

INS & OUTS

GRINNELL SUMMER '08

We've Got Each Other—and That's A Lot

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

As an oh-so-recent Grinnell grad who has oh-so-recently experienced the final ticks of my college clock, been handed a piece of paper of supposed symbolic significance that cannot adequately contain nor express the magnificent years that have so recently ended, and moved back home in hopes of finding myself/finding a job/finding a way, recently I've come to reflect on my time here at a Grinnell. In short: it's been quite a ride.

Here I am, diploma in hand, nearly four years since the medallion ceremony in which I was told that my odds of marrying another Grinnellian were significantly higher than those of marrying my biggest celebrity crush (at the time, 1980s John Cusack); four years since I first ate breakfast in the dining hall with three guys from tutorial who later morphed into three of my closest friends; four years since I ran my first of many unseasonably warm runs with my cross country teammates along the rolling Iowan hillside.

It's been almost four years since my first PEC shower, my first Grinnellian crush, my first of many Oreo cyclones from Dari Barn, my first bakery run, and my first day as a dining services employee

when I accidentally dropped six cents into the cup of coffee that a professor had just purchased.

Over the past four years I've shopped at the local farmer's market, eaten approximately 1,500 pounds of crispy fried tofu from Choung Garden (my all-time favorite meal on this planet — for serious), swung on the swings at Merrill Park, and watched a friend give a research presentation in Chinese even though I don't speak Chinese. I've baked a lot of cookies, written a lot of papers, lounged on a lot of rooftops, and played a lot of Ani DiFranco on my iTunes.

During my time at Grinnell, I've worn rainbow suspenders, a maroon unitard, a unicorn hat, a rainbow beanie, and my fair share of gaudy spandex. At various parties I've rocked out to Madonna's "Like a Prayer," rocked out harder to Bon Jovi's "Livin' on a Prayer," and found ways to make music deemed undanceable by many very danceable indeed.

As an Iowa resident, I've visited the bridges of Madison County, run the bases of the Field of Dreams field, sat in the world's largest rocking chair, and used the bathroom at the world's largest truck stop. As a study abroad participant I

managed to contract dengue fever despite the safety my mosquito net and insect repellent theoretically provided.

As a Grinnell student I have flown kites naked as a study break during finals week, ridden dorm mattresses down the stairs in academic buildings, studied in the library without pants, participated in wheelie chair races in Noyce, explored an abandoned building in town, taken midnight bike rides off campus, taken a dip in the pond beyond the college president's house in January, attempted to sit on every bench on campus (a work in progress), and engaged in silent dance parties outside of Burling.

And at the core of all these experiences, through every class attended, every test taken, and every paper researched, through every all-nighter and excursion to the dining hall, every concert, play, presentation, lecture, and sporting event, were some of the finest human beings I've ever had the pleasure of being acquainted with. I'm talking about the kindest, kookiest, most intelligent, most compassionate people I could ever have imagined into existence. People who have inspired me to be a better person, challenged some of my most steadfast

opinions and beliefs, picked me up when I was down, and giggled incessantly with me every time a giggle was warranted (which was often).

I love the individuals who have made up my Grinnell experience, to quote whoever originally coined the phrase, "with the passion of a thousand fiery suns."*

All of which won't burn out for at least 5 billion years or so.

So as that oh-so-recent Grinnell grad who is both excited to approach a new world of untapped possibility and nostalgic for the community she's leaving behind, I'd like to send out an invitation. If you're kind and inquisitive, passionate and loving, open minded and open hearted, you might want to consider spending a few years at Grinnell. It just might be the ride you're looking for.

**I most recently saw this expression used in a campus newspaper article written by John Guittar '07 in September 2005, used, unsurprisingly, to express his love for Grinnell students. I feel it is appropriate to credit him here.*

A Film Festival Spectacle

• Dan Neely '09 • Chicago, IL • Psychology Major

Let me tell you a little about Titular Head, Grinnell's own homegrown film festival. Now don't get the wrong impression. We're not sophisticated filmmakers. We don't watch in silence and clappolitely at the end. And we definitely don't submit the movies on time.

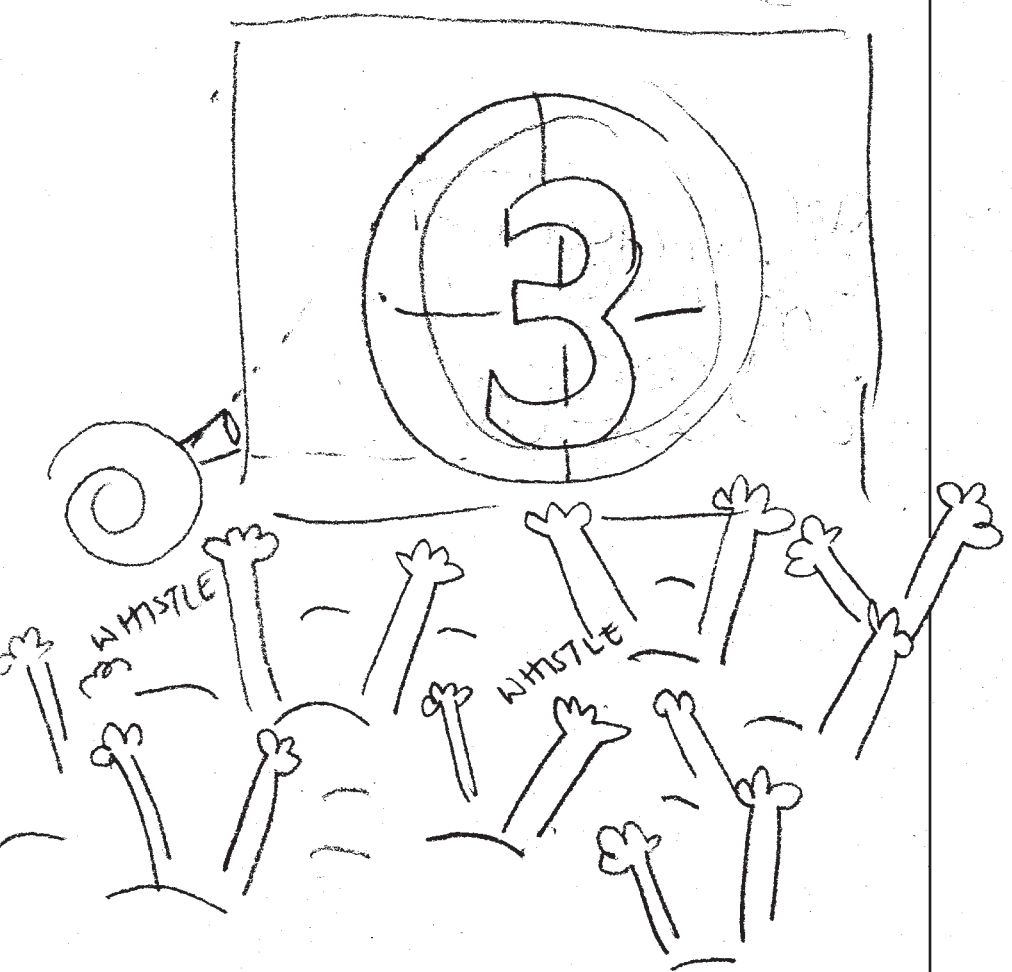
To give you an idea, some recent successful Titular Head movies have been about a fearsome rivalry between two racquetball players, dancing dining hall staff, a campaign to elect our student government president as the new U.S. president, and a tale about a student's epic struggle to become the best streaker on campus. Raucous cheering and catcalls accompanied the screenings, making the event even more fun. For the past 32 years, students and a few brave faculty and staff have squeezed into the limited seating to watch not so much a film "festival," but rather a rare spectacle that celebrates this unique campus community we all know and love.

It's important to note that Titular Head wasn't always a film festival. It actually got its start in 1976 as a short skit show in conjunction with Grinnell Relays, another fine Grinnell tradition still happening each year. Who knows if the founders had any idea of what exactly they were creating? Even the origins of the name have been lost to the mists of time.

During the 1980s, camcorders hit the scene and folks started submitting videos instead of practicing skits. Gradually the tradition began to move away from the Grinnell Relays, eventually evolving into a short film show traditionally held on the same day but later in the evening. With improvements in technology, film quality also got better and archiving became a possibility. A new era of shorts began in the late '90s with the creation of consumer digital editing software, and since then we've seen the iMovie pushed to its limits.

This spring, the student body celebrated the 32nd Titular Head. We handed out nearly all of our tickets within the first hour they were available. Eager fans filled the lobby of Harris Concert Hall and crammed into the bleacher seating for the opportunity to scream, cheer, and boo 23 films over the course of two and a half hours. All that enthusiasm — from the audience, judges, and filmmakers — contributed to another successful chapter in Titular Head history.

Titular Head is a great show, but there's more to it than good laughs and big crowds. I've had the privilege of helping out for two years now, and I've discovered that the films allow you to really note the incredible community and quirks of Grinnell. Regardless of some of the bad films and bad hair in the '90s archives, this event has consistently



documented our excitement and senses of humor, and really illustrates the unique vibe of Grinnell.

But honestly, I can't give you that a good idea of what Titular Head is all about. Ask other people around on cam-

pus, search YouTube, and get a ticket for next year. Even better, grab a camcorder and make some local history. Come be a part of just one of the many spectacles that makes Grinnell spectacular.

Ye Newe Pub

• Conor McGee '08 • Oshkosh, WI • English Major

The year is 1984. The legal drinking age in Iowa rises to 21. The state's largest vendor of beer, according to legend, loses three-quarters of its customers. Two years later, the Grinnell College campus pub closes.

Over the past two years, students have worked with the College administration to reinstate a pub on campus. The College stipulated that such a place must be open to all members of the campus community, while diligently maintaining College policy and upholding the law. Leading into this year, a committee of students looked into the logistics of implementing these precepts, while the administration secured a space in the basement of the Joe Rosenfield '25 Cen-

ter and began construction. Thanks to a cooperative administration and student leadership (not to blow my own bugle — but did I forget to mention I'm the manager?), our new and completely student-run pub opened in February 2008 with a mission to provide a safe, comfortable atmosphere for the campus community.

Inside the pub, exposed ceiling, globe lamps, and a section of cement wall create an industrial feel, contrasting with the neon fixtures and cool dark colors. We named it Lyle's, after campus celebrity Lyle Bauman, a friendly dining hall manager known for his immense hospitality, which even extends to cookouts on his farm. A student-commissioned portrait of Lyle dominates the far wall, watching over the nightly activity like

some amiable Big Brother. In the painting, Lyle wears his typical big smile as he leans against a backdrop of fresh lime-green tiles of the dining hall elevator.

Other decorations change with the times, but there's currently an exhibit of student photographs on one wall, while quite a few boxes of chalk have been liberally put to use by patrons on the cement wall. "Join us, it's bliss," one piece opines, swimming in the midst of a few colorful, somewhat-amorphous fish and an octopus.

The chalk also finds its way to the bar, often with pretty interesting results. The counter is a slate surface that appears to be recycled sections of old lab tables that had probably seen 20 years of science experiments before moving into their surprisingly natural-looking new role.

The rest of the bar seems to be similarly cobbled together from spare parts. Just beneath its slate surface, the bar features nice finished wood trim, while sheets of corrugated metal cover the frame under the counter. The bar's brick base doubles as a footrest. In spite of this apparently random fabrication, the components of the bar fit well together aesthetically. And to a certain degree, its unconventional construction makes it original, augmented by the chalk scrawls, messages, and drawings that appear in the course of an evening.

Activities at the pub, however, include more than impromptu art sessions. The pub has hosted numerous concerts by both student and touring performance groups. Most notable would be our opening night pairing of a student klezmer-

punk band with a student jam band. The pub hosted a trivial pursuit tournament between academic disciplines, as well as a weekly pub quiz game symbiotically run by the manager of Bob's, the late-night student coffeehouse.

Even when there aren't events going on at the pub, it's great to have a small place on campus where I can always expect to see a few buddies. Whether I'm going in to get a little homework done, working behind the bar, just relaxing with friends, or picking up a half-finished crossword puzzle, the pub has a chill atmosphere where I can choose exactly how I want to spend my time.

While the pub is a nice, familiar spot, it's also a focal point on campus where I can meet people whose paths I would never cross elsewhere. As an English major who got most of his time in Noyce out of the way early by pretending to be a physics major first year, there are a fair number of science junkies I had never met until we started running into each other in the pub. These sorts of run-ins can lead to a whole discussion where we map out mutual friends, professors, stomping grounds, and life philosophies. These kinds of experiences have shown me how even a fairly small, social space on campus can exhibit itself as a microcosm of the amazing diversity at this school.

And this diversity does not apply solely to the students; even professors come to the pub. After talks, meetings, class-days, and especially at the end of semesters, it's great to have a central meeting spot where the dynamic is a little different.



Opening up with Grinnell Monologues

• Stephanie Rosenbaum '08 • Glencoe, IL • Spanish Major

I am not a theatre person by any stretch of the imagination. I have terrible stage fright, I cannot memorize lines whatsoever, and once, I even threw up while giving a presentation in front of my high school class. So when my friend begged me to go to the kickoff meeting of Grinnell Monologues during my second year, I thought, "Okay, I'll go to make her feel more comfortable about being there, but no way am I going to have any part in this performance nonsense."

Grinnell Monologues, or GMons, as it is also affectionately known, is a student-run group on campus that writes and performs its own original monologues centering on themes of sex, sexuality, gender, relationships, body image, and more. Given the intimate nature of the performance content coupled with the still fresh in my mind high school vomiting memory, one could see my hesitation about joining such a group. Little did I know how much this first meeting would alter my perspective.

The meeting began innocently enough. We sat around and answered the basic questions: what's your name, what year are you, and so on and so forth. But then we got a little closer to each other when the group leader asked everyone at the table, "What was your most embarrassing moment from a Grinnell hookup?" Excuse me, I thought, *is that something you should even be asking?* I didn't think so. But to my surprise, everyone answered with very truthful and earnest answers, and I really admired everyone's openness and acceptance of what others had to say. When it came to my turn, I shocked myself by answering with an embarrassing

story of my own. So much for keeping my guard up. But I no longer felt it was necessary to do so. And I showed up for the second meeting.

The point of starting our practices with personal questions was to get the creative juices flowing. Hearing a response from one member of GMons might spark an idea in another member, and *poof!* A monologue is born! By the end of the semester, we all had come up with great ideas and were ready to perform. Some monologues were comical, others were serious, and some were emotional, but all of the performances were honest, insightful looks into topics that hardly ever get talked about in the open. Sharing a story about how uncomfortable a woman is with her large breasts, or how a man hates to be identified as a heterosexual alpha male, all in front of an audience, is not easy to do. However, stories such as these open doors to dialogue about body image and gender, doors I think deserve to be opened and dialogue that needs to be heard. I believe that everyone who walked away from watching that performance had an altered view about something discussed in the show.

It is probably hard to believe, but even after all my resistance to performing and getting up on stage, I became so enamored with Grinnell Monologues that I served as co-leader of the group the following year. Working with these students was incredibly rewarding because I got to listen to their stories and encourage them to be as truthful and sincere about their own stories as the leaders from the previous year had done with me. And the applause at the end of the performance? That was the best part.



An Idiot's Guide to Procrastination

• Patrick Laine '08 • St Paul, MN • Philosophy Major

Going to college is a big step. When I arrived on Grinnell's campus as an enthusiastic first-year, I was filled with grandiose visions of the four years that lay ahead. I was eager to immerse myself in the exciting world of higher learning and embrace a new lifestyle. I was ready to become an adult and use the liberal arts education to forge a new identity. I was so caught up in these romantic musings that the simplest of adjustments took me completely off-guard. For the first time in my life, I had to use the Internet!

At first, the challenges of navigating the World Wide Web addled my brain. I don't doubt that most prospective college students practically think in 0s and 1s. However, there must be a few others out there who have never been to JSTOR or attached a word document to an e-mail. In order to deal with the pressures of college's technological requirements, some Internet virgins seek refuge in a few frivolous websites. This is understandable; we college students spend so much time in front of a computer screen, it's healthy to have a few recreational outlets. Internet procrastination seems harmless, but it can be devastating if conducted improperly. Having wasted many hours surfing the web instead of writing papers, I consider myself a procrastinator extraordinaire. I feel compelled to impart some of this hallowed knowledge to future Grinnellians, lest their souls become trapped in the "about me" sections of their Facebook profiles. To this end, I will tell you about a little website called Grinnell Plans.

In January of this year, Plans was reported to have 3,809 members, consisting of current students, alumni, and some faculty, staff members, and, by invitation, other friends of the College. Much like

Facebook and MySpace, Plans is a virtual community consisting of individual profiles. However, Plans is different from these run-of-the-mill time-wasters. For one, the profiles are not little boxes for filling in your favorites. Plans members' pages are akin to blogs: full of opinions, anecdotes, and unadulterated expression. Reading my classmates' Plans lets me know what's going on in their lives on a day-to-day basis. This allows me to actually learn about people as unique individuals, as opposed to reducing them to a list of their favorite things, and it can actually inspire real social interactions. In fact, my friend's witty Plan impressed an admirer so much, she asked him on a date. Surely it's better to ask someone out because of their scintillating wit, and not simply because he or she is listed as "single" and looks hot in the profile pic.

Facebook claims to be a social networking site, but I consider it a source of insecurity and a vehicle for divisiveness. Friend counts encourage people to quantify their social worth. Exclusive events can make people feel left out. Basically, sites like Facebook and MySpace perpetuate the social dynamics that govern junior high. As a college student, you should seek to expand your social horizons and develop mature relationships with people. Plans fosters this type of social growth by allowing you to connect with the people in your life in meaningful ways. Digital socializing will never replace face-to-face interactions, but in today's fast-paced world, technology is central to communication. This doesn't mean we need to interact as robots.

In light of this, I exhort you to spend two minutes on Plans for every minute on Facebook. Wasting time is too important of an activity to be carried out poorly.

Grinnell students also decorated the Rosenfield Center with life-size human cutouts telling anonymous stories of rape and sexual assault. We also participated in the Clothesline Project, in which white T-shirts were used to write statistics and stories of assault, and then hung from a clothesline for all to see. The Clothesline Project also served as a symbolic gesture to the roots of Take Back the Night in the early feminist movement.

The week culminated with a testimonial circle of students sharing stories of sexual assault and rape with others, followed by a passionate march around campus with chants such as, "Two, four, six, eight: we won't be raped, we won't be beat," and "Mother, daughter, sister, friend, help make the night safe again," filling the air. The goal of Take Back the Night is to raise awareness about the realities of sexual assault and rape in the world around us, and to let the community know that there are venues and opportunities to be informed and supported when necessary. The energy of Take Back the Night week will hopefully resonate on our campus until next year, when we will again rally and march against fear in hopes of making the night truly safe once again.

Take Back the Night

• Timothy Hederman '10 • Staten Island, NY • Philosophy Major

Take Back the Night is an event focused on collectively speaking out against — amongst many other social problems — rape, sexual violence, domestic violence, violence against children, and violence against women. Across the country, Take Back the Night rallies are made up of candlelight vigils, empowerment marches, and sexual assault survivor testimonials, as well as other forms of solidarity and protest.

The event's diverse political origins are reflected in the coalition of Grinnell College organizations that help sponsor it. This year, they included the Feminist Action Coalition, the Stonewall Coalition, and the gender and women's studies concentration. The organizers planned a week of activities to inform the student body and Grinnell community at large about the realities of sexual assault and violence on and off college campuses. "Take Back the Night Week" was composed of various presentations, such as one sponsored by Domestic Violence Alternatives/Sexual Assault Center (DVA/SAC) about intimate partner violence, a talk by sociology professor Betsy Erbaugh on domestic partner violence in the queer community, and a multimedia performance by the nonprofit organization The Long Walk Home, titled "SOARS: Stories Of A Rape Survivor."

Write On

• Molly Rideout '10 • Madison, WI • English Major

The Grinnell writer dropped her forehead onto her arms in abject despair. She lay there, limp and hopeless, like a corn doll abandoned in the rain. The husks of her notebooks lay about her, fluttering idly in the Iowa wind that whistled through the partially open window. A page of one particularly kind and caring notebook draped itself across her shoulder in a reassuring way. It's all right, sweetie, that touch seemed to say. It'll all work out.

The writer had bigger things to worry about than talking notebooks. It was two hours before her Craft of Fiction class, and she still had no idea how she was going to end the story about General Partitions' visit to the laundry mat. She had typed only one sentence, the cursor blinking menacingly after the small, plain period.

"Where are the 'mats' at this so-called laundry mat?"

She couldn't bear to look at the sentence one more time. She was doomed. No late fees. No hidden charges. Just straight up doomed.

Of course, this never actually happens. Not only are Grinnellians generally sane enough to know not to take advice from stray sheets of whispering paper, but the creative community here is so strong that any despairing writers only have to click their poetic heels three times and they'll have five peers sitting in the living room of Mears Cottage discussing potential directions to take General Partitions and his matless laundry mat.

Both the students and the English department are wicked supporters of writing. And even more students are writers than are active in the community. This past semester we received more than 120 submissions of poetry, prose, and creative essays to *The Grinnell Review*, our student literary magazine. But if anyone does want to be active, it doesn't just stop at submitting to the magazine. Let's take an average week in the life of me, Molly Rideout, aspiring novelist, not-so-good poet, and champion swimmer in the pool of the Grinnell writing community.

Sunday: I get up early before anyone else and spend my morning in one of the classrooms of the JRC developing stories on the dry erase boards. Writing on the walls makes me feel important and powerful. During my night shift at

the library, I interrogate my supervisor on his latest screenplay about an editor who gets duped into publishing a worthless, contentless book. I contemplate if those same tactics could work for me.

Monday: One of the three days of the week when I have my Craft of Fiction class. Each of us brings in scenes from stories we're currently working on for feedback from our peers. Students from any major can take the Craft classes, so we get a nice variety of perspectives. I took the Craft of Poetry class last semester with Professor George Barlow, who has got to be one of the coolest cats in Iowa. He tells stories about farting poets.

Tuesday: I spend two hours of free time between class and lunch working on the story I outlined on the dry erase boards. Sometimes I fall asleep too.

Wednesday: Another Craft of Fiction day. At night there is a meeting of Grinnell Writers at Large, an unofficial club that meets and workshops pieces the members submit. It's a lot like any of the Craft classes, only you can submit anything, you don't have to come every week, and we only grade you based on the number of cookies you eat. Wednesdays are also Build-Your-Own-Burger day at the dining hall. Maybe I can write a story about that.

Thursday: The English department brings in an awesome visiting writer like Ana Castillo or Adrienne Rich to read to us and answer questions about the writing process. They tell us where they like to write, how they got published, and whether they prefer the Mets or the Yankees.

Friday: Last day of Craft of Fiction. That night, we have fun partying with friends. Every once in a while a group of us drives to Iowa City where we run around, eat good Indian food, and listen to other cool writers read from their work.

Saturday: A good day to start doing some of that homework. There's usually a lot of writing involved, but none of the fun stuff. Unless you find "Use of Photographs in Nabokov's Pale Fire" to be fun, which (to be honest) I kind of do. Oh well. Even the writer's brain needs a break from creativity every once in a while. Sometimes it's good to just regurgitate literary criticism onto a computer screen in 500–700 words and not have to wonder where exactly the mats are located in a laundry mat.



Rediscovering Your Inner 12-Year-Old

• Victor Colussi '09 • Madison, IN • Physics/Mathematics Major

“These kids are truly barbaric!” my mind screamed as I walked into the child-infested art room of the local middle school. Fifteen paper planes were flying, a rental clarinet was honking, and scissors-wielding 10–13-year-olds were zooming across the room, reminding me more of Brownian motion than of an academic institution. I was a first-year and eager to rocket into the upper ranks of the learned and distinguished. This was my hell.

Earlier that Friday, my floormates had asked me to join Kids Art, a volunteer organization that goes to the middle school each Friday to work on art projects with the kids. I decided to give it a try and rode over to the school in a car along with a handful of college students. As we rolled up to the entrance, yellow buses, filled to the brim with the little monsters, streamed out. We parked, went up to the school, and entered the art room.

After an hour in the room, I made a resolution to never have kids or at least to only have kids who would skip directly from 10 to 14 — what a breakthrough that would be! After an hour and a half, I questioned the ethics of giving a 12-year-old a pair of scissors or a piece of paper — think of the vital areas the little rascals could get at with a poster board! Needless to say, my first experience with Kids Art left me feeling harassed, tired, and distraught.

Three years later, I'm now the co-leader of Kids Art and regularly visit the middle school. In fact, I now feel more comfortable around the little “barbarians” than I do around most people my age. But

how and why did this change occur?

One of the main reasons behind my current comfort level is the fact that I've finally rocketed to the upper ranks of the learned and distinguished, and I've discovered just as many paper-plane-flying, scissors-wielding 20-somethings. And not only that, I realized that I am actually one of the most rambunctious!

Of course, I'm not running around the College at night with a giant poster board giving paper cuts to unfortunate passersby, but as my college career progressed, I learned that it was socially acceptable to say weird things, make jokes about someone's mother, and imitate air-horns with my voice — in fact, it's even welcomed. But why?

For all those people who need graphs, logical propositions, and numbers to crunch, I'll offer this explanation: if we take laughter as the shortest distance between people — and my voyages through the adult world have shown me that this distance can be quite great — then the shortest distance between any two people is between two children. Of course, one must also consider how fast laughter spreads, and I'd estimate this as inversely proportional to the difference between the ages of the two speakers. So, laughter between a 21-year-old acting like a child and an actual child is at the minimum laughter distance and spreads slower than child-to-child laughter. Therefore, two 21-year-olds will connect much easier if they step out of their adult world and into the wild world of the middle-schooler.

For people who are swayed by less

numerical arguments, let me offer this explanation: in the world of careers, job-paths, majors, and expectations, the chance that any two students will be able to find common ground about some specific class, issue, or topic is slim. However, if we flip back the clock 10 or so years, we were all learning grammar, fathoming the phenomena of weighted averages, and puzzling over the best one-liner about a bodily function.

It's this common ground, shortest laughter distance, etc. that I found in Kids Art. Each week, a handful of college

students still make the journey over to the middle school, but for every paper plane flown by one of the rascals, there's a corresponding dive-bomber launched by a college student. Where destructive behavior might ensue, an intellectual challenge arises: let's make the plane that will fly the farthest. Let's draw the scariest monster. Let's make the most complicated hopscotch pattern. Let's find out what it is to be a chair. But ultimately, we're there to laugh and to find out a little bit more about ourselves.



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