

# TRANSFER STUDENTS *SPEAK*

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*Profiles of Transfer Students*

★ PREVIEW  
INTERVIEW ★

Edited by  
Chris Goodmacher  
Lan Ngo



# **Transfer Students Speak**

Profiles of Transfer Students

Edited by Chris Goodmacher and Lan Ngo

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Second edition.

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## As Seen In



## Praise for The Transfer Book

### Our favorite letter

*Hi Guys,*

*...please allow me to tell you how great great great The Transfer Book effort is. I was thrilled to discover it online, I have enjoyed reading and re-reading it, and I have certainly profited from it...*

*Our nephew, who is a senior at (top national university), confirmed your comments on their high transfer rate... (As hard as he worked and as qualified as he was to get into to [top national university], I would never have broached this with him.)*

*Frankly, I wouldn't have thought that our son (a freshman at [small local state school]... a true late bloomer who is academically [sic] blowing it out of the park this year-- FINALLY!!!) would be remotely eligible to transfer there.*

*But, because of The Transfer Book, he will be applying there.*

*He went to (public high school), and was consistently in the bottom quarter of his class. Lots of extracurriculars, loved by everyone, integrity and honor, great all-round kid, captain of the tennis team, etc. Just not "there" in the maturity category... though blooming did begin late Junior year. The classic upward trajectory.*

*John's SATS were 1300, so we knew that though not yet ignited, he was capable of more. Fortunately, the scores were high enough for him to apply and be accepted into to (small local state school's) honors program. With 15 hours behind him at (small local state school), his GPA is a 4.3.*

*He intends to double major: history, political science, and he wants Rosetta Stone for Christmas to learn Arabic... because he thinks that it will be fun to learn it! Wow, who is this kid????*

*Because John's high school grades were weak (2.6 freshman year, 3.2 Senior year) and the college counselor never spent much time with us, I am especially grateful for your "partnership" and edification.*

*Best to you both!,  
Jane*

*I have printed and bound The Transfer Book and consult it regularly as a reference book.*

*I have told A LOT of parents (and freshman students) about your book.*

*I do hope that you have enormous success. The Transfer Book contains valuable information and is an exceptional service to any student considering transferring. And it is highly illuminating for a parent who knows next to nothing about what it takes to be a good transfer candidate.*

## **And the follow up**

*Hey Chris,*

*I am writing you before I even write my brothers!  
John just got in UNC today...  
we absolutely believe that you guided us.*

## **More praise**

*iGrad.com Winner, one of the Best College, Post-College (and Beyond) Blogs, 2010-11*

*"[The Transfer Book] contains information that students need to know. You have done a great job with it! ... In the years I have spent advising college transfer students, I have seen some changes, but you are right, there is nothing out there specifically to help them."*

—Dr. Michelle Aheron, Director, Student Services, Wake Technical Community College, Raleigh, NC

*"Considering the fact that 20% of students who start at one university end up at another, you'll want to make sure you check out [The Transfer Book]."*

—Rick Lyons, Publisher of Honor Student Magazine

*"Speaking as a transfer student and someone who has referenced those other sources, I can attest to the helpfulness of this book and website. I find it a shame that it wasn't published only a few months earlier to help me when I was going through the entire process."*

—Hannah Haas, a successful transfer student now at Furman University

*As I started my transfer application process, I came across an extremely helpful site called The Transfer Book. Their website provides first-hand testimonies, essays, and advice for transfer applicants... As I embarked on this crazy yet perfect journey as I now see it, I kept finding myself to be reading up on their book. The book not only details the transfer process but provides so many personal accounts of students who transferred. At first, I felt extremely alone but after reading this, as cheesy as it sounds, I feel that I can do it... as I work my way through this book, I am starting to believe in something... This is a decision for me and me only. I am doing it because I know what I lack in my current education and I know what I am looking for. I want to learn. I want to be pushed to my limits and strive for something I never imagined I could reach.*

—Fang-hua, a student applying to transfer for Fall 2012 (excerpted from her blog with permission)

*This book, which was written by transfer students for transfer students, provides the tools and information needed in order to have the college success you've always dreamed of.*

—Eric, transferred from Santa Monica College to Cornell University

*The Transfer Book is so essential for anyone considering transferring to a different school. No matter what your situation is, this book can provide insights you will find incredibly useful... The Transfer Book gives you real experiences first hand, and will guide you as you begin your transition to a different college.*

—Tanya Sperling, transferred from John Tyler Community College to the College of William & Mary

*This is exactly the resource that transfer students need. Students looking to transfer should learn from others who have gone through the process themselves. I'm glad that someone finally put this together!*

—Christina, transferred from College of DuPage to University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

*I scoured the internet for the best information on how to transfer to my top choice schools. The Transfer Book is by far the best resource out there on transferring. The real-life sample essays alone are worth it!*

—Jennifer, transferred from Pasadena City College to UC Berkeley

# Nicole

Transferred from Trinity College (Hartford, Connecticut) to Barnard College (New York, New York)

Major: Liberal Arts

## Introduction

Nicole's story doesn't lend itself to a tidy category or summary (i.e., transferring internationally, or for financial reasons), but she is amazingly articulate and honest about how the entire transfer process went for her. Nicole went to Trinity mainly because she thought the buildings were lovely, but she soon discovered that beneath the pretty facades the facilities were not really well maintained, the area wasn't as safe as she would've liked, and she felt socially isolated as someone who wasn't as into drinking and partying as the rest of the campus. The last straw was when the school cut a special program that Nicole was in for budget reasons. As soon as that happened she applied to Barnard even though it was after the deadline, because her former high school counselor who used to be in admissions there knew that Barnard would not hold a slight delay against a promising transfer candidate whose program just got cancelled. Of particular note is her advice to be honest about your situation and not be afraid to tell friends or relatives that you want to transfer (because otherwise she wouldn't have heard from her former high school admissions counselor), as well as her great recommendation to meet a ton of people fast by simply saying "yes" to everything you're invited to at your new school.

What was the college application process like when you were in high school?

The whole process started a long time ago. I never stayed in one place growing up. I moved around a lot, every two years, even lived abroad. Whenever I moved somewhere, I knew which school I would be going to. When college came, it was the first time that I got to choose. It was an overwhelming decision. It's something that everyone talks about, and my parents met and fell in love and got married right after college. So, naturally there were expectations in my head that I devised: "This is where I'm going to be the person that I'm going to be because this is my life. This is probably where I'm going to meet the person that I fall in love with and marry."



I don't think I would have been happy at any of the schools that I applied to the first time around. My problem was that I didn't look to these schools with any thought to who I was then. It's not that you go to college and something magical happens and you become a different person. It doesn't happen that way. If you're the type of person that hangs out with friends on weekends and do school activities, when you get to college, that's probably going to be the case. Or if you spend a lot of time with your family or if you travel a lot, chances are that you're going to want to do the same thing in one year. You don't change suddenly just because you go to a new school.

I had this idea of who I wanted to be or who I thought I was: "As a college student, this is the type of person that I'm going to be." I didn't think, "It's important for me to be close to home because I had never been away from my family for more than a month." In retrospect, it didn't make sense. Why would I choose a school that was farther away than that?

Which schools did you apply to the first time around, and what were the results?

The first time, I naturally looked at the school my parents went to, which was Harvard. It was a big school. What I thought the first time around was, "Oh, wow. That's a really good school. It's amazing academically. People know it."

I applied to other universities, big schools where I thought I would have a lot of people to meet and a lot of opportunities. That was great, but I had only gone to medium- and small-sized schools. I don't know why I applied to universities. I'm not the one to stand up and make myself known. I develop relationships with teachers quietly and slowly. A college is what I needed.

I applied to Harvard, Princeton, Tufts, Trinity, Clarke, and a random school in Indiana, Earlham. I think it was because half my family is from West Virginia and I had this idea that it would be "real America", not in the city. I don't know what I was thinking. I'm a city person. I also applied to two schools in California: Scripps and Claremont McKenna.

I got into Scripps, Trinity, and Clarke. I got waitlisted at Tufts and I think Harvard. I didn't get into Princeton or Claremont McKenna.

I visited three of the schools that I got into. I didn't visit all the schools. I had never been presented with the option of where I should go and where I wanted to go. At that time, I didn't think visiting would make such a difference, but after I got my letters of acceptance, I visited Scripps, Trinity, and Clarke. When I went to Clarke, it felt wrong. I didn't feel like the people would be the people I would be friends with. I wasn't interested in the activities and the majors. Some of that I should've known beforehand. Some of it I could have only known by going, walking around the town and seeing that it's not my type of town. I needed more of a city. Clarke was gorgeous but you couldn't get around. You needed a car to do your daily stuff. It's beautiful, but it felt too isolating.

I ended up going to Trinity. Walking around the campus with this gothic-inspired architecture, it just felt like history. The school was built in the late 1800s and it felt like it. It looked like you could sit on the lawn with a few of your close friends and do intense studying and talk about important things. Those are aspects that are advertised but had I talked to people from my high school that had gone there I would have known that it wasn't the place for me. I was going by what it looked like. I didn't go by what I knew. I knew this guy, for example, that went to Trinity. I had my opinions about him. He was never my type of guy at high school. I don't know why that didn't jump out at me. This guy was really happy at Trinity, but it didn't mean that I would be. Maybe I should've thought twice about going.

Trinity ended up being a very isolating experience. It wasn't very safe to walk around outside campus. It wasn't safe to walk *on* campus. But when I went, I saw large grassy quads, wide sidewalk areas, and these beautiful buildings. It felt right. It was probably the most challenging of the schools that I got accepted to, in that I was accepted to a smaller elite program in Urban Studies. I thought, "At least there's going to be a smaller community within a college that I'm going to be a part of."

Reflecting on what you know now that you've gone through the college application process twice, what advice can you give about finding a school that fits you?

Some people say research the school. Some of it is obvious. Look at the range of SAT scores and the majors. But when someone says, "Do you want a small, medium, or large school? Do you want a college or a university? Do you want a party school? Do you want a school that's strong in sports because that would mean strong school spirit?" I didn't know.

I didn't know what that meant on a college scale. When people said, "70% of the classes are seminar classes and the rest are lectures," I said, "Yeah, I've seen college classes on TV." Sometimes classes are really small; sometimes they're really big. What does that mean to me? I didn't even know enough to ask questions. People were asking me these things based on an experience I had never had. How am I supposed to know which place was good? I could only know based on experiences I've already had. For example, I did really well in my high schools. They were small schools, not huge public schools. Chances are, because of that, I'm going to want a small to medium sized school. I don't know why I applied to universities. I needed one-on-one work with my professors.

People are so happy to talk about themselves. They want others to know their life story. As such, when you're looking at colleges the first time around or as a transfer student, talk to people. Talk to admissions people. The campus tour guides are often happy to give you their email addresses and contact information. Do it. Contact them. They genuinely want to help you. That's why they're there. I feel that way when I give Barnard tours. If I could, I would write my email address on my forehead and hope people will memorize it because I want to help them. That's something I should have done the first time around. I should have contacted people and asked students: "What do you do? What is a typical day for you?" That's information you can really only get from students at the school.

When you're looking at schools, look at where the school is making improvements, no matter in what. If the school has money, like any organization, they should be doing something new: construction, expanding programs, something with money. Trinity was doing nothing. In fact, they had put off some critical repairs to roofs. People had to move out of their rooms when I was a freshman because their ceilings were caving in and mold was coming in. Had I looked into the current state of the college and seen that no construction was being done, it would've have been a clue to me that Trinity was having serious money problems. That was an attitude that infected everybody: the administration, the teachers, and the students. That's one thing that no one tells you to look for. Construction is absolutely a turn on. You should be excited when a school has more money to put into the school than to just sustain costs.

Go to admissions events because the small talk is different depending on the school. At the Trinity admit events, somehow people had managed to navigate and find groups and they were walking around in little groups. They all dressed similarly. They seemed to understand

something that I didn't. I went to admitted students day. People were walking with their parental units. It was one person to two parents. They all looked very good. They looked like country club, preppy, J Crew, Ralph Lauren models walking around. It was impressive, like pages right off of a catalog. That's how they carried on in their small talk, too. When I came to Barnard, people were genuinely interested in where you were coming from. It was, "What's your name?" Not like at Trinity: "Oh, it's so nice to be here. Yes, it's a lovely day." No one really talks like that. That was who they were at Trinity. That's fine, but it's not who I am. At Barnard, people dealt with each other even in small talk. They might be shy or overcompensating, but they were still themselves. They were still very straightforward. That's who I am.

Why wasn't Trinity a good fit for you?

I'm generally not good with transitions in the beginning, in the first several weeks, in the first month. I know that about myself. I expected that when I went to Trinity. At the same time, going to Trinity was the worst experience I had ever had. I was unhappy from the first day I was there. That was primarily socially. It's a school where it's not safe to move around the campus, let alone get into the city. Chances are you're going to have a lot of activities on campus and it's a small school that's primarily into sports. I'm not into sports. You get a lot of drinking. Heavy drinking. It's a big party school. It's known as Club Trin Trin. I'm not like that at all. It's no wonder I wasn't really happy. I tried to give it the benefit of the doubt, so I thought this might just be a really hard time. It didn't get better, so I loaded myself up with courses and I tried to get really busy with academics. That worked for a while and I assumed I was productive. People wonder why I didn't transfer after the first semester, but that wouldn't have gotten me anywhere. Had I transferred after only one semester, I would have started as a freshman. I decided to stick it out.

Were you unsatisfied with Trinity in terms of academics?

That's a tough question because I wasn't a typical Trinity student. I actually did my work where I didn't have to. I was thinking about what makes a challenging school challenging. Why is Barnard considered a better school than Trinity? At Barnard, there's work assigned to you outside of class. At Trinity, you didn't have to do work outside of class or more work in order to be at the top of your class. You just did the bare minimum and sometimes go in without doing your work and BS your way through. At Barnard, to be at the top of your

class, you actually have to do your work and you might need to do more. You have to have study groups and talk to your teacher.

When did you finally decide that you wanted to transfer to another school?

At Trinity, I was part of that special program in Urban Studies. The way you got in was to be an especially interesting candidate in the beginning. As I said, I loaded up myself with all these courses and did all the work and more. I got interested in studying Chinese, which was incredibly challenging. I looked at another program, which Trinity ended up cutting for budget reasons. That's the reason that I ended up transferring. I applied to transfer to Barnard after the deadline because I had been accepted to a small program at Trinity, where three of your classes were devoted to reading about 50 books throughout the year and learning through discussion. I learned that the program was cut. That's when I said, "There's nowhere this school's going but down for me." It was not the right place. That's why I ended up leaving. There's no doubt in my mind that I would've transferred as a sophomore after first semester even if this program had worked out, but it didn't, so I transferred. The cancellation of that program was the final straw.

How did you decide that you wanted to transfer to Barnard?

When I was in high school, I actually took it off my list a few times and my counselor put it back on the list. She said, "This is going to be a really good school for you. Honestly. I was in admissions at Barnard. I know it's going to be great for you." I said, "No. It's in the city." While I was at Trinity, my mom ran into my high school college counselor and made small talk. The counselor asked how I was doing. My mom said, "Everything is not working out." The tri-state area is a "college happy" area where people make connections. You do things through connections. Through alums, parents, people who used to work in admissions. Be honest. There's a huge chance that you might not like a school that you're in because it's new. Give it time. However, if you feel that the school you end up at is really, really not the place for you, be honest with the people who are important to you because chances are someone somewhere has a contact somewhere else and they'll be able to help you in some way.

The program at Trinity was cut and then I realized that the deadline to apply to transfer to Barnard had already passed. Luckily, we ran into my former counselor and she said, "It's

slightly flexible. A few days. If you're a really promising candidate, they're not going to turn you down because a school cut a program on you. It's not your fault." That's something that gave me the courage to apply even though I thought the door had closed in my face. That makes people scared. I had friends who applied to schools and didn't get in or got in but couldn't go for financial reasons. They applied as a transfer student and got in. You have to be brave like that. You can't say, "I'm afraid. It didn't work out the first time." Or, "It did, but I couldn't go because of financial aid didn't work out." Try again. The application is about \$50. If that means having three happy years if you're transferring as a sophomore or two years if you're transferring as a junior, that's worth it. The college does have a hand in shaping who you already are.

#### You only applied to transfer to Barnard?

I knew that one of the biggest reasons I was unhappy at Trinity was because of everything that didn't work. On top of that, I wasn't close to home. Some things were hard when I was moving a lot previously, but I had my family. That was important to me. I don't know why I thought I had to get away. That didn't make sense. After the first semester of being unhappy at Trinity, I looked at schools to transfer to. I looked at Columbia, Barnard, and NYU. I didn't end up applying, but I printed out the application and stared at them for a while.

Then again, there were things I did well at Trinity. I did well in Chinese and developed a close relationship with my teacher. I had a fantastic group that I sang with. So I thought, "Maybe it was just the first semester." Second semester, I didn't apply to Columbia or NYU really because I had that contact at Barnard. I found out that I knew a lot of people who were involved in Barnard in some way. That's why I ended up only applying to Barnard.

#### What's the difference between the freshman application and the transfer application?

The biggest difference is that, in high school, people hype up the college application so much. At my high school, for example, we had an extra class added to the second semester of junior year called College Knowledge. They actually created a class where they sought to teach us how to write college applications, how to interview, how to take a tour. Seriously? They were going to teach us how to write on paper and to be ourselves? It's no wonder you get stressed and look at an application question and say, "Maybe I'm not interesting

enough. I really need to make sure I have my tagline. Who am I? Who am I going to be to this college? How am I going to make myself known when they're reading my three-line answer to their question?"

No one else knows what it's like to apply to transfer. There are very few people you know who have transferred or ever thought it was a possibility. Without all those other people looking at you, when you read that application, you write out your answers to it. You are yourself and that comes across to people who work in admissions. They can tell when you're kind of stiff and you're looking for an angle, and they can tell when you're being yourself.

The transfer application asks, "Why do you want to transfer?" What did you say?

I said that I wasn't happy with where I was. That feeling shaped my answer. However, when you write an application, you should try to be positive. It's not, "Oh, I want to get out of here and go anywhere else." It's "Why do I want to go to YOUR school?" It's a sensible question and it requires a sensible answer. Therefore, the answer that I wrote included things that I was looking forward to at Barnard. However, at that time, I had three days to write the application because it was after the deadline and I couldn't let it go too much longer. It wasn't fair to the admissions people. It wasn't fair to other candidates. I had to do it then.

As I was in Hartford at the time and it was finals time, there was no time to visit Barnard. I had to do all my research from the Barnard website. That did give me some information. Some of it was general. I wrote that Barnard is in the city and I needed more opportunities to walk around to engage myself with the environment. That was absolutely true and something that I had learned from Hartford, that Hartford is not like New York City at all. I also wrote that I needed a more rigorous curriculum and student body. I needed students who would challenge me at the college just as the teachers would. I got that information looking at the average scores of the typical students that get in. I knew I wanted to transfer, so I looked for what made Barnard unique. What made Barnard unique happened to coincide with who I am: it's in the city, it's a smaller school, it's devoted to academics but has a strong sense of community, it's connected to Columbia.

How was your adjustment at Barnard?

Moving around a lot taught me what I was good at and what I needed to work on. For example, I'm an academic person. I knew I wouldn't have problems with academics. I was looking forward to classes. There was no anxiety. I knew some people who were afraid. They thought, "What if I can't handle the workload? What if the people are smarter than me?" That didn't cross my mind. I knew on the other side my problem was that socially I can be shy with my peers. I find small talk necessary but silly. I never really give myself enough time. Do the whole, "I'm sorry, what's your name? I know we've met five times, but I met so many people at orientation." It always felt a little fake, but necessary. It's an area that I tried to change. I really tried to do this at Barnard and it helped.

At Barnard, what I tried was saying, "Yes." For example, someone asks you if you have eaten dinner yet, implying that they want to invite you to dinner. If you've eaten already, say YES anyway. Go nibble on something or have coffee. Sure, the first few conversations are going to be ridiculous: "Do you know what you're going to major in?" "What made you choose this school?" You get tired and you know your answers by heart. But the more times that you say it and the more people you say it to, the more genuine you can become because you can relax a little bit. You start to open up with people you've seen a few times and that's where anything beyond just acquaintances can come in. You don't have to be best friends with everyone. You just have to be able to say, "Oh, hey. How are you?" The more people you know, the more you feel that you fit in.

Did you get involved in any extracurricular activities at Barnard?

[You know how] ever since you were in middle school people have been saying, "Oh, what's your thing? Oh, you're a sports person. That's good. They like sports people." Or, "Oh, you sing? How many choirs do you compete with? Oh, you compete nationally? That's very good." Music was my thing. I play the piano. I sing. I do all of that. Also, academics. I tried to continue that at Trinity, but I wasn't honest with myself. I did like music. I sang at Trinity, but I didn't love singing. I didn't look forward to going every single time. I met a lot of people singing in groups and competing, but I didn't like the activity itself, not tremendously.

When I came to Barnard I thought, "I can't believe I got in. Woo, this is going to be great!" But I realized, "I'm not really into singing. If I want to do it second semester, I'll do it then."



What should I do now?" I got involved with academics as always. I came in with no clue as to what my major should be, so I pursued that.

I just fell into things. Some of it was through meeting people. I happened to meet another transfer. I found out she lived two doors down from me. We became best friends. We talked about our previous experiences. She's an English major. I'm an English minor. One thing she said was that she couldn't believe that there was no general literary magazine. Just from talking with her and other people about what they like to do, things happened. In this case, she decided, "Nothing's going to happen unless I do something." That's an attitude you get a lot from transfer students. It makes sense. Someone who is going to say, "This situation isn't working. Let's try something new," is going to be self-motivated. She said, "OK. We're going to start a general literary magazine." I said, "We?" She said, "Uh-huh. I need another name on the petition."

I became the treasurer and layout director of the literary magazine. We came out with our first issue. We're a recognized student group with student activities funding. We've got funding from the English Department.

I realized that I liked the tech-side of the magazine. I never really thought about doing layout but it worked. I tried other things. Sometimes it worked out, sometimes it didn't, but most of the time, it did. Like being a tour guide. I said, "I love this school and I want to give back." When you're honest, other people can pick up on that. I was hired. Again, being a tour guide is something I never thought about. I always thought tour guides was so peppy. I thought, "Wow, that's really hyper of you." I'm one of those really hyper people now. I tried it, I love it, and I'm going to stick with it.

[Tell me more about the Barnard Transfer Alliance.](#)

The group tries to be active. Most people I know at Barnard transferred for real reasons. When you transfer for a real reason, you end up being happy, either because you're determined to be so because you were unhappy where you were or because this really is the better place for you. As such, I haven't seen much of a need in the people that I know for the Barnard Transfer Alliance. Often, support groups hold your hand a little in the beginning. That can be really helpful for organizing things including orientation. I met a lot of my friends from orientation and most of them are transfers. As for a continuous presence

on campus, I get emails. Sometimes I go to activities, but I don't need to go to all of them. I have friends. I have activities. I'm sure other people go.

How was the process of transferring credits?

The only thing that didn't transfer was a choir class because the amount of hours spent per week at Trinity wasn't as much as the amount of hours you would do at Barnard or Columbia. Aside from that I didn't have any problems. I know of some people who did. One friend had the equivalent of two classes missing, but it's not a big deal. You just take an extra class here and there or over the summer. It works out.

Did the courses you took at Trinity help you to decide what you wanted to major in at Barnard?

It was difficult because of the scheduling of the Urban Studies program I was in at Trinity. There were a lot of required courses for the program. I also took Chinese, so I had just two classes that I could choose. I wasn't able to experiment with different classes, so I decided to be an English major. I liked to read and discuss writing, but I didn't love it. Had I stayed at Trinity, I would've continued with that. It was only when I came to a school that really fit me was I able to experiment and take classes that I hadn't thought about, for example, American Studies and Art History. At Barnard, I was able to find things that I was interested in.

Did you find that you had to make compromises in your college experience to transfer?

I'm going to graduate in four years, including my time at Trinity. I just jumped in. In some ways, I thought that by transferring, I was going to miss that freshman experience that everyone had at Barnard. I thought I was going to miss having four years in one place and I wasn't going to be able to study abroad. However, because of my background, those experiences aren't important to me, but for some of my friends, studying abroad is important. Trying to find a way to study abroad while being at Barnard is difficult. People have taken summer courses at Barnard in order to go study abroad. Transferring doesn't preclude you from studying abroad. I have a friend who's a transfer student who was able to fit in studying abroad. There are things you have to give up. You have to weigh how good

and bad things are. Things were so bad that I couldn't continue at Trinity. From the first day, I knew I probably wouldn't be there for more than two years.

What do you know now that you wish you knew then?

When people said, "Do you want a more diverse or a more homogenous crowd?" Naturally, I wanted diverse. But I didn't understand that there was more to understanding diversity than looking at the demographic information. Just try to find, for example, five black people at the quad at Trinity. There are a lot of people at the quad. Give yourself five seconds and you won't find them, and yet when you look at the college books, Trinity has a relatively high diversity rating. I thought Trinity was going to feel more like the city—you walk around and there should be a lot of different people and experiences. Diversity is more than how people identify themselves. It's where people come from, their economic backgrounds, where they come from politically, geographically. It's not just ethnically and that's one of the biggest ways that diversity is rated in the books. Also, look at the top states that the school is pulling from. If the school is pulling from the tri-state area and you went to school in the area, then the college is going to be a similar experience.

Would it have helped you to talk to transfer students when you were applying to transfer?

Absolutely. Even when you're looking at colleges the first time around or interested in transferring, talk to transfer students that transferred OUT of the school that you're interested in. You're going to hear about all the positive stuff from the school. You're going to see the school, read the guidebooks, and talk to the tour guide who loves the school. They're extreme lovers of the school. You're going to get the positive side but you're not going to get the negative side. I love Barnard but I understand that there are aspects of it that other people don't like and people may transfer because of those aspects. If you talk to me, I would be able to tell you that honestly. As a tour guide I also get questions, for example, "What don't you like about Barnard?" Tour guides are given explicit directions to be careful in responding to those questions. You don't say everything you would say if you were just talking with a friend because you are an employee of Barnard. But the only way you can make a real decision is if you know both sides. If I had known what others don't know about Barnard, would I still have come? Absolutely, because it's a good fit for me. You shouldn't be afraid of hearing the negative side.