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Welcome back to College Bound, Notre Dame Admissions' podcast. We're so excited to continue sharing what's unique about Notre Dame with you and to talk more about the student experience. This is our final episode of season one, so Matt and I are really excited to be concluding this season leading up to our restrictive early action application deadline.

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I'm Maria Finan, I am a Double Domer, and I'll let my co-host Matt introduce himself and today's topic and also our fantastic students.

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Yes, thank you, Maria, and thanks, everybody, for sticking with us during this first full season of College Bound. It's been an excellent ride with you all. My name is Matt Greene. As you've heard in other episodes, I am a graduate of Notre Dame, I graduated in 2016 and I am also an Admissions Counselor with Maria in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions.

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Today, we are going to be talking about our final topic of the season, the first year at Notre Dame, the first year experience at Notre Dame. What goes along with being a first year student at the University of Notre Dame? And to talk about that, we have special guests as we've had in the past.

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But today, our special guests are two first year students at Notre Dame, Meg Beuter and Matthew Fischer. If you both like to introduce yourself, tell everybody who you are starting with. Meg.

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Hi, everyone. My name is Meg. I'm a first year from Nashville, Tennessee. On campus, I live in Howard Hall, which is on South Quad. And right now my major is American Studies, and I'm interested in possibly doing the ESS and Poverty Studies minors. On campus so far, I've gotten involved in Folk Choir, which I absolutely love, I highly recommend for anyone who is into choir or music in general.

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I just got involved in College Mentors for Kids where each student has a an elementary school student from South Bend that they mentor, which looks a little different this year, obviously, because of covid and then also Outdoor Outing Club, which takes trips obviously different this year, again, to different places to hike and ski. So I'm really looking forward to that.

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Hi everyone, I'm Matthew Fisher, and I'm from Fargo, North Dakota. I'm in Baumer Hall, which is on West Quad, and Baumer Hall is actually a brand new men's dorm. I'm studying Political Science and I'm going to pick up a minor in Business Economics and maybe Real Estate, which in Mendoza, and I might do a supplementary major in Spanish. I am involved in the Notre Dame Glee Club, which has been an incredible experience so far, and then I'm also part of Interhall 4 v. 4 Flag Football, which just got started.

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That's awesome. It's great to hear you all getting involved. Obviously, we'll talk a little bit more about your dorms, but we'll start off with kind of what was your transition like coming from your hometown to Notre Dame, knowing that that's often something that kind of can be nerve wracking for students and you all have just kind of gone through that experience.

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I think something key to remember is that it will never be easy to make this big of a transition., but I think there's such a good support network at Notre Dame. People really want to help you find your way around here, and everyone just wants to be friends with you. Everyone is so welcoming, which I've really found very helpful. Also, with coming from Nashville, the weather, which now winter is starting to set in a little bit, can be difficult, but you got to bundle up.

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And then just dealing with moving away from family, I have two older sisters that I'm really close with, and my dog as well, and it's just a big transition to go from spending especially in quarantine, all of your time with them. And then, you know, this newfound independence, which can be great in so many ways, but it's also hard sometimes to live completely without your family. But I found that my friends in Howard and the upperclassmen have really become my family on campus and have been such supportive friends.

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And, you know, another aspect of the transition is the academics, and it's really rigorous here at Notre Dame. But that's one of my favorite things about it, although it's difficult. I'm learning so many things that I absolutely love, which is a great thing to be able to say coming first semester freshman with all of the core requirements that we fulfill, but all the students and professors are really passionate about what we're learning. They encourage us to be really curious about it all, and it's just a very collaborative environment. And so that has made the transition a lot better.

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My transition was pretty, pretty dramatic. I came from a very small high school and when I got here, there were a lot of people and some would say that Notre Dame is actually not that big, but for me, different types of people, different views. And that was a really eye opening experience just to meet all different types of people. Like Meg said, the academics are definitely tough. I did not feel very prepared coming from my high school.

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And so I've had to learn how to ask for help and utilize different resources around campus, and it's really nice to know that everyone here wants to help you. And everybody here is a potential resource because there's always going to be someone that knows something more than you, which isn't something that I was used to before.

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It was also really nice to know that your professors really care about you. I'm actually in quarantine right now and was sick for a while, but it was really easy for me to just talk with my professors and explain the situation. I was kind of falling behind in work and they offered me extensions on some papers that I had. So it's really nice to know that your professors are people too, and that if you just talk to them, and they want to support you and they want to help you learn.

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That's awesome to hear that there's been so much collaboration, and so much help from the Notre Dame family and everybody involved here. So for both of you, when we should start with Meg and then go to Matthew- as you've started to navigate college, what supports resources have been the most helpful to you in your time at Notre Dame?

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For me, I think I found a lot of support in my dorm as far as like social-emotional support in my R.A., who lives two doors down from me in my hall. I love just stopping by and talking to her, as well as just

all of the friends that I've made. You know, we've all had a few emotional rough patches when everything is too overwhelming or we miss home, anything. And we're all there for each other, and even if it's not a best friend who you reach out to for help, everyone here is willing to give you advice or just listen to what you need to voice if you're struggling.

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And then as far as academics go, I've found sometimes office hours, it seems like, oh, that's too much to fit into my busy schedule, but it really does help in my calculus class. I've gone to office hours a few times and it just makes me feel a lot better. The professors are always willing to answer questions to figure things out with you, as well as there's peer opportunities as well to get peer tutoring, which I have heard great things about. And I need to try that out as well as the Writing Center, which I've also heard fantastic things about.

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You can go there and work through a thesis with you or a first page, a rough draft of a paper, and they'll give you advice. So there's boundless opportunities to reach out for support here at Notre Dame.

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Like Meg, my dorm community has been a huge resource during this uncertainty and COVID. Being able to talk with my rector about just about anything, it's a safe space that you can go, it's confidential, you can talk with him or her about anything, just what's going on during the day. If you're struggling in class, if you're struggling to meet people, just what's happening with COVID? Are we going home? What do you think the score of the football game is going to be? They're always there for you.

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And it's really nice because you live with them. There's plenty of resources for tutoring. I've been going to tutoring sessions for my econ, and it's a collaborative environment where you just sit in on a Zoom call with other students who are also struggling, and you can just ask an upperclassman or TA questions and they work you through problems. It's very low, low pressure.

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There's never a bad question. You can always ask for help and definitely your R.A., your R.A. is nice to call them your friend. While they are in charge, getting to know your RA is very beneficial and they're also a support system.

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So you two have mentioned a lot about the great things in the great community that you're doing provides. But if you can narrow down what would be your favorite thing about each of your dorms?

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So for me, one, Howard's small size, that the size of the dorms can vary, but Howard is around 140 people, which can sound like a big number, but I pretty much recognize almost everyone's face by now, which is a really comforting thought to know that there are so many people around that even if I don't know their names, I know that we're in the same dorm and I know that if I needed anything, I could reach out to them. It's just a very tight knit community and it's also an older dorm and it has a lot of character despite, you know, some of the things that come along with, you know, having older facilities, but it builds character and we love it.

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And there's also just a lot of random fun activities that all of the dorms do, but I especially love that. I thought back to just last week, Howard has a YouTube channel and we decided to do an episode where

we all tried Uncrustables together, which unbeknownst to me, there are Taco Bites Uncrustables and Nutella Uncrustables, all the different types you can think of. And so we all tried that together on our patio.

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And I think that just really demonstrates that we're just all willing to have fun together. And it's a very fun, supportive environment, so I've loved that.

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One thing that I really love about Bomber is that while it is called "Hotel Baumer" for a reason, it's brand new and it's very, very nice, but we're actually the first freshman class to be in here. And so we have the opportunity to start traditions and make the Baumer community strong and brings everyone together. Because we're the first class, we're pretty much in charge of coming up with everything.

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In your first semester, what are some of your favorite clubs or traditions that you've encountered at Notre Dame so far?

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Yeah, so I talked a little bit in my introduction about the Folk Choir, which is definitely one of my favorite clubs that I've gotten involved in. It's such a great way for me to incorporate the music that I need in my life into my weekly schedule. We rehearse twice or three times a week, depending, after dinner time, and right now we're doing it in a tent outside, actually, but I'm glad that we can do that and that we can sing safely with masks and everything. It just feels good to be able to sing as a group again.

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And it's also a great opportunity to, you know, make relationships outside my dorm. We've talked a lot about dorm friendships, but I think it's also really important to meet people outside of that, and I've met so many, you know, just genuinely kind people in the choir. We've had an event that actually Matthew and I were both in because he is in the Glee Club called the Notre Dame Music Festival, which was new this year, and all the music groups on campus performed in the stadium. So that was really fun, and quick plug, if you want to tune in to the Folk Choir concert this Friday, that would be awesome.

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And then just another thing that I've really enjoyed, because the pandemic, you know, it's a lot safer to be outside. I've kind of taken advantage of that. And so running and walking around the lakes has become one of my favorite things. If you didn't know, there's two on Notre Dame's campus, St. Mary's and St. Joseph's Lakes, and they're absolutely beautiful, especially in the fall. I've been loving looking at all the trees recently.

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And then, you know, of course, Notre Dame football is probably a favorite tradition shared by all of the students here. One of my favorite things has been cheering after we exit the stadium, everyone just starts clapping and cheering together, which was a really great experience, especially the first time I had never been to a game before coming, and so that was really fun. And then, you know, just traditions that I've made with my friends. We've started making s'mores on the new fire pits they've put out on the quads almost every weekend, and so that's been really, really fun.

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As Meg mentioned, I am part of the Notre Dame Glee Club, which is an all men's choir, and there's about 70 of us. And we rehearse four days a week and have all lots performances outside. And we are also

practicing under time to make sure everything is safe for COVID. But this has really opened up a lot of doors for me, and I've been able to meet tons of upperclassmen, who come from all different majors and are studying everything.

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And you get the opportunity to meet a lot of alumni and network with them, because if you're part of the Glee Club and you meet alumni who's part of the Glee Club, there's kind of an instant connection and they immediately just want to help you in any way that they can. Some of my favorite traditions are definitely related to football. Some people don't really like this but I thought it was awesome, getting woken up to bagpipes on Game Day.

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And of course, every time we score a touchdown, push ups, throwing your friends up and doing push ups to match the score and then always win or loss staying for the alma mater and you really feel a sense of community that is like pride to be at Notre Dame when you see the alma mater with everybody. Also, I guess it's not really tradition, but having the opportunity to go to the Grotto and just pray or reflect or if you're not religious.

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Just going there is a really calming presence and something that's something I've definitely taken advantage of during this pandemic. When you need a break from school or there's a lot of stress and it's hard to keep up with a lot of schoolwork, but things like that. And just walking by the Dome, it never gets old, you look at it and you're just like, wow, I'm really here. I'm still a student here.

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Yeah, that's amazing. And it's so great to hear that even through pandemic and when things are a little bit restricted, you still have some of those unique parts of Notre Dame that come through student life on a day-to-day basis. So finally, switching gears to students who might be applying here and you all just applied within the last calendar year, what advice would you give to seniors who are applying to Notre Dame this year?

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So one of the first things that came to mind when I heard this question is the essay, which I think causes a lot of stress within applicants. But I think it's really, really important to just be authentic. Write what comes most naturally to you because when you do that, your personality will come through the most in your essay. And that's really what the Admissions team wants to see, is your authentic self. Because you don't get an interview and the rest of your application does show who you are, what you got involved in and how hard you worked, what classes you took, but really your essays where your personality and your passions come through.

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And then my other one is just remember that it's your journey, it's your application process. It's not anybody else's, so don't worry about this person who was applying there and got in already in early action or anything else, just remember that you are trying your best. That's all you can do. Look for the place that seems like would make you the most happy. And so if you find that in Notre Dame, that's awesome. So I think that would be my advice.

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Try to get yourself maybe, you know, set a goal and then reward yourself after you finish that last supplement or that last paragraph of your Common App essay, because having things to look forward to

and recognizing how much hard work you've put in is very important, and I found that to be very helpful, too.

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I love that advice. And I think all of the wisdom from Meg and Matthew is very sage and very wise. I promise we didn't tell them to say what they said, but we certainly appreciate their comments about authenticity and enjoying where you're at and the people you're with. Knowing that this is a unique time and senior year of high school is incredibly stressful, but also should be really incredibly fun. It's been so great to hear from Meg and Matthew, just about how your first year is going.

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I'll confess that I actually get to teach them in the Moreau: First Year Experience class, so I'm lucky I get to spend at least one day a week with them, but I think, you know, if you if you talk to other students from Notre Dame, they'd also have some really great things to say.

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So thank you for your time. I also really want to say thanks to Matt, my co-host. This has been a great season one. It's been a lot of fun, kind of wading through uncharted territory for the Admissions Office, but hopefully for all of our listeners, this has been a helpful way for you to learn about Notre Dame and also the application process.

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If you need any more information, whether it's about test optional deadlines, essay advice, definitely feel free to visit our website. You can also connect with us by sending us a message on Instagram, Twitter, or Snapchat @NDAdmissions. Or you can follow us on Facebook. Good luck as you finish your applications, and thank you all for listening.