

“*Where the hell am I--?*” Have you awakened in the middle of your room in the middle of the night silently screaming that question in your dreams yet? I hope not. Because the answer to this question will probably not materialize until you’ve left Skidmore. It can take that long to figure out what a wonderful, crazy, unreal place college is.

You certainly realize you are not in Kansas anymore, Toto. Noise till midnight, mind-bending concepts, people you can’t avoid, awkward silences in the classroom, academic standards too high for you (or too low), dark thoughts that can’t be shared, no pets, no dog, no cat, siblings are disappeared, pressure, pressure, pressure, hang-overs due to medicine for pressure—plus all the hazards of working and living in the *same* place. When will this unnatural state be over!

Well, at least it’s an improvement over high school, right? I mean, the manic hallways, the rumor mill, the bullies, classes at virtual DAWN! Get me outta there! What’s not to like in college, compared to that? Besides, no parents, and it’s all in a good cause, right?

You think, “M-m-m-m, what was that again? A bachelor’s degree—four more years of school on top of the last twelve for a ticket to security, may be worth it. Don’t see many jobs out there right now, do you suppose I can stretch this out a little longer. . . ?”

All that uncertainty can make college seem a little like hell. If it weren’t for that, a person could really enjoy this excursion through beauty and knowledge. So it’s best not to dwell on the uncertainties right now. You think, More medication. But the walls close in anyway, and things just feel worse.

I blame it all on the view. On a lovely campus like ours, the view is surely lovely enough but I believe that the view is just not l-a-r-g-e enough. You can’t see very much from where you sit at any one time. You can’t see, for instance, all your peers in other colleges across the country, in urban universities, in art schools, in community colleges, in church schools and military schools, in beauty courses and computer classes, all

leaning over their books and into their futures, too, wondering what will evolve for them. You can't see them and how much they are like you. And you can't see the others who didn't opt for college, who are hammering out their destinies on a day to day basis, too, some in entry level jobs, some picking up from summer jobs they had, others in the military (we are a nation at war, don't forget). The view is too limited to see them either and how much they are like you.

I think I should lobby President Glotzbach to raze the Wilson Chapel (you knew we have a chapel on campus, right?) and build in its place a sort of Eiffel Tower that we can climb up in whenever we want and get a view of the world around us, to remind us where we *really* are. You could go up to a first mezzanine (climbing stairs, never elevators) and see Saratoga and, with the binoculars installed on the railings (free for once), you could see all the families (like yours) raising children who will follow you and your peers into the seats you leave behind one day, when you go on your way. On a platform a little higher you could view the great natural valley we live in, the Hudson River coming down from Canada and flowing toward Albany (you can just see it) while it waters the crops and the souls who live nearby. Another couple platforms up and you could see the extensions of this country around the world, the perfervid commerce, the syndicated TV shows, the charitable enterprises, the overcommitted military (we are a nation at war, don't forget). And what you would see from the top! You would really see that you are not alone in your tasks and that exciting responsibilities ahead await you.

I wish people could always see where we *really* are. And really enjoy college. It isn't hell at all, far from it.

--Richard Chrisman, 9/22/2010