



Play Collegiate Golf

"creating academic and athletic success"

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Reviewing Potential Academic Opportunities at Your “Best Fit” School

When trying to find the right college for you look at the available academic choices to round out your education

Each school is different...an obvious statement. Schools may be small or large in population. They may be rural or urban. It may be a research school or a liberal arts school. In reviewing each potential education opportunity, look at the available academic choices that will help define your education. Colleges today offer a wealth of classes, programs, and on-campus services to aid your growth as a student. Though you may read this with the thought that “this doesn’t matter until my freshman year and beyond,” it is important to note that you graduate from college with a degree because of your in-class work and success. Review this article and then go and research the different academic opportunities at the schools of your choice. Some may stand out more than others which may help you select your next educational arena. Make this time looking at colleges as specific to your learning outcomes as possible so that you can reach your goals!

First Year Seminars: FYS are specially designed courses which help to enhance a student’s success both academically and socially. Academically, they are often small in nature (perhaps a 15:1 student/faculty ratio) taught by roster faculty specializing in a theme or topic of interest to that faculty member. The course titles are often very descriptive and usually catch one’s attention. FYS are a wonderful invention of someone in academia. Professors do their job for the love of teaching and the FYS allow them to teach directly within their field about topics they love to talk about. The enthusiasm in the classroom is often energizing as both the teacher and the students are excited about each daily lesson. Socially, the FYS provide a more nurturing learning environment than that of the traditional “Large Class 101” lecture hall. Students may feel more comfortable reaching out to their peers in these classes. Students definitely feel more comfortable engaging with each other in conversation as well as talking with the professor in and out of class. FYS can go by a variety of names: College 101; Student Success Course; Freshman Seminar. These courses are highly recommended and at schools such as Oregon, South Carolina, and College of Charleston they are the backbone of the first year experience.

Learning Communities: LCs are based on a cluster model of linked courses where two or three first year classes theme together so that the faculty members are doing similar assignments and the students are enrolled in the classes together. Often times, this cohort of students will live in a residence hall together and the floors in this housing environment will carry on the theme from the classroom into the weekly programming. Opportunities for more contact with faculty members and a greater sense of belonging are often a by-product of the LCs on campuses nationwide. Similar to the FYS, students engage more in and out of class. Often with this model, a Peer Facilitator (usually an upper-class student who has taken one or more of the classes) is attached to the LC. The Peer Facilitator may lead an extra hour of class where first year students gather to discuss class happenings, how to study for an upcoming test, or just to get together socially.

Service Learning: Many students are coming to college with volunteering hours already completed and want additional options. Schools have, in the last decade, risen to this request and created Centers for Civic Engagement or Offices of Service Learning. These are normally developed through Student Affairs (the arm of administration on college campuses that provides out-of-class learning experiences). Depending on the college and its location service learning opportunities will be varied (i.e. urban campuses will have many opportunities close by while more rural campuses may have to travel further or will have specific challenges available). Also, some campuses have begun “Alternative Spring Break” programs where both domestic and international service learning are available for students of interest. Many are student developed and student funded (through fundraisers) providing a unique all encompassing learning experience from germinating an idea to seeing it through to fruition.

Study Abroad Programs: A global education is becoming more and more integral to our lives. Students may want to take the opportunity during their schooling to spend a few weeks, a semester, or a year abroad at a foreign institution. Learning about other cultures and countries will broaden the student's perspective and can only help him or her in future environments. Study Abroad takes a little bit of organization so it is always suggested that the student visit the Center for International Education or the Study Abroad office as soon as possible. Look for on-campus Study Abroad fairs where various programs come so showcase their different opportunities. It is never too early to begin researching where you may want to go and what the specific requirements may be (language, credit allowance, cost). There are three manners of study abroad:

- full year abroad meaning 9 + months away
- semester abroad meaning 4 + months away
- short semester abroad meaning upwards of 3 + weeks away

Financial assistance may be available to help defray the costs. Also, talk with your professors as someone may be doing research abroad and has grant funds to bring along a "Research Assistant" for a short project. If you are an out-of-state student, check with a college in your home area. Going abroad with a local school allows you to experience the enjoyment of a different culture, pay in-state fees, and then transfer the credits back to your degree granting institution. However, if you are planning on this, make sure your school will allow the credits to transfer in from another institution.

There are a lot of academic opportunities to think about and to review when you begin sifting through the various colleges that may be of interest. Take your time, start early, and do your best to think about it from the perspective of a student already at the institution. Doing this will help you find that all-important "best fit" environment.

Good Luck.

Dr. Fleming

Dr. Bruce Fleming is the founder of Play Collegiate Golf, created to mentor young women and men interested in continuing their competitive golf careers at institutions that support their academic, athletic, and personal goals.

For more information please visit playcollegiategolf.com

Parents...Don't Leave Summer Orientation Without Knowing...

College Survival Tip

- Names, telephone numbers, and email addresses of faculty and administrators who can address first year concerns
- How the college billing process works
- The important dates germane to the first year student such as withdraw deadline, academic advising period, and final exam dates
- The language specific to the college (semesters or quarters? course offerings? college divisions?)

