

Dear Prospective Student!

The transition to college is exciting and challenging because you are making decisions about your future independently, perhaps for the first time. I know students sometimes request more information about accessibility and accommodations at Grinnell, and so — as a recent alumna with a disability — I've worked with the Office of Admission to find this way to share my own experience as a Grinnell student.

When I chose to attend Grinnell College, I was enthusiastic to be independent in this new phase of my life. I found the Grinnell community to be a place where I could have a positive — and most of all, normal — college experience despite having cerebral palsy and using a wheelchair and motorized scooter to navigate campus. As an English major, I took engaging and fulfilling classes where I honed my skills and passion for writing. I swam on the varsity swim team, and found amazing, lifelong friends.

I knew that it was up to me to utilize the various support systems that Grinnell has in place for students with disabilities, such as Jennifer Krohn in accessibility resources, or Joyce Stern, dean for student success and academic advising. But the story that sticks out to me the most is when I went to inquire about study-abroad programs. I had traveled enough to know that studying with Grinnell-in-London would pose many new challenges and wondered if it would even be possible. I went into a meeting with the directors of off-campus study very noncommittal, not wanting to get my hopes up. I will never forget when the directors looked me in the eye and said, "If you want to do this, we will make it happen."

In that interaction, I saw just how much Grinnell was committed to standing behind me as I explored all that was offered to me. Instead of having to convince someone else of my capabilities, Grinnell believed in me before I fully believed in myself.

It is this support for students with disabilities that I believe is imperative to a great college experience. Whether you choose to pursue study-abroad programs, athletics, student-run clubs, student government, or a myriad of other opportunities, Grinnell will support you and help you access whatever you need to make your college experience whatever you'd like it to be.

Sincerely,

Claire Forrest
Class of 2013