and I'm very appreciative of the fact that Grinnell does such an excellent job of providing research experience to its students.



Hot Fun in the Summertime

• Meredith Groves '08 • Centennial, CO • Anthropology Major

I am the queen of playing things by ear. Plan ahead? No, thank you — I'd rather not. Of course, at times it's necessary, but in most cases, I believe life is more enjoyable if I take each moment as it comes instead of worrying about the future.

However, I should be honest. It would be deceitful to claim that I play things by ear in a sheer effort to live in the present. Confession time — I often lack the ability to commit because I suffer from indecision. So, I offer this disclaimer: the following episode is rather common and not as painful as I may suggest. And so, we begin ...

I can wait no longer. I have to make a decision. "It's only three months," I reassure myself. Yet I am not reassured. My mind and heart fight a fierce battle over a simple question: "Where will I spend the summer?"

Having returned from Argentina only days before, I am uncertain whether I can muster the strength to leave again so soon. But I can't spend the summer at home. So I ponder my options and narrow my potential destinations to two. I can relocate to nearby Boulder, Colo., or settle back into the middle of somewhere — Grinnell, Iowa.

The next obvious step in the decision-making process seems straightforward, something I can handle even after my sabbatical from academia. However, as I begin methodically listing pros and cons, my mind quickly strays, and I slip into daydreams, indulging in memories of last June, July, and August ...

After an unsuccessful job hunt in Colorado last May, I resigned myself to the fact that I was not destined to remain

there. Disappointed, I looked outside the window of possibilities to which I'd originally confined myself. It was there I discovered an opportunity to venture into deeper waters, or in this case, into a sea of beautiful, rolling fields.

I called various restaurants in the Grinnell community, hastily packed my bags, and prepared myself for the 11-hour journey. Two days later I departed, grinning and wide-eyed. I felt childish, giddy, and a tidbit anxious. One might expect that after hours and hours driving through Eastern Colorado, across Nebraska, and into Iowa, my excitement would wane; however, on the contrary, my anticipation only grew as I approached my home away from home.

I had heard about "Grinnell summers," but I wondered whether the tales could be true. Ice cream socials every Friday (perhaps heaven on earth for this ice cream fiend)? Community meals every Tuesday? Spontaneous dance parties anytime, anyplace? Biweekly vegan-coop potlucks? No overwhelming, burdensome stress weighing upon our shoulders, but rather a pleasant balance between work and play? This would indeed be a dramatic change from the Grinnell lifestyle I knew. I was skeptical.

I arrived in early evening, hesitating only a moment to take a deep breath before jumping out of the car and hurrying into Saints Rest. Rich aromas greeted me as I strolled into the quaint coffee shop,

and knowingly, my sister, an employee there, glanced up and met my eyes. I had returned home. Welcoming smiles painted the streets, and I encountered friends and acquaintances everywhere I walked. I was starting to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the "Grinnell summer."

As I settled in, slipping gently into summer, I found pleasant surprises everywhere. Tension and anxiety were practically nonexistent, people slept more regularly, and as a result, they seemed healthier and happier. Regardless of whether a student was doing research or working outside academia, he or she undoubtedly enjoyed more free time. So even though we were dispersed throughout town, we didn't mind making a trek to visit a friend. On bike or on foot, any destination was accessible. Friends and acquaintances had more energy to sit and enjoy one another's company, to throw together a delectable dinner, to discuss new ideas, and to reflect upon the last year. I delighted in picking raspberries, cooling off with a tasty Dari Barn treat at the end of a sweltering day, riding my bike on a warm, starry evening, running along firefly-lit fields, and watching the crops mature, gradually reaching up up into the expansive blue sky. I discovered beauty everywhere I looked, in the landscape as well as in the interactions I shared with others.

My mind and heart are quiet, and a large smile replaces the furrow that earlier creased my brow. Hmmm. I inhale and exhale a deep breath. The sweet Colorado air lingers upon my lips, but the debate is over. I imagine the wind frolicking through the Iowa fields, calling me home with promises of another lovely Grinnell summer ...



When Prospies Enroll

• Cait Scherr '09 • Portland, OR • Sociology Major

It never seems to occur to prospies how much students pay attention to them. Surprise! We are a lot more curious and fascinated by you than we like to let on. My automatic response to being asked to write about my relationship with prospective students was to dig around my various fetid stacks of random information and give you a nice, steaming pile of overly factual/historical anecdotes. Statistics can be boring, but it's just my natural Grinnellian desire to impress prospies with whatever I have to offer. Oddly enough, though, my job as a tour guide has often been a nice antidote to my affinity for facts and figures.

After hearing myself talk all day in lists and factual accounts (although I admit I still remain impressed with each item), I always relish the opportunity to

be casual and personal. There's usually one "leader" in each tour group, whether it's a parent or the prospective student, and occasionally there will be a friend or younger sibling who gets excited about Dag, the foam sword fighting group, or the Grinnell Carnivore Society.

Most often the parent takes on the leadership role, leaving their child, the prospective student, mortally embarrassed. These are the sort of parents who get intensely excited about the giant "jungle gym" carpeted playhouse-style study rooms in the library (like my mom did when I prosplied), or by the wide range of quality or bizarre extracurricular activities.

I spend an hour and a half with each family (occasionally longer if I get a theatre person and spend too long trying

to get him or her into backstage areas). I've managed to enjoy each of these outings thus far, though I must admit that the enthused-moms or enthused-dads stand out. I tend to be an enthusiastic person, particularly when it comes to my college, and if you've had a tour with me you probably know how I can get even more bubbly at parental units who are equally entertained by the various anecdotes that seep out during those 90 minutes.

One of my other favorite things about being a tour guide—besides the captivated parents, the opportunity to learn more about our incoming classes, the cool people I work with, and feeling like hot stuff for getting lots of special keys for opening locked rooms—is the constant reminder of my own prospie days and how it puts my current student status into perspective.

I remember my first visit to Grinnell when my dad and I went to a free dance performance that made me realize that interpretive dance is not for the weak of heart (I had had a negative perception of it until I was completely blown away by this performance).

I remember being let up to the suspension grid in Bucksbaum and bouncing on wire mesh 30 feet above the black box theatre floor and daydreaming about all the clubs, sports, and activities I could participate in if I ended up at this place.

I also remember thinking my tour guide was one of the most amazing individuals I'd ever encountered. After all, my guide was in a place where he could not only join student government,

religious groups, or sports teams, but also start a crochet/knitting club or whatever else struck his fancy.

Now I'm here. I teach tango (and have even gotten funding from the school to do so). I weld and took up harp. I'm involved in multicultural groups, student publications, and several (mostly theatrical) productions per semester. I have strong connections and friendships with several faculty and staff members, I hold various campus jobs, I've built houses in New Orleans with classmates, and I've joined in on the midnight Nerf wars in the science building.

I realize that I may have just made myself sound like the most pretentious liberal arts student out there, but the best part is that here, this sort of campus involvement is not considered impressive, but the norm. That's the one big thing I try to show to my prospies on each tour: the diversity of opportunity.

Whatever level of participation you desire—from only being on the e-mail list, to filling an initiator or leadership role—Grinnell has it. And no matter your interest, whether it is athletic or academic, culinary or cultural—I've found that it's possible to achieve it here. And at the risk of sounding cheesier (yep, it's possible—sorry), the best part about the wealth of participation opportunities Grinnell offers is the strong community it creates. But regardless of my cheesiness, if you've had a tour with me or if you will later on, I hope I succeed(ed) in showing you our tight-knit community, at least on some level. Best of luck with the college decision!



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