

FAMILY TIES

Legacy students see a different perspective of Rivier College—their parents'

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For many small private colleges, legacy students are a crucial variable in a complex admissions equation. While larger schools like Harvard and Texas A&M have been criticized for their legacy admissions policies, admissions counselors at smaller schools say that recruiting the children of alumni can help create a stronger incoming class.

“Children of alumni start off with a better understanding of the College’s identity than other prospective students,” says David Boisvert, Rivier’s Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Executive Assistant to the President for Enrollment Management. Students attending the same school as their parents have an opportunity to gain similar experiences, but can also show their parents how the institution has grown. “Comparing the differences between the past and present can be a good point of conversation and can strengthen the experience for both students and their parents,” he says.

Courtney Lord '10, nursing major, and Melissa Lord '91 A.S. in nursing

Melissa Lord says, “When Courtney was about five years old, she told me that when she grew up, she was going to be a nurse too so we could work together.” Courtney’s prediction was right. Not only is she studying nursing at her mother’s alma mater; she also works part-time at Home Health and Hospice, where Melissa is the pediatric program coordinator.

Courtney says that while her mother’s experience definitely influenced her decision to come to Rivier, it wasn’t the only factor. “I talked to a lot of people who had come here and heard nothing but good things,” she says.

Courtney wanted to stay close to home, and liked the fact that Rivier offers an internship. She’s considering operating room or emergency room nursing and hopes her internship will help her decide. “I can pick one of the two and get a sense from being out in the real world if it will be a good field for me,” she says.

“In nursing, there are so many avenues—hands-on, teaching, pharmaceuticals, school nursing,” Melissa says. “Courtney will never have to worry about finding a job.”

Melissa is considering returning to Rivier for her bachelor’s degree to advance her own career. “I’ve always wanted to come back,” she says. “One of my goals is to take classes together,” she says. Courtney thinks it would be helpful to have classes with her mom; they’re considering starting their joint studies with statistics.

“She helps me study, and I have to tell her something doesn’t matter, it’s not going to be on the test,” Courtney says.

Melissa laughs. “I tell her it doesn’t matter if it’s on the test, she should know everything.” She says helping her daughter study has been a good refresher. Despite updated labs and new technology, “a lot of the information is still the same—bones don’t change,” she says.

Brittany Gilbert '10, marketing major, and Deb Gilbert '82 B.A. in paralegal studies

Deb Gilbert says her daughter’s decision to come to Rivier took her by surprise. Brittany had been accepted at another school, but when she took a campus tour there, something changed. “She didn’t like it,” says Deb. “She found Rivier online and did all the research herself. She wanted to go; it was her choice.”

Brittany wanted to study business and have the opportunity to play sports; Rivier fit the bill. She also likes the student/faculty ratio and individual attention the school offers. “My mother told me that college was a good experience for her, she had fun at Rivier,” Brittany says. She expected a lot of change—when her mother attended, most classes were taught by Sisters, and the College was a women’s school. During their tour of Rivier, Deb pointed out many new buildings as well.

Deb graduated from Presentation of Mary Academy in Methuen and tried several other colleges before settling in at Rivier. “I went in all different directions; Brittany’s a much better student than I was,” she says. “I lived in Trinity, on the top floor. I had a car at school, so I was always out. Curfew was at 2 a.m.—if you got locked out, you did some creative things to get in!”

Though Deb admits she wasn’t a model student, she gives credit to the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary for fostering independence. “The women I went to school with are strong women, they have strong careers,” she says. As one of the few women working in technology sales in Maine, she’s no exception.

Brittany says the fact that both her parents are in business influenced her choice of major. “Marketing poses a lot of opportunity—I love being analytical and seeing how people react to media.” She enjoys public speaking and wants to take public relations classes as well. “I hope I can make a difference in a company some day,” she says.

A Growing Trend

The class of 2010 includes nine legacy students—a higher number than in past years. The Admissions Office is working to continue the trend. Legacy students are eligible for the Alumni Scholarship, \$2,000 renewable for four years, in addition to any merit scholarships and grants they may be awarded. Rivier began a merit scholarship program in 1998; the College awards \$5 million in scholarships annually.

“With the Alumni Office, we’re planning programs for alumni with children considering Rivier,” says Boisvert. “We take pride in our legacy applications; they show that our alumni think highly of the College and the quality of the education they received.” ■

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