

You're Graduating High School... Now What?



By: Cassie Godwin



If you are a high school senior, you are probably sitting in algebra planning your fun-filled weekend consisting of Friday night football games, parties and getting your livestock ready for stock show season. The forefront of your mind is brimming to the edge with exciting upcoming events, but in the back of your mind lays the lurking question that will soon have to be answered. That question happens to be *“Where am I going to college?”* For some of you, a crystal clear vision instantly pops into your head filled with scenes of you enjoying tailgates, new classes and dorm life on your favorite college campus. For others, the vision might take on the resemblance of flashing question marks. Whether you already have a closet filled with your favorite college’s school colors, or you have a stack of brochures of prospects, I promise that both state of minds are perfectly normal, as well is that overwhelming and confusing feeling you probably get when thinking about your future. After all, these are big decisions that will shape your life.

I know when I was in your shoes, I was a anxious about planning my future, but I followed the same advice that I’m going to bestow on you, and I now have four years of amazing college experiences under my belt. I am now a senior at Texas Tech University (TTU), but prior to becoming a Red Raider, I attended

Connors State College (CSC), which is a junior college in Warner, Oklahoma. Thus, I have had to answer that daunting question twice in the past four years. So if you are confused and nervous about taking that leap of faith in deciding which college is best for you, you are in luck, because I have a few tips to help you future college freshmen. The key to making the right choice is not basing your decision on which school has the best parties, football team or where your friends are going. The secret to having a wonderful college experience can be summed up in three simple steps: surround yourself with good people, choose a place that feels like home, and attend an institution that will put you on the path to success.

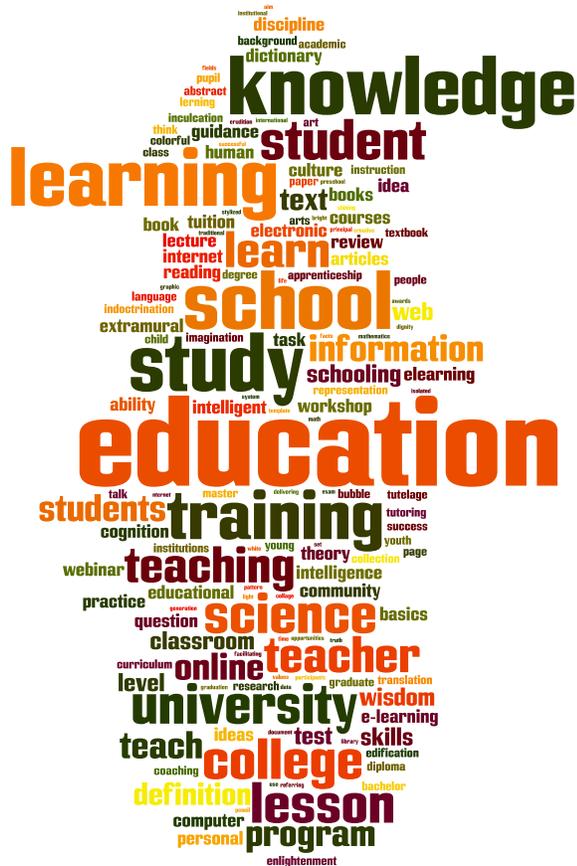
Hans F. Hanson once said, *“People inspire you, or they drain you—pick them wisely.”* College is four years to find yourself and help you become the person you are meant to be. In order for you to be the best you can possibly be, you need to continuously surround yourself with people who genuinely care for you and only want to see you happy and successful, as you venture down your life’s path. It’s crucial that you have an excellent support system to rely on so you are able to reach your full potential. I whole-heartedly believe that I would not be the person I am today without the unfailing guidance and inspiration of several very special people. Prior to and during my time at CSC, my constant friends and mentors were Brandon Gunn and Blake Nelson. Gunn and Nelson always made time for me to sit down and talk about my future, what my dreams were, and how to accomplish those dreams. Even though I am now a Connors alum, I know I can always pick up the phone and those two very special men will always be on the other end of the line, providing the same support and motivation as they always have.

When the time came for me to choose the university where I would continue my education, I knew I wanted to find a place that provided that same network of caring people. At Tech, I now have Moriah Beyers, Kayla Rathmann



and Dr. Ryan Rathmann. These three individuals provide continuous guidance, encouragement and an open ear to listen to all my questions and thoughts. With their help I have had experiences that have had a huge impact on my life. When good people who want to see you succeed surround you, you can feed off of their positive energy and are more likely to achieve your goals.

When college move-in day arrives, your parents will carry your new dorm room decor up all those flights of stairs and make your new room as “home sweet home” as possible. Although you will be very excited about your new found freedom and the countless college experiences that await you, there is no denying that as your parents hug you goodbye and drive away, a homesick feeling will creep up and make you nervous. No worries, I assure you that every other college freshmen has experienced that same feeling. That is why my next piece of advice is so important: attend a school that feels like your home away from home. I’m not telling you to always stay in your comfort zone, but your college campus should make you feel safe and relaxed. The second I stepped onto Tech’s campus I knew this is where I wanted to spend the next few years of my life. Maybe it was the pretty campus or friendly people, but regardless the reason, when I first toured campus I felt welcomed and like I was home.



My final piece of advice is to do your homework and know what colleges are equipped with the professors and resources to help you succeed. One of my mentors, Dr. Ryan Rathmann always says, “*Success begets success.*” As you make this decision, you need to know about the classes, programs, internships, job positions and student organizations that various colleges can offer you. The college you attend should be backed with departments and programs that will broaden your horizons, enhance your knowledge, and develop you into a productive and successful student that will, in return, make you an excellent employee.

As you tour different schools, fill out college applications, and make your final decision as where you will be in the fall, remember these simple tips. Even though I made the best college decisions for me and I am a very proud Red Raider, I didn’t choose Texas Tech because of our football team, the great social scene, or even Kliff Kingsbury. I chose Tech because in a way Tech chose me. I knew, from the moment I stepped onto campus and met my new support system, that this is where I belonged. It might be hard to believe, but you will get that same feeling too, when you have found the place that best fits you. All you really have to do to have an unforgettable college experience is have a great team of people encouraging you, and add a campus that feels like home, along with a program built on tradition and success. If you mix all that up, add a dash of tailgates and all-nighters, you will look back on your college years with a smile.