



The College Spy® Podcast with Michelle McAnaney

Episode 14

#14: From College to Career: An Interview with Aaron Basko

Welcome to The College Spy podcast, a podcast for parents and students addressing all aspects of the college selection and admissions process. I'm Michelle McAnaney, the founder of The College Spy. We offer college planning services to students and families across the United States and internationally. We are a team of dedicated educators who are committed to helping students and families identify the right colleges to apply to and get accepted. We offer our guidance and expertise in a way that improves student performance, increases confidence and promotes college readiness and maturity. The College Spy works with all students including students interested in the STEM fields, students with learning differences, international students, and third culture kids. To learn more about The College Spy, visit our website at TheCollegeSpy.com and follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

This week's episode of The College Spy Podcast includes my interview with Aaron Basko, author of Find Your Purpose. The College Spy's tip of the day and a college spotlight on American University. Aaron Basko is a higher education leader, speaker, and author who shares his unique insights to help others manage their education, careers, and professional development. Over his 30 year career, Aaron has led four different colleges to enrollment turnarounds, spoken and taught at a national and international level, and written or been quoted in a wide range of publications, including Forbes, The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inside Higher Ed, And the Times Higher Education in the UK. Aaron has served as a Fulbright scholar, capacity building expert for higher education in Iceland, and an international student mobility expert for colleges. He loves to help readers build their intercultural competence and language skills.

Michelle McAnaney:

Welcome to The College Spy Podcast, Aaron Basko. I'm so glad to have you here.

Aaron Basko:

Thanks so much for having me. It's great to be here. I've written a book called Find your Purpose, Manage your Career.

Michelle McAnaney:

Tell us how you got to writing that book, because the way that I know you is through your work with admissions and enrollment management. So I'm curious how you went from that to writing about career development.



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Aaron Basko:

Sure, that is my long term career, but at the same time, part of the work that I've done, I actually oversaw a career office for about 10 years, and it's an area I've always been passionate about. I think something for me that is really a life goal is to help people maximize their potential, and one of the best ways I have found to do that is to get involved with them in the career process itself and figuring out who they are, who they want to be, kind of seeing themselves more accurately, and then really maximizing and imagining who they can become.

Michelle McAnaney:

I read your book last night and a little bit over the weekend. I absolutely loved it on three levels. One, I loved it personally and thinking about my own career development and my transition to school counselor, from school counselor to educational consultant, and then even from educational consultant, working directly with students to thinking about how I am as an entrepreneur.

And then the next level I loved it on is thinking about my students and how it's my job to help them figure out what major that they're interested in and get started with those career conversations. But the book was even relevant for the admissions process. Your book goes into applying for a job, doing the resume, doing the cover letter, the interview. And I thought "All of this is completely relevant for high school students applying to college. So I really enjoyed it and appreciated it.

Aaron Basko:

Well, I'm so glad. I think for me, I really wanted to try to put together something that really melded the two pieces. On the one hand, "who am I? What should I be doing? How do I make those selections?" And on the other hand, find the really practical pieces that I could put in place to help me take those first steps. And I don't think you find that very much. Usually you either have one or the others, but I really wanted something that was comprehensive and can tackle both.

Michelle McAnaney:

The book was really good, because the "who am I" part of it, where you talk about the three keys to a career fit design, desire and demand. But you talk about those "who am I" pieces in a way that is practical. Because a lot of times what I'm finding when I'm working with students is the self-reflection is difficult.

I wonder if we should start by just talking about the three D's.

Aaron Basko:

Absolutely. I think that really is the key. And I talk about that as the three keys method. So you start with this idea of "what is your design?" I talk about it as answering the "what" question, like "what is it that you naturally are sort of built to do or gifted to do" the things that come out



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naturally. I kind of make a joke, a lot of times you can tell this by like the things that you used to get in trouble for as a kid. Those were the things that you just naturally have this bend. Maybe you help people in a certain way, maybe you solve problems, maybe you do puzzles. Whatever it is that is really that natural strength that pops out, and what you want to do is combine that piece of it with your desire. Which is the thing that you are drawn to, you get excited about, you never get tired of doing. It's really that piece that allows you to answer the question of "okay, Now I know what I do really well. Where do I want to do it or who do I want to do it for?" If I know what my gifting is, what area do I want to use it and to serve? And then the third area obviously is to find your demands, and the demand is: now that you know what you want to do and where you want to do it, how do you figure out how to make a living doing it? Who will pay you to do that in order to be able to use your strengths?

Michelle McAnaney:

When in the process, do you recommend that students do this? So I'm thinking about as a school counselor, we would often start career development in grade 10. However, you're at the college level.

Aaron Basko:

I think that grade 10 is a great place to start. I've worked with a lot of groups and talk to a lot of groups and students, I think, are ready to start thinking about who they are and what they love to do. And again, the other thing that's wonderful about this is it gives an opportunity for parent engagement at that level, because sometimes, especially with the design question, your parents see it better than you do. Sometimes you're too close to it. And they'll say things like "Oh, you've always done that ever since you were a little kid, you've always reached out to new people. You've always liked taking care of things. You've always found alternative ways to do things that are entrepreneurial." So I really feel like if you're starting in that mid to late high school range to discover who it is you are it's going to help you a lot in terms of before you have to pick a major, or decide on a career direction, or that kind of thing. I think earlier is a little better there.

Michelle McAnaney:

It's a hard thing for kids to do though.

Aaron Basko:

It is.

Michelle McAnaney:

It is.



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Aaron Basko:

But I try to make it fun too in the book. I have this set of exercises, I call it that little design finder exercise, and it's these questions, it's 11 questions and I have used this with groups of all different ages, and that kind of thing. And they're fun questions, but they're these reflective questions that kind of pull out for you "what are the highlights that you've lived?" "Would you rather work with this kind of people or this kind of people?" And I find by the end, people are laughing, they're joking. They're like "Oh, you totally do that!" That kind of thing. It really helps, so you don't feel like, "Oh, I have to pick what I'm good at, I need to choose." And what I'm really saying is, it's already partly chosen for you. You already can see what it is you're great at.

Michelle McAnaney:

I think some students, they can talk about the desire, which is interesting because that's the one that changes, right?

Aaron Basko:

Absolutely

Michelle McAnaney:

The design is the same. This is really who you are since you were a little kid, but the desire will change over your lifetime. And I think that's the part that makes people very uncomfortable in terms of making a decision.

Aaron Basko:

I think people are told so often "find your passion and follow it". Which is not terrible advice, but it could be distracting because that's not enough by itself. If you don't know what it is you're really good at and you're really talented at, I give an example in my book. I say "there's a student out there who loves music, and follows music, and wants to go into the industry, and whatever else. The only problem is they actually can't carry a tune." So that's the problem, when we start people with that passion idea or the desire idea and we just say "Well chase after whatever it is that you're really excited about", we're not sure they're actually equipped to do that. So you really need to start with that idea of "who am I?" And that's something you don't have to guess at, you just have to discover. And then when you apply that to those areas of interest. That's great. Over time that can change. You talk about "I'm a person. I love to communicate. I love to speak. I love to work with groups." Well, that part might always stay the same, but maybe I'll work in a college setting. Maybe I'll work in corporate training. Maybe I'll work in marketing and communications. I can use that in different places if I know that's my key skill. So your passion can change over time. Your desire can change over time. But if you're always using that amazing key skill, that design, it's going to serve you well.



Michelle McAnaney:

As I was reading your book, I was thinking "but students won't know where to go for this information." A lot of my students, they can name maybe 15 majors. And if you go on a large university's website, there's 200 sometimes. But the book is great because it leads you into where to go for the information in order to find out more about different careers, and be able to answer the demand question.

Aaron Basko:

I've tried to really prompt people. Obviously I couldn't list everything in the book you could possibly want to do. So I've tried to instead point people towards maybe using a Holland assessment to try to get some idea of what you're interested in. Or point them toward the Bureau of Labor statistics in the occupational outlook handbook where they can find all these great resources about figuring out what's out there and what to do.

If you want a really fast thing too that I think is fun, I oftentimes will talk with students in their first step for college decisions, or major decisions, I tell them to look at the catalog and cross out everything they would never like to do. You can eliminate three quarters of the options that way and start to feel better about that this is doable.

Michelle McAnaney:

And where you're hesitating and you're not sure, "should I cross this out or not", my recommendation would be: don't cross it out. Get more information about two things: One, what that is, and two, yourself.

Aaron Basko:

Right.

Michelle McAnaney:

Because there's a reason you're hesitating. It might be that you're interested, but you're worried you're not good at it.

Aaron Basko:

And I think one of the things that's really challenging for people is, I think when they are considering their options, they're trying to decide with both their heart and their head. And so they oftentimes will eliminate things without really diving in and understanding them because they're like "I don't know if I can make money in that" or "I don't know if I can have a stable job" or "I'm worried that's not a clear career path". And I think that's one of my favorite tools that I think is underrated actually in the book, I had this options matrix where I asked people, I say, "look, put the 10 things that you are thinking about. And then let's walk through this process of learning more about those and see whether it makes you more interested or less interested while you do that". And the great thing about that is sure, it works for a first career,



but it also works later on in life when you're saying "okay, do I want to make this change? Do I want to stay with what I'm doing or change to this other thing, or do something different?" You can use the same tool to say "will it take me closer to what I'm really great at closer to my design or further?"

Michelle McAnaney:

You just mentioned making decisions, and it's so important. Understanding how do you make decisions so that when you're struggling, you can understand why you're struggling, and then you know what information that you need.

One of the things I wanted to ask you about is the assessments. I have a love/hate relationship with assessments. I have some families who want me to give all of these different assessments hoping that the student will be able to figure out what to major in. And therefore, when you know your major, sometimes that it makes the college search process feel easier. I don't know that it actually is easier, but it might feel easier. And I find that some students can do the reflection and get a lot out of it, but many struggle with that. What is your experience? Cause you mentioned all different ones in the book, and you give these great free resources, where you can just take these online.

Aaron Basko:

I think you've hit on it perfectly, which is "Can the person do the reflection needed in order to get the full value out of the tool". I think sometimes we approach those kind of assessments and we're like "I'm just going to put all the data in it. It's going to pop out my magic career". And that doesn't happen. It doesn't work that way. What it does is it sort of gives you clues to what's already inside you. You take the assessment and it shines a little bit of light on the fact that "Oh, you have this tendency. Gee, let's think about where you could use that to your benefit." So I use assessments kind of as the last step in putting those pieces together instead of the first step. Don't go to an assessment for it to tell you who you are. You have to know who you are. And then the assessment can help you fine tune it and figure out where to plug that into the world.

Michelle McAnaney:

The one that I give all the time is Myers Briggs. So I went to New York City, spent four days getting trained to give the MBTI, which is a personality assessment. The theory is that personality is made up of your preferences. So I do that with students, usually on the third meeting. And the reason why I do it is I want to use it as a tool to get to know them and have discussion. Because I'm trying to understand who my students are really well so that I can match them up with the right college and recommend the right college. In the discussion, I'm hoping that they're also getting to know themselves well. And you just said, it's really towards the end of the process, you know, that it would make sense to bring it out. That's exactly when I bring up the MBTI again is when the student is making their final decision. They're struggling



and I'm like, "let's talk about the Myers Briggs. Do you like to make decisions based on thoughts or based on feelings? How is that different from how your parent likes to make decisions, and why you might be having a clash here? Do you like to leave your options open or shut them down and make decisions fast?"

Aaron Basko:

I think that's perfect. That's How I think about it too. So in find your purpose I really look at those pieces of the sort of heart of type of the MBTI because I do think It's important to understand. There's one or two ways that you absorb information about the world. They're one or two ways that you kind of make sense of the world around you. You either are looking in your sensory, kind of checking it out and seeing what's around you, or you're intuiting and learning some things about it, going that way. And then there's like, you're saying, there's one of two decision making styles that most people use. They either think logically and they go down this, like "here's my pros and cons list, and this is the one that makes the most logical sense." Or they go with their gut. And they rely on their intuition and their feelings to help them do that. And I think even just understanding that much about yourself, can give you so much permission to make decisions without stressing. It just really helps you to say "Oh, this is why I feel that way. Yes the pros and cons list tells me to do this, but I know I make my best decisions when I trust my values and my instincts. And so I'm going to go with what those are telling me."

Michelle McAnaney:

And for me, what often comes up is when the student wants to use their gut to decide, and the parent wants to use their logic. And the parent is so frustrated because they don't understand why the student who has this great opportunity or it's cheaper at this other school, they really want to go here. And the student can't explain it because they might not know. I just know it's a values thing, or it's just in their gut and in their intuition.

Aaron Basko:

Such a classic example. I see that all the time in the college world. You have one parent who's the real like logic thinker type, and you have this student who's more of the values, kind of gut instinct person, and they just cannot see that either of these are acceptable ways to make a decision. You just have to know yourself, and know what way works for you.

Michelle McAnaney:

In MBTI land, where I like to live sometimes, we talk about flexing to the other, they call them dichotomies, to the other. So if you prefer to make decisions based on feelings, that you might need to flex to force yourself because you can't make all your decisions based on feelings. I'm an F, I know, you can't. And so that's what I try to talk to both sides about when they're having this conflict is, flexing to the other side that's uncomfortable and gives you anxiety can help you



understand where the other person's coming from, or just bring in more information to help you make that decision.

Aaron Basko:

Absolutely. And it might be that you use your thinking logic skills early in the process to put together a really good list of colleges that you want to consider, you whittle it down to a certain point, and then at the end, you need to go with what you feel like your heart is telling you. And that's a great way to combine the two pieces.

Michelle McAnaney:

Can we talk about the second half of the book, which is all this practical stuff about resumes and cover letters and interviews?

Aaron Basko:

All kinds of networking, managing your brand. It's really why, you notice the name, it really has two parts. The find your purpose and manage your career. And the second half is all about the manager career part. It really walks you through all the practical steps that you would need. Number one, certainly to get a first job or to move into a career field, but also to say "how do you make sure that the promise that you're sending to the market, the image you're creating of yourself, is consistent with who you are." And then "how do you continue to make decisions about your future as you go along over the course of your lifetime?" So you're not going to make one career decision. You're going to make lots of smaller career decisions and you need all these tools at the ready to be able to help you do that.

Michelle McAnaney:

I like that part about managing your brand. And I was thinking about it in terms of the admissions process, because we hear this sometimes about how having a brand is a great way to apply to college. What are your thoughts about that? .

Aaron Basko:

I think, when it comes to a brand, it's just a way of being consistent in the promise that you are delivering to your audience. In other words, what your audience thinks it's going to get, it's going to get from you every time. So whoever you are, you're making a promise. This is who I am. And when you interact with me, this is what you're going to get. And I think what you want to do when you're preparing a college application is again, be consistent in your brand. When I help students in this process, I say "look, are you going to tell me that your favorite thing is computer science, but you've never taken a course that has anything related to computer science. Are you going to tell me you love writing and it's what you want to do with the rest of your life? And then your essay is a disaster." You're trying to send consistent messages about who you are so that it fits. Because I think that's what admissions readers are looking for.



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Admissions officers have to take all this information and sum it up in a really short period of time. And so you're trying to help them say yes, this is consistently who I am. Everything in my portfolio that I'm presenting to you, my application, my interview, all those kinds of things, they all point you in the same direction that this is who I am. Because if something is dissonant, if something stands out as "wait, that doesn't match", that creates questions for the reader and they're like "maybe we don't know the student as well as we thought we do." So I think that's a great way to stay on brand and send that consistent message as you apply

Michelle McAnaney:

How do the admissions counselors leave room for the development of students throughout high school?

Aaron Basko:

We love to have people tell us about their progress. You have so many opportunities through your essay, through your short answers, things like that, to say "this is what I learned about myself". I always say, in particular with the essay, what you're trying to do is, number one, just show that you have a command of the English language. But number two, you're trying to teach your reader something about you. And I think that's where that really comes in to say "Hey, I started here. I had these challenges, or I moved through, but this is what I've learned about myself. This is what I've learned about myself and my environment. This is what I've learned about my community." If I can give like an insider tip on applying and working with readers from colleges, I would say I always encouraged students to triangulate themselves. To say "here are the three things that I want my reader to walk away knowing about me". Maybe it's an academic interest, maybe it's an athletic interest or, some kind of passion, a service, whatever it is. What are the three things that you want that person to walk away knowing about you and review your application and say "okay, if I was reviewing this, would I know what those three things are?"

Michelle McAnaney:

I give similar advice. I don't usually limit them to three or insist they come up with three. But what do you want admissions to know about you? And then let's make sure it's in there and that it's explained. And really this whole applying to college experience is setting the student up for the experience of careers and jobs.

Aaron Basko:

And I think, we don't help them sometimes at the college level. Cause the first thing we do is we say, "well, what's your major?" And it's almost like they're starting on this career path. If they can go to college and then go somewhere else, and we almost sidetracked them and say, "oh, it's about your major." And then they have to get back on track afterwards and say, "oh, no, wait, it's about my career. . I forgot that it was, that this is about my long term



development." So I think they can get lost in the major sometimes. And what happens is a lot of times, people leave a college and they go on to a career and they're like, "wow, my major didn't matter as much as I thought it was going to."

Michelle McAnaney:

Unless it's like nursing or engineering, but for most students, it may be.

Aaron Basko:

And a lot of times, again, people are going to continue to change that. I think what we're seeing in the career world is this hyper flexibility now in terms of careers. Where I always talk about that, years ago, people worked for one company their whole career. And then the generation after that, maybe work for three companies, but at least in the same field. And then the generation of that, started changing fields. And pretty soon you're going to have people that even if they take a very, what we would consider a traditional career, like a nurse, well, then they're going to go into travel nursing, and then they're going to go into nursing administration, and then they're going to go into some kind of telehealth, and then they're going to go into consulting. So all careers now are careers where the flexible mindset is really important, and again, managing your career at every step of the way. You don't want to just be like, "Oh, I got my job. Forget it. I'm never updating my resume. I'm never polishing my interview skills. I don't need to know any of that stuff anymore." Gone are those days. These days, you are going to manage your career for life. And if you are good at that, and if you keep on it, it will work to your benefit.

Michelle McAnaney:

I like the part of your book about networking and the informational interview. I'm always encouraging students to do job shadows, or talk to somebody in the field. They're very shy often. It's a hard thing to do, networking. People have a sense of they don't want to bother somebody, or they don't want to put themselves out there. But the benefits to you when you go out and you meet with somebody and just express interest in them. And like you say in the book, don't push, don't say, "Oh, you have to introduce me to somebody else or get me an interview or read my resume", but you just express interest. The benefits are going to come back to the student. I think whether they're at the high school level trying to figure out "is there an internship that I can do" or what is my major or when they're in college too.

Aaron Basko:

I'm right in the middle of turning this book into a course and I just was working on this part of it last night. And I get so excited when I think about informational interviews because they're so powerful. And you don't have to be a classic extrovert to do this. Anybody can invite somebody for a cup of coffee. And all you're doing is you're saying, I'm somebody who I'm thinking about a field like this. I know you work in this field or you have experience in this field. Help me to be a



better candidate for this field. Tell me what you think it takes for people to notice skills that I have. What should I be thinking about? What should I be reading to catch up in the field? What would make me a great candidate? One of two things will happen. Either they'll just give you some tips, and that'll be great. And you'll have a nice cup of coffee with somebody. It won't go any further. Or somebody will get really enthusiastic and they'll be like, "Oh, I'm so excited you're interested in this field. Let me think about who I know in my contact that I can connect you with." Networking is all about just having the maximum number of people who know you and who know what you are looking for so that they can advocate for you. It's really just connecting on a personal way and saying, this is what I'm interested in. How can I borrow your expertise? Basically you're just asking this person to be an expert, which almost everybody likes. If you go to somebody and say, I think you've got expertise. Would you be willing to just share your expertise with me? Most people are going to say yes to you. I think knowing that and knowing that you can just have a nice conversation with somebody and just learn from them. And when you give off the vibe, that's what you're doing, I'm not trying to manipulate or trying to get something out of you. I just want to learn from you. People tend to respond very positively.

Michelle McAnaney:

The part of your book, that I like, I think I liked the whole thing, but the part of interviewing where you give very specific questions to ask at the end of the interview and you need to have more than one question because you might be meeting with several different people. But you actually say these are the things that you could ask. I thought that was brilliant and so helpful. People should buy the book just for that because there are things that other candidates aren't going to be smart enough to know to ask.

Aaron Basko:

You know, It's so funny because I must be kind of crazy, but I love to interview personally. Like I really find it enjoyable. I know it's kind of nerve wracking. And so for me, it's so very natural to think about, okay, well, how can we really present this well. And like you're saying, you want to make sure you have questions that represent you well, and you want to think about psychologically what those questions mean. I always encourage people to the first question that you ask should be about how can I be successful in this job. It's not about what is the benefit for me or, how can this be comfortable for me or, impress me with something. It is, I'm signaling to you that my goal is to be super successful in this job more than you can even imagine. So tell me what it would take in order for me to really impress you. And so there's this whole kind of series of questions that you can use that kind of work through that way of saying, okay, what is the employer probably thinking? How can I put them at ease that I understand what their priorities are? And then how can I make sure that there are no barriers to them seeing me as a great fit? What you're trying to do is, this person is trying to solve a problem that they have by hiring you. They're not thinking, gee, I would like another assistant director of



whatever else because I just want somebody at that title. They're thinking, I've got a problem and I need somebody who can help me solve it. And I think you as an interviewee, You can learn as much as you can. You can listen really well and figure out what is the problem that they're trying to solve. Number one, you can decide if that's a problem you actually want to work with. You don't have to take it. If you're like, wow, that is a problem I do not want to walk into, you back out. But if you say, wow, that's a problem I could actually help that person with, then it's very easy for you to demonstrate that you're the solution to their problem. And I think that's what they're really looking for and what people respond to.

Michelle McAnaney:

And it works the same when you're interviewing for a spot at a college, right? Where you're trying to understand, is this the right place for me? And they're trying to figure out, is it the right place for you? Are you the right student to be here?

Aaron Basko:

Because colleges are looking to build a community. And so they are thinking, gee, we need more people who care about this. And then they meet somebody and they think, oh, this could be a person who cares about community service. Or this could be a person who cares about social justice, or whatever the issue is that they are oriented towards in their values. That's why I think it's really important for students to look at what the values of the institution are and say, do those match with mine? Because it'll be so much easier for you to speak into those values and say, Hey, I'm a person, I care about this. And then if the interviewer says, wow, we care about that too, probably found a pretty good match.

Michelle McAnaney:

And if they don't, you don't want to be there. It's not a good match. You're not going to be happy.

Aaron Basko:

Exactly.

Michelle McAnaney:

So tell people how they can get your book.

Aaron Basko:

Absolutely. So my book is out on Amazon. It is in both printed and ebook format, and it should be coming out in about a few weeks. Also on audiobook form. So look for it on Audible, because I know some people love audiobooks and would much rather listen than to read. I'm really hopeful that it will help a lot of people again, not just in that first group, but to feel like they



know who they are and have that confidence to be able to say, I can make good decisions because I understand how I'm built.

Michelle McAnaney:

Great. Thanks for coming on The College Spy podcast.

Aaron Basko:

Been my pleasure. Thanks for having me.

If you're feeling stressed and overwhelmed by the college admissions process, this is for you. Our next session of College Admissions 101 is starting soon. This four week course is the perfect opportunity for you to gain the knowledge and confidence that you need to help your student through the college selection and admissions process. College Admissions 101 is a live and interactive course on zoom for parents of students in grades 9, 10 and 11. Over the four weekly sessions we cover the key topics that you need to know to successfully navigate the college admissions process. At The College Spy we live and breathe college all day long and share expert insights into the frequent changes to this process. It's not the same process we went through back in the late eighties and nineties. So save yourself hours of research and costly mistakes that could affect your student's admissions prospects with this course. You'll be working directly with me, Michelle McAnaney the founder of The College Spy. As we discuss key topics, including:

- How to build a college list that best fits your child and their unique personality, skills, and interests
- How to research colleges to fully understand what they have to offer, including how to find those colleges that offer a lot of merit aid
- How to choose between SAT, ACT, and test optional
- The college application timeline
- College application strategies for success
- And how to think about financial aid options, both need based and merit based.

If you can't attend one of the four sessions, you'll get a recording so you won't miss any useful information. We also save time for Q& A in each session where you can ask questions about your child's situation and circumstance. Spots are going quickly. Head to thecollegespy.com and then click on Services and Group Workshops to register for the next session. I hope to see you there.

The College Spy's Tip of the Day:

Students sometimes tell me that they don't want to play sports in college. Even though they love their sport and being part of the team. When I scratch at the surface of "I don't want to play in college", I usually find this: I don't think I'm good enough. Often this belief of not being



good enough is an assumption on the part of the student. They do not really know the level of play at the college level. I recommend that students research the different ways they can play sports in college. Varsity sports are broken into three levels, Division 1, 2, and 3. Colleges also have club sports and intramural sports. In my experience, if a student wants to play sports in college, there's some level that they will be good enough.

This episode's college spotlight is on American University.

American university is a medium sized private university located in Washington, DC. Located on the outskirts of the city, free campus shuttles take students to the metro station, which offers a quick, easy ride downtown. The campus has a mix of classical and modern buildings. In 2018, AU achieved carbon neutrality, one of the first universities in the country to do so. Students relax, hang out, or study on the campus quad's many sitting areas. Given its location, it's no surprise that AU has strong programs in the areas of politics and international studies. The most popular majors include political science, international studies, business, communications, environmental science and politics, policy and law. Additionally, there is an option for students to design their own interdisciplinary major. A three year bachelor's program is available in several majors. AU's core curriculum aims to develop effective citizens and lifelong learners.

AU has a strong first year experience program and all first year students take complex problems, a small group seminar, and a yearlong AU experience sequence of courses to help with the transition to college life. New students to AU also take part in the All American Welcome, a two week celebration that welcomes students to campus with over 70 events. About 90 percent of students take advantage of the endless internship opportunities in Washington, DC. Studying abroad is very popular, and American has partnerships with schools all around the world.

Approximately 8,000 undergraduates are enrolled at American. Students come from every state as well as 120 countries, which gives the campus a diverse and international feel. The typical American student is politically and globally aware, smart and highly engaged in academics and activities. On campus housing is guaranteed for two years. There are traditional suite apartment style and living learning community housing options. There are more than 150 clubs and organizations, including cultural, social, academic, and service groups. The campus is officially dry, so most parties take place off campus. On the weekends, students venture into the city to take advantage of all that Washington D.C. has to offer. DuPont Circle and Georgetown are popular nightlife destinations. Here are some interesting facts about American University. The school mascot is an eagle named Claude Z. Eagle. There is a big focus on sustainability, 100 percent of electricity on campus comes from renewable sources. And AU may not have a football team now, but there was a team that was forced to disband in 1942 when most players were drafted to World War II.



the college spy
WE KNOW COLLEGES.

Famous alumni include Goldie Hawn, Judge Judy, Paul Ryan, Cass Elliott, and Jordan Belfort.

The College Spy interviewed a current Eagle for insider information. We asked:

What is the best place on campus to hang out with friends or meet new people? *The main quad in our school's most popular cafe, The Bridge.*

What is the best food or meal at the dining hall? *My favorite meal to get on campus is a poke bowl from The Sushi Place.*

What is the best kept secret on campus? *There are so many great study and hanging out spots on campus that aren't just the quad. The amphitheater and patio behind the Hall of Science are some of my favorite places to go.*

Describe a typical student at your school in under 10 words. *Goal oriented, driven, hardworking, active within politics and current events.*

What do most students do on weekends to have fun? *Most students enjoy going downtown and to other parts of D.C., trying different foods, museums, and parks.*

What is something you wish a current student had told you when you were applying? *I wish a student had told me that people are fairly competitive and very focused on setting themselves up for success.*

What is the best dorm to live in as a freshman? *Anderson or Centennial Hall.*

If you could wave a magic wand, what would you change about your college? *I would make the school a little bigger. I'd probably increase the size of the undergraduate population.*

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