

Mike

WR 13100

Professor Clauss

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Glee

Situation: As a freshman and rookie of the University of Notre Dame Glee Club, I am writing a letter to my friend, Phillip, who is currently a senior at my former high school, Yuma Catholic, in Yuma, Arizona. He has just been accepted to Notre Dame, has an excellent voice, can sight-read, and possesses qualities that fit well with other members of Glee Club. Although Phillip has interest in Notre Dame, especially Glee Club, he is not sure he wants to attend, because he has been accepted to Stanford, his dream school. As a result of my letter, I hope that Phillip will be strongly influenced to attend ND and, ultimately, try out for the Glee Club.

Dear Phillip,

How have you been doing since the last time you visited Notre Dame? I've heard from your dad that your senior year at Yuma Catholic has been phenomenal. Congratulations on being the first team from YC to win state in football! Also, good job on finishing your fourth season of varsity soccer and best of luck to your upcoming track meets. Anyways, this letter is to mainly address your concern about choosing a college. Earlier, you texted me saying that you got into Stanford, your dream school, but your recent visit to Notre Dame left such a strong impression on you that you are now having a tough time deciding between the two. Hopefully, you will be more relieved after I give you some pros and cons of ND along with some of my own personal experiences. Most importantly, I would want you to audition for the University of Notre Dame Glee Club, because I know your passion for music and how this is the club you were most interested in. Not only is it one of the premier music groups at ND, but also, for me, it has been one of the most rewarding clubs here at the university.

Like you, I also had a difficult time deciding which college I wanted to attend. We both worked our tails off in order to get to where we now are. My knowledge of Stanford is limited to what they have on their website so I cannot say too much regarding anything they have to offer, but I can offer a student's perspective on Notre Dame and its values. In terms of ranking general education, Stanford (5) prevails over Notre Dame (19) ("National"). But that does not mean the experiences at Stanford will be of higher quality or ranking than ND's.

For instance, the Asian population at Stanford is significantly higher than Notre Dame's. As a Filipino-American, you might be concerned with Notre Dame's lack of racial diversity. However, don't be discouraged, because there is an Asian club or group for every major Asian country such as Chinese Culture Society, Japan Club, Korean Student Association, and the Filipino American Student Organization. What's even better is that they are all organized under the Asian American Association here at ND ("Asian"). This organization allows Asian students to meet with each other, support one another regardless of ethnicity, and acts as a second family to those who are far from home. Moreover, it's really easy to meet white students of different backgrounds here at Notre Dame. Furthermore, being part of the minority at ND, I've never felt left out or discriminated against. Overall, it introduces ND students to a different type of diversity, one based off experiences and cultures. Besides, how likely is it that you will meet all the Asian students at Stanford? Most likely, you'll associate yourself with a small group, similar to what you can do at ND.

Phillip, remember the summer before your senior year, you told me how you wanted to attend a university renowned for making an impact in the world? Well then, ND might be the perfect place for you as it is ranked ninth for sending about fifty-six percent of its students to study abroad ("University"). Yes, I know that you might be thinking that it isn't ranked first, but

there are some students who may wish to or have to stay back at ND due to busy schedules or other circumstances. Still, sending over half of the student body abroad is a significant accomplishment. When comparing Stanford's Bing Overseas Studies Program with ND's study abroad programs, the percentage of students sent abroad (around 50%), the types of programs (engineering, arts and letters, business, science), and the countries (China, Spain, Germany, etc.) where students travel to are similar ("Bing"). However, Notre Dame on average will send almost a thousand more undergrad students because Notre Dame's student body is slightly larger. When you attend meetings involving study abroad, there are many professors and students who will tell you that Notre Dame receives enormous funding to send its students abroad. Even as a freshman, I have received a grant to study Korean in South Korea. It just goes to show that there are many opportunities to do great things at ND.

If volunteering suits you better than studying abroad, Notre Dame has plenty of openings for you to get involved. First, there are multiple departments like the Office of International Studies, Center for Undergraduate Scholarly Engagement, and the Center for Social Concerns that develop programs to help undergraduate students volunteer during their breaks and summers. These programs usually send students to impoverished areas within the U.S., and there are some programs that send students to different third world countries to volunteer. For example, my roommate, Mike, got accepted into the Summer Service Learning Program and is designated to help out at a hospital in Boca Raton, Florida. Another friend of mine, Matt, was able to earn a spot in the International version of this program and is planning to volunteer in Ecuador. As you can see, there are plenty of chances for you to use your skills and talents to physically make a difference in the world. Even within the South Bend community, there are clubs such as the Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity ND, and Student United Way that volunteer. Of course, there are

many more groups than the ones I just listed. You and many ND students think alike when it comes to advocating goodwill or promoting change.

By now, you are probably dying to know more about the Notre Dame Glee Club. First of all, I know you have a passion for music, sing well, can sight read music, and play the guitar and piano. Also, you're just a fun guy to hang out with in general and I'm sure that the guys in Glee will be ecstatic to have you join the club. Even if you didn't possess all these skills, the executive members and our director, Dan Stowe, accept guys who share a passion for music and commitment to a club. Performing with you in school talent shows, choir trips, and Sunday mass choirs, I know the amount of dedication and effort you put into making sure everything runs smoothly. These are traits that Glee clubbers look for in those who audition, and I'm sure you'll do fine. Honestly, this is great group of people who are truly devoted to singing not only for pure enjoyment, but also because it's a great way to represent the university and reach out to other communities through song and service.

As a rookie, all the upperclassmen took care of us from the very beginning: assigning big brothers, holding cookouts, and spending time to learn each and every single one of our names. The executive officers frequently hold events like hot wing challenges at Wings etc., a local restaurant in the Michiana region, or guy's night at one of the senior's houses in order for all of us to bond. I seriously felt more welcomed or at least in good company than I did back home. I can still recall the time we were all at Bruno's, a favorite pizza place of ND Glee Club, standing on chairs, toasting, and singing "A Toast", when one of the vice presidents, Doug said, "We welcome our new brothers. Here in Club, we look out for one another while still having a damn good time". For me, the tight-knit community is what truly distinguished Notre Dame from other excellent universities. When you came to visit ND a while back, you said yourself that this is the

first time experiencing such a strong sense of community, and I remember seeing the truly impressed look on your face as you said that to me.

I talked with John Kemnetz, current president and former secretary of Glee Club, and he gave me a better understanding of what value the club is to the university. John said, “It’s a large, and diverse group of students who probably have the most physical interaction with those who aren’t within or nearby the Notre Dame community”. To specify, the club consists of students who are engineering majors, bio majors, business majors etc. from different U.S. states and regions in the world such as Latin America, the Middle East, and East Asia that perform in front of thousands of people during the year with concerts and tours in cities such as Los Angeles, New York, and Houston and several European countries (“Glee”). With Glee Club, for example, I’m one of the few Asians in the club, but Peter, a Caucasian student, is fascinated by Asian culture and is studying to be a Chinese major.

Additionally, Notre Dame is well known for having excellent alumni contribution and networking. Each year, Notre Dame ranks among the nation’s top 20 colleges and universities in terms of annual voluntary support (“Frequently”). We meet hundreds of people through homestays and events and can sometimes network with ND alumni. John also added that an average of two members in Glee Club will be asked to work for a company of an alumnus during tours (Kemnetz). So, it’s in our best interest to represent Notre Dame’s student body to the best of our abilities. Besides, it would be great if we could sing together like we did in high school. ND Glee Club holds tours and concerts every fall and spring break which means you would have the opportunity to travel to different states. Also, there is a tour to a different country every two years and, every four years, Glee Club has a four week Europe tour (“Glee”). Like I mentioned earlier, joining would be an excellent way to explore the world outside our small hometown.

At least for me, Glee acts as a break from all the stress that comes with college, homework, and tests. Practices last only about an hour and fifteen minutes a day about four to five days out of the week. So, it's not really too much of a time commitment. Attending rehearsal is mandatory if you want to partake in concerts and other singing events, and that reasoning is completely understandable. But, you can be excused from practices if you have mandatory lectures to attend, class conflicts, important meetings, or exams. I do hang out with the Glee guys quite often, but I also spend an equal amount of time with my other friends back at the dorm. To me, it seems like the executive officers try to make Glee Club as flexible as possible with your schedule. In the end, if Glee doesn't suit your musical taste, then there are other singing groups such as Folk Choir, ND Chorale, Halftime, Unchained Melodies, and Common Time that could fit your style.

Ultimately, it's your decision, Phillip. You've gotten into some great schools and it wouldn't be fair of me to say that Notre Dame is the only choice for you. However, just keep in mind that if you were to attend, you would already have a friend here who knows how to manage life at ND. Plus, you were invited to the Glee house when you visited earlier this semester and are always welcome to hang out with the guys and my dorm mates. I hope my experiences and information helped ease some anxiety about choosing college. Don't be afraid to call me or text me if you have any further questions. If you choose Notre Dame, try out for Glee Club. I'm sure you would do great!

Take care,

Mike

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