

Joe

WR 13100

Professor Clauss

April 30, 2012

Situation: As a college student who has attended both the University of Notre Dame and Duke University, I am writing to one of friends, Jack, who is a senior in high school at Saint Michael's Catholic Academy in Austin, Texas. Jack is an amazing student, and he is considering attending either Duke or ND. I would like Jack to attend ND, not Duke, because I believe that he would have a better college experience at ND.

Duke vs. Notre Dame

Dear Jack,

It was great seeing you over Spring Break! I really enjoyed catching up with you; it sounds like you are finishing up your senior year and are ready to move on to college. Keep working hard, Jack. I know you are in the running for valedictorian and I think that is awesome. Being valedictorian would be a great reward for all of the work and long nights you have pushed through during the last four years! I am super glad that we keep in touch ever since I left Austin to attend college. Speaking of college, this letter has to do with the big decision you will be making here in a few weeks—where to attend college. I know you have a lot of options available and I want to congratulate you for that! However, I know that the decision has come down to Duke University and the University of Notre Dame—the schools that I attended during my freshman year in college. I want to advise you to think hard about where you choose to go. I want you to keep in mind that college is more than just going to school. It is where you will live, practice your faith, and meet some of your best friends. Because I know you so well and because we have such similar personalities, I want you to consider Notre Dame over Duke. As you know, after a semester at Duke I made the decision to make a change and I am very glad that I did. Both

schools have their ups and downs at times but overall I truly believe that you will have a better and more meaningful time in college if you choose to attend Notre Dame.

If I were to describe you to someone, one of the first things I would say about you is that you are a strong, devoted Catholic who is in love with his faith. I am a strong believer that even the most devoted Catholic can still learn more about his faith and can become a better, more faithful person. Because of this, I think you should attend Notre Dame over Duke. I spent a whole semester at Duke trying to get involved with their Catholic Center: I went on retreats, I went to weekly mass, and I hung out with fellow Catholics—but something was still missing. I found that many of the Catholics at Duke were not as devoted to our faith as we are and that a sense of community was lacking at mass each Sunday. I often felt alone at church and wanted the mass to go as quickly as possible. However, when I arrived at Notre Dame, I immediately knew what was missing at Duke: the lack of people similar to me. At Notre Dame I have found almost all Catholics to be in love with Catholicism. As you know, every Sunday each dorm has a “dorm mass” at around 10:00 PM. Although it sounds great, actually experiencing it is unbelievable. My favorite part during the mass is when we share the sign of peace. Rather than just shaking hands with the people around us like at most Catholic masses, everyone at dorm mass leaves their pew, lines up in the aisle, and hugs one another. It is one of the happiest feelings I have ever experienced – it is so nice to know that everyone in the dorm respects you and cares about you so much. Because of these things, I go to mass every weekend in my dorm with my fellow Sorin Otters. Praising God with my best friends on Sunday night has been an unbelievable way to start my week and I think you would feel the same way. Every time I walk out of our Chapel at the end of mass, I feel refreshed and ready to take on the week ahead. Jack, this is the main reason why I advise you to attend Notre Dame over Duke. I think you will find the Catholic community

to be unbelievably rewarding at Notre Dame. In fact, ND offers over 100 Catholic masses a week! (“Student”). I can guarantee you will not find that at Duke.

Not only will you find the Catholic community at Notre Dame to be incredibly rewarding, I think you will enjoy the academics better at Notre Dame than at Duke. From being with you during high school, I can say that I have never known someone that enjoys and cares more about their high school classes than you. I know that you plan on studying business or economics in college (just like I was during my senior year of high school), and I think you will find the business classes at Notre Dame to be much more rewarding than the economics classes at Duke [Duke does not have an undergraduate business school]. When I was studying economics at Duke, I found the class to be incredibly boring and my classmates to be very competitive. Although this could have simply been an odd experience (or was just the case within the economics department), while I was at Duke I felt like the whole student body was more academically cutthroat. For example, I had multiple “friends” at Duke that would not tutor or help me out in my classes. In one instance, there was this guy, Nick, who offered to help me after I struggled with my first economics test. Multiple times I texted him asking to meet up for help, but each time he was busy and did not have any other available times to work with me. Although many Duke students would not admit this, I think the reason some did this is because they did not want me to get a good grade. Unlike Duke, I find Notre Dame to be a supporting community. I have not met a person that has said “no” to helping me with my classes. Whenever I have a test in a class, there is always a group to study with the night before the exam. In addition to this, I find that overall my Notre Dame professors care more about my classes and how I perform in them. For example, I was in two classes at Duke that, when a paper was assigned, required you to write exactly 2,000 words—no more, no less. I believe that my two

professors did this because they felt like they were too “busy” to spend time grading the extra work. At Notre Dame, I have never been restricted by an upper limit on paper assignments. If I were to write five pages for a one-page assignment, I think all of my professors at Notre Dame would not only happily read and grade the assignment, I think they would be glad that I dedicated so much time and effort to the work as well. However, by no means does this mean Notre Dame professors expect you to write more than is assigned. If a Notre Dame professor expected you to write a five-page paper, they would assign it!

Knowing you, I do not think you would like being surrounded by alcohol, and especially drugs, in college. I think that the drug and alcohol scene is less present at Notre Dame than at Duke. In college, I have found that drugs and alcohol influence many students’ weekends. In fact, I found drugs and alcohol to be a much larger influence on Duke students’ weekends than ND students’ weekends. I was around marijuana a lot at Duke (people smoked it in our dorm), and although I was never forced to smoke it, I did feel uncomfortable being around it a lot of the time. In addition, I heard of multiple instances where people were taking drugs such as cocaine and LSD. At Notre Dame, underage drinking is definitely present (although many ND students do not drink), but I have yet to see, smell, or be offered any drugs. In fact, according to the website Things Notre Dame Students Like, “At Notre Dame...this form of youthful expression (smoking marijuana) is notably absent... As a result, most Notre Dame graduates head off into the world unaware of the distinct smell of marijuana smoke” (“#93”). Overall, I have concluded that alcohol is present at both schools, but marijuana and other drugs are used at a much higher level at Duke. As a friend of yours, I do not think you will use drugs or drink alcohol in college anyways – I know you wouldn’t want to jeopardize many things in your life, including your athletic abilities!

Speaking of athletics, I know how much you love being involved in physical activities and playing sports. I have found ND to have a much larger availability of sports and recreational activities than at Duke, and I think you would really benefit from this. Duke did not have intermural sports, and the club sports there were a joke. In fact, I had a friend who played soccer in high school and went out for the club soccer team at Duke. After about a week, he quit the club team because it was too relaxed and very few people took it seriously. However, at Notre Dame, almost every student I know participates in some sort of physical activity. Interhall sports at Notre Dame are a blast; they are not too competitive and are a lot of fun. In fact, so many people wanted to play soccer that our dorm had “tryouts” (to see who was really interested) – and then let everyone on the team! This semester, I played on Sorin’s “B” basketball team (and started every game!) and played on Sorin’s first ever interhall lacrosse team. As you know, I have not played basketball since ninth grade and haven’t played lacrosse since eighth grade but that didn’t matter! The guys were just happy to have another enthusiastic player on their team. I have really enjoyed getting to know my dorm mates better through sports and physical activities, and I know that you would really like this as well.

Jack, I hope you take what I have said into consideration. I want you to remember that I have only spent a semester at each school, but I do feel like I have a good idea about the way each school runs. In the long run, I want you to choose the school that you believe you will enjoy the most. However, I truly believe that Notre Dame, and not Duke, is the right place for you. Like usual, feel free to call or text me if you have any questions; I’d be glad to help you out. Have a great remainder of your senior year, and keep working hard. I’m rooting for you to be Saint Michael’s Catholic Academy’s Class of 2012 valedictorian!

Your Friend,

Joe

Works Cited

"#93: Not Knowing What Pot Smells Like." *Things Notre Dame Students Like*. 10 Aug. 2010.

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"Student Life FAQ." *University of Notre Dame*. Web. 02 Apr. 2012.

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