Erica Molina

Longhorn or Leprechaun?

Most students suffer through the daunting process of furiously typing admissions essays only to highlight the text and delete everything wondering if the process gets any easier. I’ve been there. And looking back on that process, it was nowhere near as difficult as the decision process. Applying to college is stressful, but how do you know if the college you choose is right for you?

It’s the fall of 2011and I’m driving home to a view of massive piles of colorful leaves resting on the ground. I remember the time I used to jump into those leaf piles before I was afraid of the bugs that could be hidden in there. Those were the good ol’ days. The days before I had to start thinking about this scary concept called my future. The day seems typical, until I walk up to my bedroom door and see the envelope on the ground. That burnt orange seal looking up at me from the upper left corner has my undivided attention. I hurry, scoop up the envelope and close my bedroom door behind me as I fling my backpack onto the ground and rip open the envelope as if it was a check for a million dollars.

[“The Eyes of Texas” (UT alma mater) plays in the background.] “Congratulations, Erica,” it reads, “You have been accepted into the Red McCombs School of Business at the University of Texas at Austin.” I freak out. My heart is racing and my hands are shaking as the letter falls to the floor. For the past 6 months, all I have done was rave about Austin and UT. I was surely going to spend the next four years of my life there.

It’s the end of March, and I am sitting in the counseling center of my high school when Mrs. Dexter, the school secretary, begins asking me about college. She sits behind her desk with her sandy blonde hair and kind smile always wanting to know that everyone is well.

“So have you decided on a college, Erica” she asks.

“Not yet,” I respond, “I’m still waiting to hear back from Notre Dame.”

She then goes on to talk about how wonderful going to ND would be as did most people when I told them I was considering going there. But most of these people didn’t realize that I was actually crazy about UT.

Later on, my friend Tessa and I drive to my house. I cruise up to my mailbox knowing that my acceptance or rejection letter would be waiting for me. I anxiously open the mailbox and see a package.

[“Notre Dame Victory March” plays in the background.] Tessa sees the envelope and yells, “Holy crap, dude! Notre Dame!” I open the envelope and see that golden seal sparkling in the light like a diamond in a display case. It feels like there are a million butterflies fluttering around in my stomach.

The middle of April comes around when I start to feel everyone, especially my parents, getting impatient with my indecisiveness about college. UT and ND both have pros and cons. Each parent favors one over the other. I slouch at my desk scanning over the acceptance packets trying to decide which university I want. Do I choose the one that my heart has been set on from the beginning but risky financially? Or do I choose the school that’s somehow more affordable and one of the greatest schools in the country? Every time I say I’ve decided, doubts come into my mind, and I panic like I’ve just sold my soul to the devil.

One night, as I am sitting on the couch in my aunt’s house trying to avoid any talk of college, she asks me, “So have you decided?”

Out of nowhere the words “I’ve decided on Notre Dame” come out of my mouth. Part of me is shocked, another part saw this coming. Even if my heart was set on UT, practical thinking led me to choose my number two. Crazy, right? The few that truly know me notice my faulty reasoning for choosing Notre Dame.

[“Notre Dame, Our Mother” plays in the background.] It’s a beautiful August day at Notre Dame when I am greeted with genuine smiles and helping hands. The squirrels on campus are just as massive and friendly as I remember them being when we first met. And, there is the Golden Dome that glistens in the sun for all of campus to see. This is my home for the next four years, and yet I can’t help but question why I am here. Everyone seems to have so much pride in ND. While I struggle to feel the same, I will continue to walk around South Quad wearing my shirt that says “We Are ND” on the back doing my best to convince myself that I am proud to be a Fighting Irish.