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Basalt High School Returning Graduates Panel 2015

More than a dozen recent BHS graduates shared their college experiences and gave sage advice to current students during two panel discussions in January 2015. Students represented small and large colleges and universities, both in and out of state. Here are just a few of the answers from the panels:

Q. How important is it to visit the colleges you're interested in attending?

"Tours are really informational; you get what the college is all about, not just statistics and descriptions you read about on the website. Being on the campus gives you a sense of the community on campus and the type of people you'll be around." —Gus Anderson, Washington University, Missouri

Q. How well did BHS prepare you for college?

"I took a lot of CMC classes in high school, so even though I graduated from BHS last spring, this coming semester I'll be a sophomore—I came in with more than 20 credits, which saved me a ton of money. I took one AP class my senior year, and even though I didn't get college credit for it, it definitely helped me realize what college-level classes were going to be like." —Tucker Jenkins, Southeastern University, Florida

"I think BHS does a really good job of offering CMC, CU and AP classes, because those classes were the ones that prepared me the most for college. However, timing-wise, I didn't realize how many hours I'd have to put into my work at college. College feels 10 times harder; the actual content may not be that much harder, but there's just so much to do in so little time." —Lucy Uguccioni, CU Boulder

"It's great that BHS has a variety of AP and college-credit classes in different areas, like science, literature, and math, to help us figure out what we might want to major in for college." —Gus Anderson, Washington University

"One specific thing is that pretty much for every single class I've had to write papers in APA format, when in high school we only wrote papers in MLA." —Bella Mobilian, Chapman University, California

Q. What other ways did your experience in high school help you prepare?

"The college counseling office definitely helped guide me in my applications and deadlines, since my parents didn't go to college, and I didn't have anyone to ask specifically about the whole process." —Berta Rivera, CU Boulder

"Coming from a small high school, at Basalt we were able to interact with our teachers a lot, and that experience is definitely something that I use in college. At CSU I'm in some classes with more than 300 kids, and I know I can go to professors' office hours to check in with them. I am used to talking to teachers at Basalt, so I'm comfortable talking to my college teachers." —Ivan Loya, CSU, Fort Collins

"Since Basalt is a small school, it's easy to get involve with a bunch of different things—like athletics and clubs and student leadership. I go to college now with kids from much bigger 6A or 7A high schools [with more than 2,000 students], where it's harder to take on leadership roles since their high schools were so big. So, I'd definitely take advantage of being able to be so involved in high school here, since not all high schools are like BHS. It can only help you in the future." —Tucker Jenkins, Southeastern University

Q. Is there anything BHS could have done differently to help you better prepare for college?

“I would like to see BHS offer a class on how to study—techniques on how to best prepare for exams. I didn’t feel like I was really prepared to study for tests when I arrived at college.” —Bella Mobilian, Chapman University

“It would have been helpful in high school to have more timed tests or timed essays. The first time I had an essay test in college that was timed, I only had time to finish the first two of three.” —Berta Rivera, CU Boulder

“In college, once the test is done, that’s your final grade. There are no re-do’s. High school didn’t really prepare for ‘no reassessments’ in college.” —Kiyoshi Nakagawa, CMC Spring Valley

“It’s good to start practicing note-taking in high school now. PowerPoints are just the basic outlines of what the professor is talking about, so you definitely have to learn how to take notes in class. It’s not like you can stop your professor and ask him to repeat something in a large lecture hall.” —Lucy Uguccioni, CU Boulder

“Having a class that helps high school students understand the importance of time management—balancing sports, clubs, classes, a job—would definitely help in college. Especially during finals week.” —Katherine Marquez, Colorado Mesa University

“It would have been nice to understand how syllabuses work in college. In high school, you’re reminded about assignments, but in college you get a syllabus for the semester and you’re expected to read it and know when assignments are due. I almost missed handing in all of my chemistry homework until one of my friends in my class told me about it.” —Kade Cheatham, Occidental College

Q: If you could go back and do anything differently in high school to better prepare for college, what would you do?

“I should have taken harder classes and applied myself more in high school. I really didn’t push myself, and I’m paying for it now.” —Cira Mylott, CMC Steamboat Springs

“I definitely could have taken more college level classes in high school. A two- or three-credit class in college is expensive, and it would have been good to get some of those basic classes out of the way.” —Alex Revilla, CU Boulder

“I wish I’d applied and been accepted at school earlier, since there are some scholarships that have early deadlines that you can’t apply for until you’re accepted.” —Katherine Marquez, Colorado Mesa University

Q. How about financial aid? Any tips for finding money to go to college?

“Don’t limit yourself to only applying for scholarships sponsored by your college. There are a lot of scholarships out there and it’s free money.” —Omar Lopez, CU Boulder

Note: Current seniors should talk to Liz Penzel about available local and nationwide scholarships. From Liz: “It may seem like a lot of work to write still more essays for scholarship applications, but it’s definitely worth taking the time to do that.”

Q. Tell us about the fun parts of going to college. The highlights.

“Definitely meeting new people from all over. Even at CMC there are people from Florida, Hawaii, Kansas... I was surprised at how far people came to the valley to go to school.” —Kiyoshi Nakagawa, CMC Spring Valley

“Wash U gets a lot of international students. You see a lot of different cultures. My roommates are South Korean and most of the students in my architecture program are Chinese. You get to meet a lot of different people and hear different viewpoints, which is great.” —Gus Anderson, Washington University

“The types of activities and options of things to do expand when you go to college. And it’s nice to become more independent and make your own choices—good or bad.” —Omar Lopez, CU Boulder

Q. Tell us about going out of state to college—any surprises?

“I had a bit of culture shock going from small town Colorado to North Carolina. The people were different, the scenery so different. Going from knowing everyone in high school to no one at college was hard. I’ll be honest, I was chronically homesick for about two months. But in the end, it forced me to meet people and get out there.” —Sara Pearson, Guilford College, North Carolina

“For me, it didn’t take too much getting used to. I like being 10 minutes from Portland. It does rain all the time, and didn’t bring an umbrella or a raincoat.” —Shion Reilly, Lewis & Clark

Q. How about staying in-state to go to college?

“You walk around campus and see people you know all the time, so you do have a sense of home. In the beginning it was nice to have other high school friends at CU; it was a good feeling. I did reach out to make new friends, and now I have two friend groups to confide in—new friends and my high school friends on campus.” —Lucy Uguccioni, CU Boulder

Q. How do you feel about going to a small school—say 5,000 or fewer students?

“Everyone knows you by your name—which can be good and bad. Anything you do, everyone knows it.” —Kiyoshi Nakagawa, CMC Spring Valley

“I go to a medium-sized school, about 7,000 students, but I still have small class sizes. My professors know me and I know them all personally, and it’s easy to talk to them directly and ask questions after class. But still big enough that I see new people every day—it doesn’t feel small at all.” —Isabella Mobilian, Chapman University

“My classes aren’t any bigger than 35 students, that’s the max. And my Spanish class has only six students. I really like the size to get to know other students and professors.” —Sara Pearson, Guilford College

Q. How is it going to a bigger university?

“The more time you’re there, the smaller it becomes. If you want small classes, you can find them. You can avoid big lecture halls if you don’t want them.” —Berta Rivera, CU Boulder

“More kids mean more classes available, and more flexibility with schedules.” —Omar Lopez, CU Boulder

“Two classes had 400+ students, and two classes with less than 20 students. So I had the best of both worlds. I don’t mind the big classes though, for one class in particular, I had a really great relationship with my teaching assistant.” —Lucy Uguccioni, CU Boulder

“My school is very large, but in the architecture program—a school within a school—my classes are generally smaller. So you can choose a smaller school or program within a university if that’s what you’re looking for.” —Gus Anderson, Washington University

Q. What’s one thing you wished you’d known on your first day of college?

“The first day or first week, everyone is going to want to make friends—so take advantage of meeting new people right away.” —Shion Reilly, Lewis & Clark

“The end of the semester is going to be a lot harder than the beginning of the semester, so you really can’t procrastinate.” —Gus Anderson, Washington University

“Everyone feels the same as you at the beginning – you’re nervous, you’re alone. But so is everyone else. If you’re aware of that, it’ll make the transition easier.” —Bella Mobilian, Chapman University