



**THE  
ISLAND  
SCHOOL  
NEWSLETTER**

**November  
2009  
Issue 1**

**WHAT'S  
INSIDE....**

- Picking the Right College
- From One Island to Another
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- Essay Writing Prompts

Greetings! Welcome to the new Island School Newsletter. This has been created to give students in school and their parents to read a bit about the ins and outs of college and life after high school. The newsletter contains strategies to deal with tests, homesickness, and to generally demystify the experience for those who may not be familiar with the whole process. Hopefully a few of these articles contain some useful information. And don't forget to take it home for your parents! There are articles in here for them, too.

If you have any suggestions, questions, or feedback, don't hesitate to email Ben Odgren at [bodgren@islandinstitute.org](mailto:bodgren@islandinstitute.org)

**THE RIGHT COLLEGE FOR YOU**

Choosing the right college is about more than just going to the college that all your friends are going to, or the one that is closest.

Finding the right college takes a good amount of research, possibly some college visits, being honest with yourself about where you feel comfortable going, and what you want out of your college experience. The size and location can determine what sorts of majors the college offers, as well as what you can expect in terms of resources and entertainment.



*Average student enrollment of a small college ranges between 2,000-6,000. Examples of these would be Tufts, Maine Maritime Academy, and any of the satellite campuses for the University of Maine.*

A college on a rural campus might mean that you would be living within driving distance of a small town and maybe a shopping plaza. Many small colleges have shuttles that can take you to town at various times during the day. If you have a car, or know somebody who has a car, this would also be an option.

A small college also means that you would have smaller class sizes. This means more hands-on learning, and more opportunities to talk face-to-face with your professor. A good relationship with your professor can be beneficial, as they are more likely to help with problems you could be having in class.

Small colleges are great if you want a tight-knit community, personal relationships with teachers and staff, small class sizes, and want to be away from the hustle and bustle of the city. They are, however, limited in terms of resources, housing, and having fewer majors. If you like the small feel of your island school, this may be the way to go.

If you crave having lots to do at your fingertips, then the city (and big colleges) are probably the right choice for you. Public transportation can take you anywhere you want. No car required! And don't forget that just because you go to a big college in a big city, it doesn't mean you'll be getting lost through city blocks to try and find your classes (though sometimes that's the case). Some colleges have grounds right in the middle of a city, with everything you need right there for you. And don't forget the rec-



reation that cities can offer: major sports teams, museums, big libraries, ethnic restaurants, just to name a few things.

Of course the downside to a big college is that it can be easy to get lost in the crowd. An introductory class at a big school can have more than 200 people in it. This makes it essential that you be pro-active about setting up appointments with your professor. Allowing them to single out your face amidst a sea of faces can improve your chances of getting a better grade. Living in a city also means having to worry about a bigger crime rate, making sure your apartment doesn't have too many leaks, and not missing the three o'clock bus downtown.

*The average student enrollment at a big college can range anywhere from 12,000 to 55,000 students. Examples of a big college would be University of Maine and Texas A&M.*

On top of all of this, there is your option for going to a community college. Community colleges are great ways of getting introductory classes out of the way relatively inexpensively before transferring to a public or private college. If you are looking to get a two-year technical-related degree, need a flexible schedule, or aren't quite sure what you're looking for yet in terms of college, this might be your best option.

*The average enrollment at a community college in Maine can range anywhere between 2,000 to 5,000 students.*

Be sure to do plenty of research on all the colleges you are interested in, and *visit* them. It's easy to make a college look fantastic on a website, so it's best to get a taste of the real thing before you head there for the long haul. For a whole selection of college personality quizzes, simply type in "what college is right for me quiz" into your Google browser. Happy college hunting!

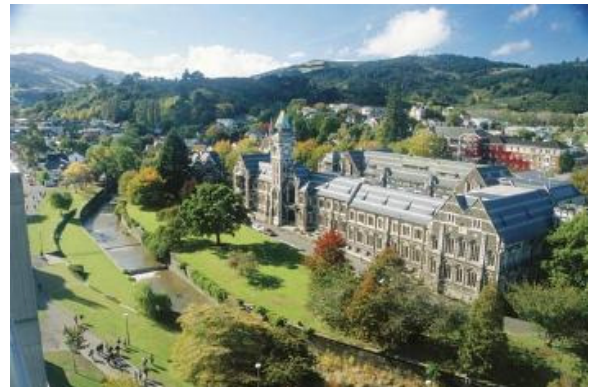
### **From One Island to Another**

by Molly Radis—Peaks Island  
Bates College (Class of 2010)



As a sophomore at Bates College, the hot topic on everyone's mind is study abroad. Where will you go? Which semester? I did some research on the Bates website during Christmas break and was intrigued by The University of Otago; a large school in Dunedin on the south island. My study abroad advisor agreed that New Zealand was a good fit because of my interest in the outdoors and my desire for a high level of independence. I filled out my application, finished up second semester, worked at the ice cream store on Peaks for a few weeks, and hopped on a flight to Dunedin, New Zealand on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June.

During my five month stay in New Zealand, I was happy to learn that the people were friendly, enthusiastic, outgoing, and genuinely interested in hearing my story. I immediately joined the tramping club (outdoors club), the break dancing club, and the guitar club in order to meet Kiwi students. During the week, I attended classes, various club meetings, and rehearsals. On the weekends, I became close with several other international students, including my two flat-mates, through various adventures and road trips. We bought an old, junky car and called him Ronnie the Renault. We took day trips to sand beaches, hiked nearby mountains, road tripped across the south island to the Fiordlands,



and even drove 11 hours north to a tropical national park and went camping. I had a wonderful experience in N-Zed and highly recommend the University of Otago to students interested in studying overseas. I loved living independently and gaining real world experience. Living on Peaks was wonderful because I was surrounded by adults who cared about me. However, I sometimes depended on those individuals too much. I allowed others to take care of tasks rather than taking initiative on projects. Going abroad helped me to feel comfortable planning trips on my own, budgeting money, and meeting new people.

At first, I felt overwhelmed and unimportant at a large university. I had no advisor, and no one checking in on me during my stay. I was used to having many islanders watch over me, and look out for my well-being. After the first two weeks or so, I began to feel much more comfortable. I was eventually able to see the benefits of a large university in that I had access to so many clubs, courses, and student events. I also enjoyed the fast paced urban lifestyle in Dunedin because it was so different from “island time” on Peaks.

After reflecting on my 5 month stay, I give the following advice to younger students from Island communities. Choose a destination very different from your home and college so that you have to adapt and learn about your strengths and weaknesses. Get involved in activities in your area or at your university immediately in order to make friends with native students. Also, don't wait until the end of your trip to start exploring areas around your city or town. Get out there from the start!

Good luck!

Editor's Note: There are lots of opportunities to study abroad during high school. If you are interested, do some research on Ocean Classroom at <http://www.oceanclassroom.org>.

### SPOTTING SCHOLARSHIP SCAMS

Many students, both new to college and returning, are looking for scholarships. And who wouldn't? Given the current economic situation, free money to help pay for college is certainly better than a loan you'll have to pay back with interest. There are lots of scholarships out there, and doing some digging around on the Internet and at the library (a simple step that many don't take) can lead you to scholarships you didn't know about before.

Before you borrow anything, be sure to talk to your parents about how much you'll need to borrow. Talk about finances and working on the FAFSA form together before December 31st.

The downside is that there are a lot of scholarship “scams” out there. The Federal Trade Commission website (<http://www.ftc.gov>) has several tips for how to spot, and report, scholarship scams. But here are a few tell-tale signs to get you started.

1. They'll say things like “The scholarship is guaranteed or your money back.” Red flag. No scholarship is ever guaranteed to anybody. You shouldn't have to pay more than the price of a postage stamp in order to get information about the scholarship.

**Which brings us to...**

2. ...applying for the scholarship. You and your child have to do this yourselves. There is no way around it. If



you get something in the mail saying, “You’re a finalist in our sketchy scholarship program!” – and you didn’t enter in the first place – throw it in the nearest trash can.

3. In line with that, any scholarship exclaiming, “We’ll do all the work for you!” means that they’ll probably want some sort of fee when it’s all said and done. Free money shouldn’t cost you a cent (except for the postage); otherwise it wouldn’t be free money. You should be spending more time than money on possible scholarships.

4. “Everybody is eligible!” Not true. There are always restrictions – always some guidelines as to whom the scholarship is meant to go towards. Some are for athletes or people with disabilities. Some are aimed towards minorities. Some scholarships give out awards to people who are left-handed, or who have an uncommon name. No scholarship is awarded solely on the basis that you are alive.

5. There are some programs that claim to be scholarship matching services. Don’t trust them. These people have no influence with legitimate scholarship programs. They can’t slip five bucks into the maitre d’s pocket and get you the table by the window with the candles...so to speak.

Visit the Federal Trade Commission website (<http://www.ftc.gov>) for more tips about scholarship scams.

## SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT WHILE WRITING YOUR SCHOLARSHIP OR COLLEGE ESSAY

Students, as a way to get you thinking about writing essays for college, even if it’s a few years off, here are some writing prompts that might come in handy.

- What is the scariest thing you’ve ever done? Did you learn anything about yourself? Did you overcome your fears?
- Have you ever had a moment where you see things in a different way? A moment of clarity that made you wonder why one year ago (or maybe even one week ago) you wouldn’t have thought that?
- What are your plans for the future? Where do you see yourself in one year? What do you hope to have accomplished by then?
- Think of your favorite character from your favorite book or movie. What makes you identify with them? Are they like you? Are they in a similar situation as you?
- Bill Gates hands you three million dollars. What do you do with it?

Connecticut college has a great sampling of essays from students that ended up awarding them scholarships. Check them out at this url: <http://www.conncoll.edu/admission/essays.htm>

### FINANCIAL AID UPDATE

Every year, January 1<sup>st</sup> marks the opening day of being able to submit the FAFSA form.

For the 2009-2010 school year (July 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 – June 30<sup>th</sup> 2010) FAFSA forms need to be submitted on the FAFSA website on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010 by midnight central time.

Head over to the FAFSA website at: <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>

Applications for the **Maine Island Scholarship** are due April 1, 2010, and will be available for download off the Island Institute website in late December.



Benjamin Odgren is the Island Scholar’s Network Coordinator at the Island Institute.

He is working at the Island Institute through AmeriCorp: a government-funded national community service organization. He will be creating newsletters, hosting college-awareness programs on the islands, and creating a social network between college-bound islanders.