

In-Depth Newspaper Coverage: College Chronicles
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Volume 27, Issue 2.2, November 2025



Chieftain Times



COLLEGE CHRONICLES

*An in-depth on college life
featuring Yutan
graduates*

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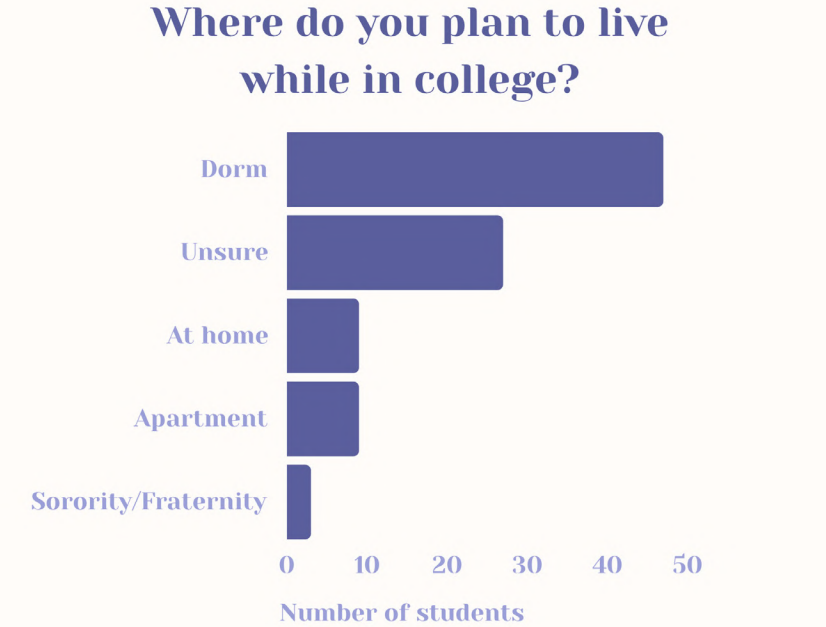
What are your plans after high school? Where are you going to college? What do you want to major in? These are common questions faced by Yutan High School students, and in the hopes of helping them answer these questions, we decided to write this in-depth on college life featuring stories of our very own Yutan graduates. Our hopes are that these stories might give our student body different things to think about when it comes to college, from types of colleges, activities to become involved in, living arrangements, financial support and how to make the most of the experience.

-The journalism staff

2025-2026
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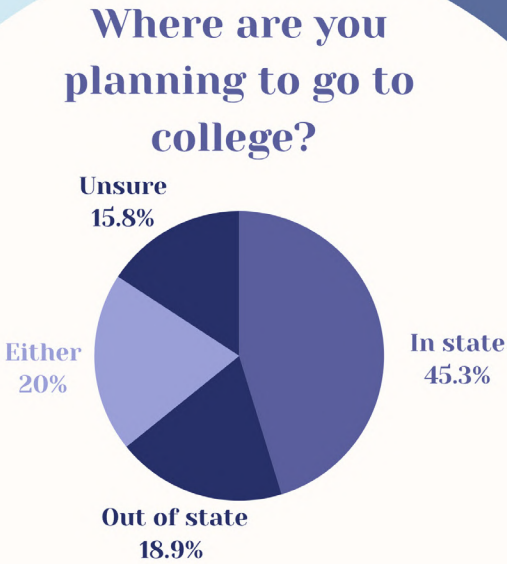
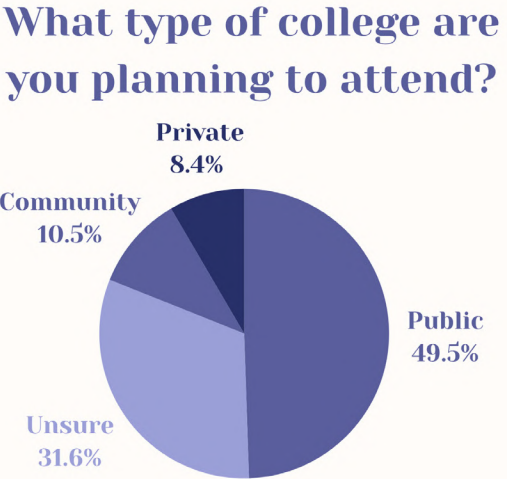
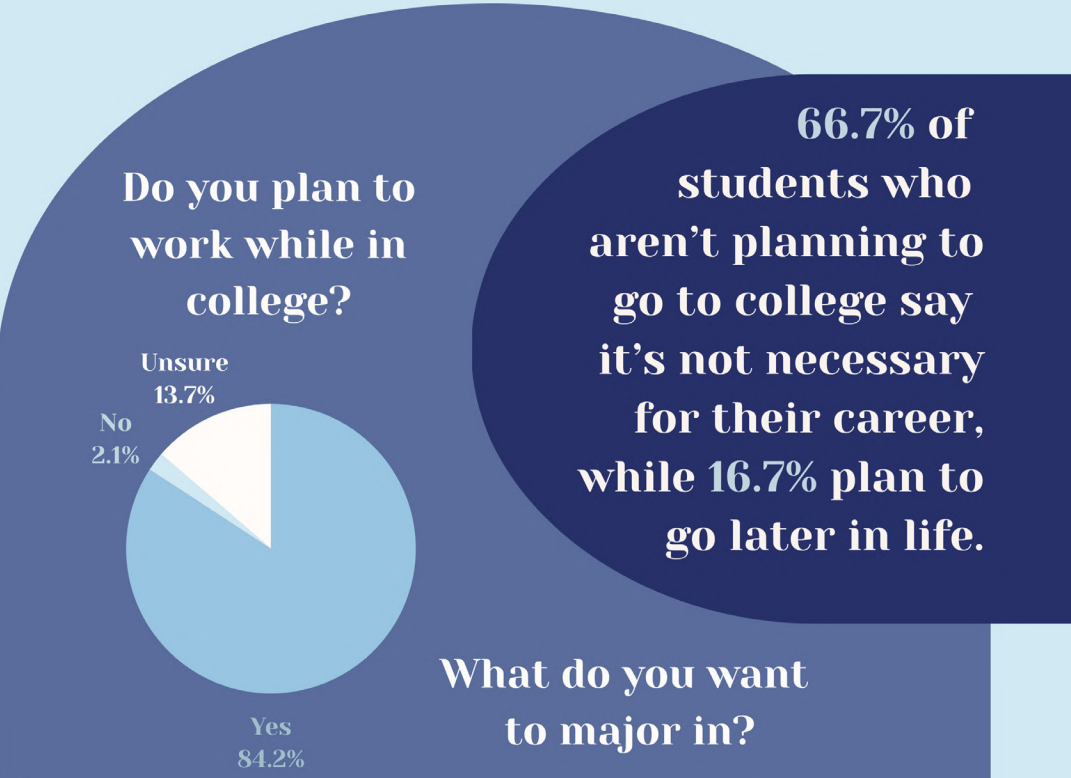
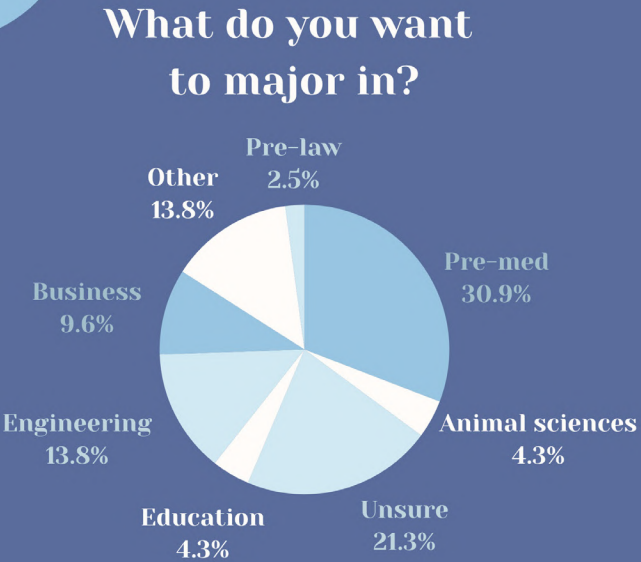
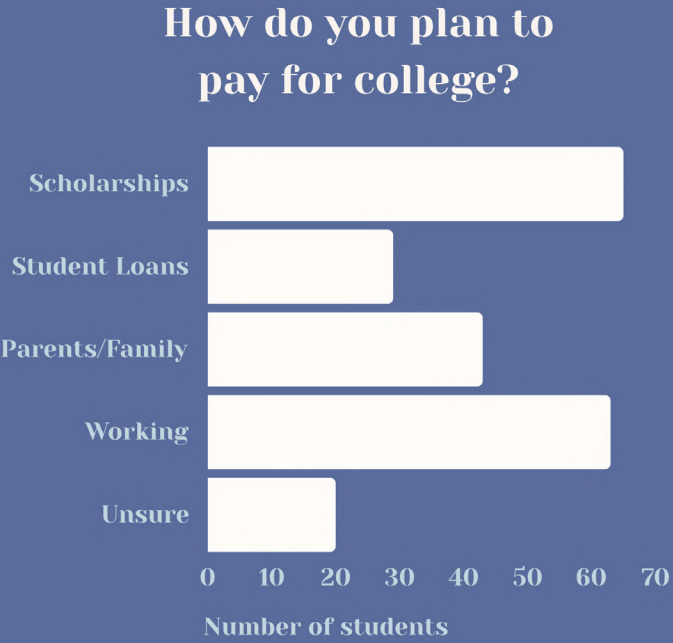
Information on both pages was collected in a survey sent to Yutan High School students in grades 9-12 on Oct. 14, 2025. A total of 101 responses were recorded. Infographics were created by Maddie Fenn.

Students' College Thoughts

80 percent of Yutan students plan on going to college

6 percent of Yutan students do not plan to go to college

14 percent of Yutan students are unsure about attending college



Apply2College week inspires seniors, underclassmen to explore college options

By Mackenzie Govier

Buzzing with excitement, questions and college dreams, students at Yutan participated in Apply2College Week, Oct. 6-10, which focuses on encouraging high

school seniors to take the first big step in their higher education journey.

“Apply2College Week is a national campaign that high schools are asked to participate in throughout the United States,” school counselor Missy Chvatal said. “In Nebraska, it is spearheaded through EducationQuest, a non-profit with a mission to improve access to higher education in Nebraska.”

At Yutan, the week featured college and military visits, assistance to seniors applying to schools and activities for every grade level to get all ages thinking about college.

“I always encourage seniors to apply to their top three schools by December 1st,” Chvatal said. “That was my goal for the week so that they wouldn’t miss any deadlines or scholarships. Applying early helps ensure they wouldn’t miss those opportunities.”

Chvatal also hoped to spark interest in different colleges that students might consider visiting.

“It’s important for students to visit different kinds of schools, whether it’s big, small, public or private,” Chvatal said. “You might be surprised by what you find when you explore your options.”

One way to expose students to different colleges was through pennants featuring colleges that

each of the staff members had attended.

“It was cool to see where each of the teachers went and what they studied,” senior Ruby Ochoa said. “It lets me look at all the teachers’ schools.”

Seniors made their own pennants to hang in the cafeteria that featured colleges they are thinking about attending.

“I was able to pick from a bunch of different colleges to put on my pennant,” senior Madalynn Bussing said. “I liked seeing where everyone was going or where they hoped to be going.”

Even though many of the activities were focused on seniors, an activity that involved everyone was college trivia during Chieftain Times.

“Everyone was able to call the office and guess the questions right,” junior Ella Henkel said. “We didn’t get any right, but to guess and have the whole school compete was fun.”

While all ages had opportunities to participate, for the seniors, Apply2College Week was more than just a school event.

“It means that we’re getting older and actually have something we’re working toward,” Bussing said. “I’m excited because it’s something new and it feels like the start of real life.”

Bussing is planning to study welding at Metropolitan Community College. She has yet to start the application process but is still looking forward to it.

“I feel more prepared than ever this week,” Bussing said. “I have a clearer plan of what I need to do for my future.”

While Bussing feels confident about her next steps, other students are still navigating their choices. Ochoa, for instance, has applied to several schools, including Wayne State College and Metropolitan Community College, and has been working closely with counselors and teachers to refine her essays and explore her options.

“I’ve had really good teachers to give me advice and lend me a hand when I have questions,” Ochoa said. “The hardest part has been figuring out which colleges meet my goals, and every school offers something different.”

The week was also helpful to students who don’t know where they want to study, like senior Dryden Hobza.

“I don’t know where I am going, but I want to stay in state,” Hobza said. “I want to go for four years because it would be better for what I want to study.”

At the end of the week, both seniors and underclassmen found the benefits of Apply2College week.

“Even though I am still a sophomore, I definitely have started to think about where I am going,” sophomore Aniston Hoegh said. “The activities we had done and talking to some colleges were very helpful for me.”



Seniors circle around the table to put college stickers on their pennants. Earlier in the week, each senior took a picture and grabbed stickers of what colleges they were interested in going. (Courtesy Photo)



During Apply2College Week, seniors met with a representative from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Throughout the week, there were multiple representatives that came to visit. (Ginger Eikmeier)

Finding community at college

Yutan graduates share benefits of community college life

By Jada Reed

When students are deciding what they want to do after high school, they have multiple options, which can become overwhelming. Between the classes of 2024 and 2025, 11 Yutan students decided to attend a community college.

Among these is Yutan graduate Mckenna Jones (class of 2025), who is attending Northeast Community College in Norfolk, Neb., and is already noticing a lot of differences from high school.

“College is a lot different than high school. In high school, teachers were responsible for you and your learning. In college, you’re responsible for yourself and your own learning. Professors and other students treat each other as adults, so students are expected to act like it,” Jones said.

Not only has Jones had to transition from high school to college, but she also faces the challenge of balancing school work with other activities, as she is a member of the volleyball team.

“The main challenge I’ve really had is balancing athletics and academics. In college, the homework load is fairly heavy, and being able to balance volleyball and my school work gets pretty time-consuming,” Jones said.

Jones went the community college route as she is pursuing a career as a radiology technologist, which only requires an associate’s degree. One benefit that she’s noticing about being at a community college is the smaller size.

“While attending a community college, I’ve noticed how close everyone here is and how everyone really knows everyone. My classes here aren’t as big as classes at universities, the campus is much smaller and easier to get around and there aren’t as many people walking around as you see at bigger universities,” Jones said.

The size is a benefit that Yutan graduate Jack Edwards (class of 2024) has noticed at Central Community College (CCC) in Columbus, Neb.

“Community college also reminds me of Yutan, in that it is a small community and you pretty much know everyone that goes there,” Edwards said.

While Edwards enjoys the small, tight-knit community that a community college offers, he also enjoys the perks that come with attending college in general.

“My favorite part of being in college is the amount of freedom that you have. You are able to make more choices on your own, which also comes with more responsibility. It is a great bridge from high school to beyond education and being on your own,” Edwards said.

For Edwards, this freedom also includes managing his increased free time.

“In college, you have a lot more free time since you’re only usually taking four classes instead of the standard eight in high school,” Edwards said. “In my opinion, high school prepares you for college, but college prepares you for real life.”

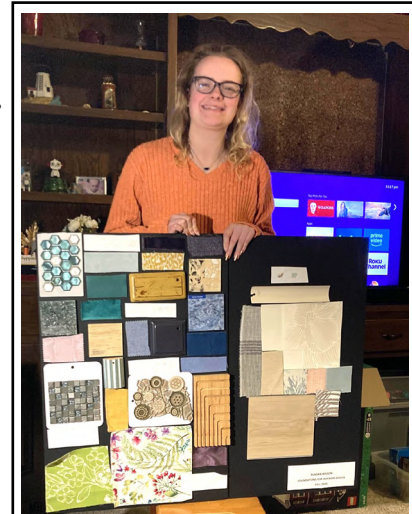
Edwards chose CCC so he could continue playing golf, but after graduating, he plans to transfer to a four-year university, which means that the classes he’s taking now are all general education classes.

“Academic transfer is basically a way for me to complete all of my gen-eds so I can pursue any major that I choose when I transfer to a four-year university,” Edwards said.

Not only is Edwards getting his general requirements done, but he’s doing it at a cheaper cost, especially considering he is on a golf scholarship.

“There are many benefits of going to a community college, one of them being a cheap education. Community colleges are thousands of dollars cheaper than attending big four-year universities,” Edwards said.

Another Yutan graduate who decided



Reagan Wilson poses with her Foundations for Interior Design project. Wilson is taking three classes this semester. (Courtesy Photo)

to attend community college because of the cheaper tuition cost, along with the location, is Reagan Wilson (class of 2025).

“I’m attending Metropolitan Community College because it was close, convenient and I could get an associate’s degree that was affordable,” Wilson said.

Wilson is currently studying interior design, and after she graduates, she plans to transfer to either Wayne State College or the University of Nebraska at Kearney to deepen her education further so she can become

an interior designer working with residential homes, but she is already starting to specialize in the classes she is taking at Metro.

“[In college] you are taking the classes that you are interested in for your career choice instead of all the general classes, and you have more hands-on projects,” Wilson said.

So far, Wilson has been able to use her creativity in projects like a design board, color wheel, floor plan, printing and drawings.

“For the design board, I had to pick something like a seashell, leaf or rock, then make a room,” Wilson said. “I picked flooring, drapery, ceiling and wall color, fabric for chair and couch and accent pillows.”

Wilson has noticed many of the same benefits of community college as Jones and Edwards.

“At community college, the classes are cheaper and you get to know your classmates and your teachers more easily,” Wilson said.

Not only has Wilson noticed the benefits of the cost and community, but she has also appreciated how artistic she can be in her projects.

“My favorite projects are the weaving, the color wheel, the design board and the final drawing,” Wilson said. “I like trying new things and putting the whole design together.”

Because of the benefits they’re seeing, these three Yutan graduates would recommend community college to high school students who are unsure about where they want to go after graduation.

“I would recommend community college to students because of all of the benefits you get and because you can be creative,” Wilson said.

Livin' the campus life

College freshmen experience dorm life

By Emmy Tederman

Nebraska Wesleyan University, University of Nebraska at Omaha and University of Nebraska at Kearney—these are just a few of the colleges that have Yutan 2025 graduates living in the dorms this year.

At the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), freshman Tyler Witt lives on campus in suite-style dorms with three other students he met through UNO's roommate finder app.

"The living situation is actually pretty nice; everyone gets their own room.

There are three sinks, a fridge, a microwave and a kitchen downstairs. We only have one bathroom, but we get a couch and a sofa," Witt said.

As the space increases in rooms, so does the price.

"Meals cost \$2,250 a semester, and room and board cost about \$1,750 a semester," Witt said.

Even though UNO doesn't require freshmen to live on campus, Witt chose it for a specific reason.

"I chose to live in the dorms because I needed to expand my comfort zone and meet new people," Witt said. "My scholarship also required me to live in the dorms, but I was going to anyway to live the full college life."

Freshman Amelia Dieckman is also living in suite-style dorms at University of Nebraska Kearney (UNK) and met her roommates at new student enrollment day.

"The living situation is good. I really like only having to share a bathroom with three people instead of communal bathroom style," Dieckman said.

However, the choice to live on campus wasn't 100 percent her decision.

"While I love living in the dorms, it was required to live at least one year because of the Kearney Health Opportunities Program (KHOP) program, but it covers a lot of [the cost]," Dieckman said.

At Nebraska Wesleyan University

(NWU), freshman Gabi Tederman is also required to live in the dorms, but hers are the traditional style dorms with one room shared by two people.

"We're divided straight down the middle, and we keep our things on our sides and we keep ourselves on our sides," Tederman said. "And I know there's some roommates that have come to agreements on what they're going to share, but me and my roommate, we just have our own things and we stick to our own things."

Because Tederman lives in a traditional dorm, she has to share a bathroom with

around 100 other people.

"So bathrooms are a big downside to living in the dorm because communal bathrooms are most of the time not a pleasant experience and most dorms have communal bathrooms," Tederman said.

But there are benefits to living in the dorms that people might not think about.

"Some benefits of living in the dorms are you don't have to use gas to get to campus, you are surrounded by new people, you learn how to live on your own and it builds self-accountability," Witt said.

Living in the dorms also means an automatic set of friends.

"I love the privacy you get but also the friends that you have not only in your dorm but also in other dorm rooms," Witt said.

Another benefit is the involvement that

comes with living on the actual campus.

"I feel like I get to be a little bit more involved on campus just because I'm around everybody else on campus," Tederman said. "If I lived off campus, I feel like I'd feel a little bit more excluded from things, not in a negative way, but living on campus you're always around other people instead of just the people that you live with."

Another advantage of living on campus is the location, which is especially helpful for Tederman and her roommate, who are both playing volleyball for Wesleyan.

"It's very convenient because [the dorms are] on campus, so you're next to everything that you need, and being an athlete, I have a lot of early mornings and later nights, so it's really easy to just wake up and walk to where I need to go," Tederman said.

One of the most common challenges with dorm life is the amount of space.

"There's also just the lack of space. You're going from living in a house with your parents and your family and you have everything that you need in this house, and then now you're confined to this tiny little room sharing with one or more people and it's just not a lot of space," Tederman said.

Even in the suites, the space can be more confined than at home.

"I like the dorms for the most part; one thing I would change is making them a little bigger, but overall they are nice," Dieckman said.

Another challenge associated with dorms is the lack of personal garage space or large appliances.

"It's impossible to get parking and you don't have your own laundry machine, and the ones in dorms are always just not fantastic," Tederman said.

Still, students manage to find enjoyment in these new changes.

"Living in dorms is certainly an experience and it's a change, and just be open to it

because, I mean, it's not a glorious lifestyle, but it definitely gives you more of the college experience," Tederman said. "Living on campus is actually really nice."



On move-in day, UNO freshman Tyler Witt (middle) takes a picture with his parents. All of UNO dorms are suite-style with individual bedrooms and shared common spaces. (Courtesy Photo)



NWU freshman Gabi Tederman (middle) poses for a picture with her family on move-in day. Freshman at NWU are required to live in the dorms. (Courtesy Photo)

Beyond the dorm

Yutan graduates share off-campus living experiences

By Halle Arlt

When thinking of college, many people think about new experiences, one of which includes living on campus. Multiple colleges require freshmen and even sophomore students to live on campus. However, after these first years, most students move off campus, which can include living in an apartment, a house or even back home, all of which can offer different benefits and challenges.

One former Yutan student living off campus this year is Bella Tederman (class of 2024), who is a sophomore at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. This August, Tederman moved into a house with four other roommates.

"It is cheaper, I have more personal space, and it feels more independent than living on campus. I took into consideration price and what I missed when I was living in the dorms (personal space and cooking) and decided that was the best option for me," Tederman said.

Even though her freshman dorm was spacious, Tederman is still noticing the changes of moving into a house.

"I personally lived in the suites, not a traditional dorm, so my experience as a freshman was already more apartment-like than those who lived in a traditional dorm," Tederman said. "Living in a house gives me a lot more personal space. I have my own room and bathroom, which is different than the dorms."

Another benefit to living in a house was that Tederman got the chance to choose who her roommates were going to be.

"Two of my roommates are from freshman year and a friend that one of them met through her major, and my other roommate is my cousin," Tederman said.

Unlike living in the dorms, Tederman has to manage her rent and other expenses that come with renting a house.

"Living off campus forces you to pay a lot more attention to finances because last year, you just had to live in the dorms and have a meal plan, so you didn't have a choice but to pay for it," Tederman said. "This year, I have to take into consideration rent and utilities, as well as groceries and gas. Overall, though, I have still found it more cost-effective for me to live off campus."

There may also be some downsides to living off campus,

which can range from the 15-minute commute to missing out on some of the campus experiences.

"I do miss being able to walk everywhere, and parking can be a hassle sometimes. Living off campus, you also just feel a little more disconnected from everything happening on campus," Tederman said.

Yutan graduate Trevin Arlt (class of 2023), a current junior at Midland University, also knows the experiences of living in a dorm and then off campus. But for Arlt's off-campus living, he ventured back home.

"It is much cheaper to not live in the dorms; there's also more freedom and personal space," Arlt said. "I have a lot fewer people bothering me and can efficiently get my work done instead of getting distracted or procrastinating."

While living off campus can save money, especially living at home with no rent, there are still other added expenses that Arlt has to manage.

"Since it is a little more of a drive, I have to manage how I spend my money by paying for gas and buying food because I'm not paying for a meal plan," Arlt said.

Because of the challenges, Arlt believes that there are benefits to living in the dorms before moving off campus.

"Living in a dorm my first year was 100 percent worth it because I got to experience the fun college life of living in a building with a bunch of friends," Arlt said. "At the same time, living off campus has its benefits, and you're going to get the same college experience either way as long as you put yourself out there and continue to be social."

Some students may not have a choice of whether they are on or off campus, but Yutan graduate Mallory Zeleny (class of 2023), who is a junior at



With having many of his classes online, Trevin Arlt created a study space for himself. Arlt used one of the extra rooms in the house as a study area while his bedroom was down the hall. (Courtesy Photo)

the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO), got to decide her freshman year that she was going to live at home during college.

"I chose to live at home because I go to UNO, which is relatively close to home," Zeleny said. "Also, I plan on getting my master's degree, so I decided I would like to save money where I could. Housing is a huge expense that living at home has removed for me."

The money Zeleny saved by living at home has given

her new opportunities that she might not have experienced otherwise.

"Looking back on the past few years, I am grateful I made the decision to live at home because I have gotten the opportunity to study abroad, which most likely would not have been possible if I had moved out for college," Zeleny said.

With three younger sisters still living in the house, Zeleny also gets to enjoy spending time with her family whenever she wants.

"For me, the benefits of living at home have definitely outweighed the downsides. For example, I still get to enjoy my mom's home-cooked meals [and] spend a lot of time with my family," Zeleny said.

Although there may be more benefits to living at home for Zeleny, it still does come with some disadvantages.

"There are downsides to living at home, including battling the traffic driving into Omaha for my 8 a.m. classes and not being on campus on the evenings, which is when my friends get together to study," Zeleny said.

Luckily, Zeleny found easy ways to make sure everything fits perfectly in her schedule.

"The commute can be frustrating when driving through Omaha during rush hour, but there are so many ways to work around this. Scheduling classes strategically helps with commuting problems," Zeleny said. "I usually leave for class at least 45 minutes before it's scheduled to start and frequently spend a few hours between classes studying on campus."

Overall, Zeleny is glad she made the decision to live at home during college and encourages others to think about all their options before making a decision.

"If you're planning on attending college close to home, weigh the pros and cons individual to you before deciding to move out!" Zeleny said.



Bella Tederman (second from left) poses with her roommates for a picture. Behind her photo are the kitchen, dining and living areas of Tederman's house. (Courtesy Photo)

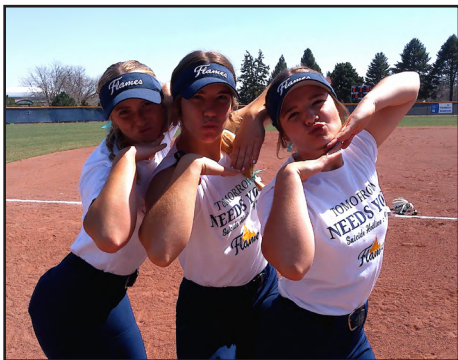


A HOMERUN EXPERIENCE

YUTAN GRADS STRENGTHEN FRIENDSHIPS THROUGH COLLEGE, SOFTBALL

By Addi Jones

One of the things students look forward to in college is making new friendships, but they can also strengthen existing ones, which is the case for Yutan graduates Shaylynn Campbell (class of 2023), Ella Watts (class of 2023) and Maycee Hays (class of 2024), who already played high school and club softball together and are now playing together at the College of Saint Mary (CSM).



SHAYLYNN CAMPBELL, ELLA WATTS AND MAYCEE HAYS POSE TOGETHER AFTER A GAME. CAMPBELL IS A PITCHER, WATTS PLAYS INFIELD AND HAYS IS A CATCHER. (COURTESY PHOTO)

“Maycee, Shay, and I have a very special bond on and off the field. We have played together for quite some time and know each other very well. We know each other’s strengths, weaknesses, how to help each other and can read each other very well,” Watts said. “I think that it helps us on the field because we know how each other plays. You don’t get that very often, and I think that is what is special.”

Even though Watts and Campbell didn’t plan to go to college together, they were both looking for the same things in a college and ended up at CSM.

“I went to CSM because I wanted to stay close to my family and friends while playing softball and being in a nursing program, but I was ready to start my own life,” Campbell said.

After hearing about the college experience from Campbell and Watts, Hays also fell in love with CSM because she could be a part of the nursing program while also being a part of the softball team.

“Shay and Ella definitely influenced me by explaining the whole nursing program situation. After I learned from them that I could get my degree there as well as play softball, it really caught my attention,” Hays said. “But also, it was hard to pass up playing more softball with two of my

bestest friends. I look up to them both a lot, in softball and in school.”

Although going from a public school to an all-girls private school could seem like a challenging switch, all three found it easy to adjust because of the small school environment that is similar to Yutan.

“Being at an all-girls school is not as different as you may think it seems. Our classes are smaller sized, so you get to know everyone pretty well. It is nice being able to build a relationship with classmates and the professors. The graduate programs, like occupational therapy, physical therapy and physician assistant, allow boys, and we see them around campus often,” Watts said.

Softball was also a fairly easy transition, as high school and college have very few differences. One big difference, however, is that college athletes travel a lot more.

“Almost all of our away games are at least two to three hours of driving, if not more, so you really get used to long car rides in the early mornings,” Hays said.

Because of the increased travel, that means making up a lot of work not only in class but also in clinicals, hands-on medical trainings that take place three times a week in nursing programs.

“The biggest negative for me is missing class or clinical. There are three days of classes and you have to be able to make those days or you could fail the whole class. This is very frustrating as an athlete because even if the faculty work with you, the hospitals you’re at might not. Along with that, our classes are anywhere between 3-8 hours of lecture... in one class. If I miss that lecture, I can almost guarantee I will not be focused enough or have the time to listen to a 3-8 hour lecture video,” Campbell said.

Travel isn’t the only thing that takes up the students’ time. They also have to build their schedule around practices and classes.

“I get up at 8 a.m., then go to class from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Nursing classes are longer and take about three hours. After class at 12 p.m., I go to the dining hall to get lunch. In season, practice times vary, but we typically practice from 4-7 p.m., so after lunch, I can do homework and get ready for practice. I go to bed around 11 p.m. However, if I have clinical the next day and have to get up at 6 a.m., I will go to bed around 10/10:30 p.m.,” Watts said.

Putting in all the time into school and softball makes it hard to have a job.

“Another negative is no time to work. Being a college kid, it is well known that everybody is broke. However, as an

athlete, that time to work is far and in between, so I really have to manage my money,” Campbell said.

To balance both student and athlete, most people find things that work best for them, and for Hays, that is staying organized.

“I like to keep a planner with a to-do list in it to keep track of my priorities and softball schedule. Along with that, I put everything in my iPhone calendar, including practice schedules, games, due dates and anything else to keep everything in line,” Hays said.

But being a student-athlete isn’t full of negatives. It comes with many positives and memories that students make along the way.

“The friendships you make being a college athlete are special. It is so much fun being on the softball team with some of my best friends. It is also fun to go to many different places to play softball. We got to go to Florida and Alabama. Those are memories I won’t forget. We got to stay in condos with all my teammates and go to the beach together. This year, we are going to Arizona to play, and I am excited to go,” Watts said.



HAYS, CAMPBELL AND WATTS POSE FOR A PICTURE WITH THEIR FORMER TEAMMATE LAYCEE JOSOFF. COLLEGE OF SAINT MARY PLAYED CONCORDIA IN A DOUBLE HEADER AND LOST BOTH GAMES. (COURTESY PHOTO)

In the end, all three agreed that their time as softball players at CSM has been worth it.

“I think it has been worth it because I have gotten the opportunity to branch out and try new things, especially because it is a smaller school,” Hays said. “College gives you the chance to try whatever you want without someone telling you ‘no.’ I’ve met a lot of new people from being here and playing softball, and it has resulted in me making a lot of new friends, which I’m thankful for.”



PLAYING SPECIAL TEAMS WITH A SPECIAL TEAM

WACKER LIVES HIS DREAM AS HUSKER FOOTBALL PLAYER



By Nicole Wacker

Many boys have a big dream to play for Nebraska football one day, but Yutan graduate Derek Wacker (class of 2024), current sophomore at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, is living that dream now. And Wacker works hard to keep the dream alive and well.



DEREK WACKER GETS LOCKED IN AT BEGINNING OF PUNT RETURN. WACKER IS ON THE TRAVEL TEAM AS A SOPHOMORE. (COURTESY PHOTO)

“On a normal day with practices, I wake up at 7 a.m. and get breakfast by 7:30. I then get dressed for practice before meetings that start at 7:45 and go until 9. Practice then starts at 9:30 and goes until 12. Right after practice, I go to class until about 3, then I have football meetings again at 4:45 until 6:05, then eat dinner. Afterwards, I’ll go home and study for a couple hours, then go to bed around 10:30-11,” Wacker said.

All the time Wacker has put in is starting to pay off, as he has earned himself roles on various special teams.

“Right now, I play a lot of special teams—kickoff, kickoff return and punt,” Wacker said. “Kickoff is my favorite because I can run as fast as I can and put a big hit on someone.”

Looking back at his freshman year, Wacker confesses that joining a Division 1 team was a difficult adjustment, both mentally and physically demanding.

“When I first started college football, I was pretty overwhelmed. There was a much larger emphasis on the game in terms of knowledge and football IQ, as well as taking care of your body and nutrition,” Wacker said. “It was pretty clear it wasn’t just a game anymore; there was a lot more to it.”

Although the responsibilities of playing Husker football are heavy, Wacker acknowledges that the benefits of student-athlete life—from a strong brotherhood to needed support—make it

worthwhile.

“Being an athlete comes with a lot of perks. We are given four meals a day for free, as well as some money on the side to go out to eat when we want. We are given lots of high-quality gear. Our coaches care for us not only as players but as men. Socially, a lot of people look up to you and support you very well,” Wacker said.

A long-established Division 1 program also means state-of-the-art facilities, designed to improve every player’s performance and growth, on and off the field.

“Our facilities are elite. We have a very good weight room and the best recovery and preparation facilities at our disposal. Academically, we have great spaces to study and meet with tutors,” Wacker said.

While he appreciates the resources that come with playing for UNL, Wacker firmly believes the true strength of the Nebraska program is the team camaraderie.

“I think the relationships between teammates here are unlike any other place. We’re all very competitive with each other but have a very strong sense of brotherhood and family and recognize that the wants of one person don’t outweigh the goals of the team,” Wacker said.



WACKER FACES OFF WITH HIS OPPONENT AGAINST MICHIGAN STATE. NEBRASKA FOOTBALL IS 6-3 AND CURRENTLY BOWL ELIGIBLE FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW. (COURTESY PHOTO)

That sense of unity extends beyond the team as a whole and to each separate position group on the team.

“I have gotten really close to all the linebackers,” Wacker said. “We’re a really close position group.”

Unfortunately, since Wacker is a walk-on to Nebraska’s team, he is not

receiving an athletic scholarship to play; however, he has taken it upon himself to fund his college experience—a work ethic that adds more weight to his drive to succeed.

“Derek’s been able to fund his college life based on the general support of the Yutan community through scholarships. He’s also been able to achieve scholarships through the University of Nebraska, as well as work part-time jobs during his time in high school,” Derek’s dad, Adam Wacker, said.



WACKER GETS THE TACKLE AGAINST MINNESOTA’S QUARTERBACK. WACKER HAS FIVE TACKLES SO FAR THIS SEASON. (COURTESY PHOTO)

Money aside, the first-hand experience of traveling and playing is something Wacker is extremely grateful for.

“Traveling with the team is very fun—I am currently traveling in Minnesota as I write this,” Wacker said. “We go to a movie every night before the game, so I’ve seen some pretty cool movies. We are given great food and get to hang out with all the guys in our spare time, locking in on our goal to win.”

While football takes a big chunk of his time, Wacker doesn’t neglect the other part of college studies, which is pursuing a career in construction management.

“He knows that he is very busy, so he maps out what his plan is for the week—for when he’ll do homework for each class and when he has his football things. He also has a lot of support from academics in the athletic department, but he just knows that he needs to kind of plan it out in advance,” Derek’s mom, Kara Wacker, said.

At the end of the day, Wacker admits it’s hard, but when student-athletes put in the work, the positives are encouraging.

“There’s not a whole lot I would change about being here,” Wacker said. “It is a lot of work, but when it pays off, it’s like no other feeling.”

Keeping the game alive

Intramurals offer competition, fun for Yutan graduates

By Kylie Krajicek

When most student-athletes graduate from high school, they will either pursue their sport at the collegiate level or say goodbye to the field or court one last time. However, there is one more option that not all high school students know about: college intramurals. Intramurals are recreational sports and activities within a college or university that are played for fun rather than at the varsity level. This is how Yutan graduates, past teammates and current freshmen at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL) Drew Krajicek and AJ Arensberg (class of 2025) are continuing their love for sports.

“Athletics was such a big part of my high school, and one thing I wanted for college was to stay active, so intramurals was the best thing, so that I could fulfill both of those,” Arensberg said.

After playing many sports together at the varsity level throughout high school, Krajicek and Arensberg decided to join a flag football league and continue being teammates. Since joining UNL’s intramural program, both Krajicek and Arensberg have discovered that intramurals are different from college sports but can be just as fun and rewarding.

“Flag football is just seven on seven, so it’s less competitive [than] high school sports,” Krajicek said. “But even though it’s less competitive, all of us guys still have a lot of fun getting a good workout in.”

For many former high school athletes like Krajicek and Arensberg, intramurals offer the perfect middle ground: a way to stay competitive, meet new people and maintain an active lifestyle without the intense time

commitment of college athletics.

“For me, it was an easy way to continue sports but leave time for studying, so the time commitment is much easier to work with,” Krajicek said.

With no practices and one game a week, balancing intramurals with college coursework has been manageable for both Krajicek and Arensberg.

“The schedule is flexible enough that I can play a game or two each week without falling behind on classes,” Arensberg said. “It’s nice to have that break from studying while still staying active.”



Drew Krajicek (far left) and AJ Arensberg (second from the right) pose with four of their teammates on an intramural field. Each player came up with a number to go with their team name, “Always Motion.” (Courtesy Photo)

Along with leaving time for studying or staying active, being involved in a college intramural program has helped both Yutan graduates create friendships and meet new people. After creating their team with their college friends on campus, Krajicek and Arensberg said that they now have even more close relationships with those people.

“I would say our team chemistry is really good. We all get along with each other, and we all understand our roles in the team very well,” Krajicek said.

With Krajicek being a wide receiver and Arensberg being the quarterback, they said it’s just like messing around during high school football again. Arensberg also said that it helps being able to choose their own teams and what positions they play to help increase chemistry between players.

“In some ways, the team chemistry is even better than high school because the team you play on is all people you choose and are great friends, as opposed to a mix of people from your school,” Arensberg said.

Even though the focus is on having fun and staying active, they still want to play well and are proud of their successes so far.

“So far, my favorite moment or memory was our second game when I had two receiving touchdowns and an interception in a big win over a good team,” Krajicek said.

After their first season is done, both Krajicek and Arensberg are looking forward to the winter season, where they hope to join a basketball intramural to keep making new memories together with new people.

“I for sure plan on playing basketball in the

winter, and I’ll have to find something for the spring,” Arensberg said.

Because of their positive experience with college intramurals, they hope other incoming students consider participating to have the same fun experiences.

“I would just say that if you are looking for a way to continue playing sports, then intramurals are a great way to do that and also help build relationships with people you meet and make lots of memories,” Krajicek said.

Tichota gains military, life experience through ROTC

By Taylor Shull

People often believe there are two separate options after high school graduation: the military or college. What if there was a way to do both? That’s where Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, better known as ROTC, comes in. Yutan graduate Carter Tichota (class of 2022) is in the Air Force ROTC at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and has seen firsthand how this program prepares students for the future.

“ROTC is a college military program that trains and prepares students to become commissioned officers in the United States military after graduation,” Tichota said. “It’s like being a part of a team sport, but at the end, you graduate and become an officer and join the U.S. Air Force.”

Before entering the program, Tichota says that there aren’t many specific requirements to join.

“You must be a U.S. citizen before you commission. There are some other requirements while in the program, but to join initially there aren’t any big ones,” Tichota said.

Regular requirements need to be met once in the program, however.

“You have to maintain a good GPA, physical fitness standards, Physical Training and Leadership Labs,” Tichota said. “For ROTC, as you go up over the years, there is added responsibility and more leadership. Juniors and seniors are also in charge of training sophomores and freshmen.”

One requirement is LLAB, or Leadership Laboratory, where 64 individuals complete 2 hours of training once a week.

“Usually, it consists of presentations for a little bit and then different skills. Skills include marching, expeditionary skills like land navigation, small unit tactics and problem-solving exercises called GLPs among others,” Tichota said.

Not all work happens during the school year. Three weeks of training in Alabama is a requirement for all before entering their junior year of the program.

“Generally, I would say there are some hard parts and there are easy parts. A lot depends on who you are doing it with because a lot of it is leadership focused,” Tichota said.

While Tichota prepares for his future with his military officer position, he is also taking classes towards a bachelor’s degree.

“I’m a biomechanics major, so I will graduate with a

Bachelor of Science in Biomechanics,” Tichota said.

This semester, Tichota has three classes to take while managing all ROTC training to meet his degree requirements. His daily schedule also includes time to volunteer, work part-time, study and manage his little free time.

“I will be honest and up front and tell you that I am kind of busy, and I wish I had more free time at times. With ROTC and school, work part-time and volunteering, it can be difficult,” Tichota said. “However, I absolutely love everything that I do, especially outside of school.”

To get more social interaction within busy schedules, Tichota finds ways to study with peers.

“I like to try and study with people. Sometimes we just start yappin’, but it is also fun to be with others and help each other,” Tichota said. “Collaborate to graduate as we say.”



Left: Carter Tichota stands in full gear at SWOC. Special Warfare Orientation Course, SWOC, is a two-week training program with the Air Force Academy. “I was able to try on somebody else’s gear, and it was pretty cool,” Tichota said. Right: Tichota (far right) holds a stick called a guidon during a Flight Drill Evaluation. This was a demonstration showing how well the cadet in charge can march their people in a box. (Courtesy Photos)

With the support from the program, Tichota finds his intimidating schedule manageable.

“I just feel like my path helped give me guide rails to do what I want. There is a great support system, mentors and everyone there to help you accomplish your goals,” Tichota said.

Amid the busy schedule, Tichota has made many memories in activities and with other individuals.

“Planning missions and playing paintball/airsoft in the woods is fun. Flying in helicopters is cool, and running out of the back of a Chinook as it lands is all fun,” Tichota said. “But the thing I will cherish the most when it is all said and done is without a doubt the people.”

After graduation, Tichota will continue his work in Texas while moving up in ranking.

“ROTC is the stepping stone that will make me an officer in the United States Air Force after I graduate college in May 2026,” Tichota said.

Family time is something that will be cut down when leaving for training, but Tichota says so far, ROTC has not affected his family.

“It hasn’t affected my family in any big way. If anything, it has made me value family time more because I know I will be leaving to go to Texas for training in about a year,” Tichota said.

Amy Tichota, Carter’s mother, agrees that ROTC hasn’t affected their family day to day but expresses how ROTC has had a positive impact on Carter’s college experience.

“Being in ROTC has brought Carter a group, something to belong to. As I think about kids moving to college, as a parent, you want them to find a group

that they can get involved with that helps them in the transition and not feel lost on campus. This was Carter’s group,” Amy Tichota said.

Carter’s parents have also noticed how ROTC has helped him prepare for his future.

“ROTC has helped define who he is as a person, and it has given him opportunities to see where he wants to go in life. He has a call-to-serve mentality that I didn’t see as much in high school as I do now. He wants to help people so much that sometimes it comes at sacrificing his own priorities, such as school work or having downtime,” Amy Tichota said.

Tichota acknowledges the impact that the

program had on him, ranging from his viewpoints, self-respect and plans for the future.

“It has expanded my worldview, and it has helped me become a better young man. It has helped me know what I really want in life, and it has helped me develop into a better leader,” Tichota said.

Because he has seen a positive impact from this program, Tichota believes incoming college students should consider it.

“I highly recommend it. It has given me a path that allows me to get a college degree as a normal college student would, get scholarships to help pay for school, the opportunity to be a part of a team while in college, and the opportunity to serve the country and lead as an officer after graduation,” Tichota said.

ZTA

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Going Greek



ΑΕΔ

ΠΚΑ

By Anna Rupp

College students experience benefits of sorority, fraternity membership

Wild Parties. Hazing. Wealth. Sisterhood. Brotherhood. These are just some of the things people might associate with sororities and fraternities, whether that's from personal experiences, movies, TV shows or stories they have heard. How many people actually know what it is like? A few recent Yutan graduates are currently members of a Greek community and recommend it to all upcoming freshmen as a way to get involved.

Yutan graduate Libby Winn (class of 2025) is in the **Gamma Mu chapter of Zeta Tau Alpha** at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Winn's decision to join a sorority was influenced at first by the misconceptions about sororities, but she decided to go through recruitment to find friendships.



Freshman Libby Winn (bottom right) poses for a photo with members from her sorority on little/big day. Each new member, or "little," is assigned an upperclassman ("big") as a mentor for the year. (Courtesy Photo)

"I never really wanted to join a sorority because they get such bad reputations, but over the summer, my mom talked to me about considering it," Winn said. "Honestly, I really wanted to find girls that I could form lasting and strong friendships with."

While Winn decided to join to make new friendships, Yutan

graduate Nathan Rupp (class of 2024) decided to join the **Delta Pi chapter of Delta Tau Delta** at the University of South Dakota (USD) to strengthen current friendships.

"I joined because I was already friends with quite a few guys in the fraternity, and they convinced me to sign up for recruitment," Rupp said.

Over time, these friendships can develop into lasting bonds, which is what Yutan graduate Haley Kube (class of 2024), who is in her second year as a member of the **Epsilon chapter of Alpha Xi Delta** at USD, has experienced.

"Growing up, I had two older brothers, so I never really had that sister-sister bond," Kube said. "I figured it was a good idea to give the girls another shot, and I now know what it's like to have sisters, also to have someone who always supports you no matter what and to be that way for other people."

For students who live together, their bonds can be closer since they live in the sorority or fraternity house. This is the case for Yutan graduate Zach Kennedy (class of 2024), who is in the **Alpha Omega chapter of Pi Kappa Alpha** at

Kansas State University. Kennedy is living in his house for the second year in a row.

"I love living in it because it keeps you involved in everybody's life that is in the house as well," Kennedy said. "You don't have to look far to find someone to study with or just hang out and watch a football game with."



Sophomore Haley Kube (right) poses with her mom in front of the Alpha Xi Delta house. Kube's sorority hosts a fall and spring family day for parents to visit. (Courtesy Photo)

In the house, members can take on different positions that they were nominated for and then voted into. Kennedy's position in the fraternity is the internal vice president's cabinet as the house manager, which requires him to help take care of the house.

"I make sure that things are fixed in the house, like AC and other technical problems," Kennedy said.

In Kube's case, her status in the house is a parent relations director and social share, so she is responsible for keeping everyone informed on what is going on in their sorority.

"I am in charge of keeping in contact with all the family members of **Alpha Xi Delta**," Kube said. "I run one of our Facebook pages that kind of lets the parents and everyone else know what we're up to."

However, membership in the sorority or fraternity isn't free. The cost depends on the college. For Rupp, it costs \$900 a semester, plus \$3000 to live in the house, whereas for Kennedy, it costs \$1,000 a month

and then living in the house costs \$5,000 a year. This might sound like a lot of money, but the students have found it comes with a lot of benefits.

"Our fraternity offers scholarships that people can do at the end of the year, but it also just offers a fun environment to be in," Rupp said.

Winn agrees that the money, which for her as a new member is \$300 a month, is worth the benefits.

"I think that the girls are a big beneficial factor of being in **Zeta**, but

of their donations go to the Kindly Heart Initiative.

"[Our philanthropy] is the Kindly Heart Initiative, and you get to help the youth experiencing homelessness or foster care," Kube. "We get to work one-on-one with these different kids and really make an impact, not only in our community but also nationally."

Besides events for the public, sororities and fraternities also host multiple events a year just for the members. At **Pi Kappa Alpha**,

there is a range of activities, a lot of which focus on bonding.

"For large sporting events like the Super Bowl, we rent out movie theaters so everyone can watch together," Kennedy said. "We also have brotherhood development events like paintball, where kids rushing the fraternity can also come along. We are also a social fraternity, which means we have

tailgates and parties at the house for members to enjoy."

Overall, being in a sorority or fraternity is something all these alumni recommend that upcoming freshmen look into.

"Joining these organizations really helps bring you out of your comfort zone, and you can meet so many new and different people," Winn said. "As someone who rarely even toed the line of my comfort zone in high school, I've loved to be able to branch out and get away from that little zone."



Sophomore Nathan Rupp poses with members from his fraternity for a photo before formal. Formal is held the last week of September. (Courtesy Photo)

I also think that our philanthropy (breast cancer education and awareness) is beneficial for many reasons," Winn said. "They also hold us to higher academic standards, so I get to have even more motivation to do as well as I can."

Philanthropy is not unique to just Winn's sorority; it is part of all Greek organizations. These include a wide range of events, but they are all focused on giving back to the community. **Alpha Xi Delta**, for example, hosts annual chili feeds in the fall for anyone to come eat. All

Other ways to get involved on college campus

- Join or start a student club
- Rush a fraternity of sorority
- Join an honor society
- Participate in student government
- Write for your student newspaper
- Get an on-campus job
- Join an intramural sports team
- Participate in club sports
- Look for research opportunities
- Attend campus events

Data from Best Colleges

Exploring the world, expanding the mind JACOBS SHARES POSITIVE EXPERIENCES STUDYING ABROAD IN SEVILLE

By Audrey Dieckman

School and vacation usually don't mix. However, studying abroad involves exactly that, with an immersive classroom across the world. This is what Yutan graduate Brennan Jacobs (class of 2022) experienced when she studied in Seville, Spain, for five months during the spring 2025 semester.

"I did it, and I don't regret it for a second. It was the happiest I've ever been for my life, and I was opened to a whole new perspective of the world," Brennan said.

This Creighton senior was a little apprehensive at first but spontaneously decided to sign up to travel abroad only three days before the deadline.

"I mean, I knew I wanted to, but I just didn't think I could afford it. But then, I just submitted the application to Creighton," Brennan said. "And then I was like, I'm gonna do this."

On the contrary, Brennan's father, Yutan sixth-grade teacher Trent Jacobs, was a little concerned when his daughter told him her plans to travel to Seville to study abroad.

"I was very apprehensive and honestly a bit worried. I never had the opportunity to do something like that in college myself, so the whole idea felt unfamiliar and a little intimidating. My biggest concern was her safety, especially being so far from home," Trent said.



BRENNAN JACOBS (THIRD FROM LEFT) EATS WITH HER HOST FAMILY AND HER VISITING SISTER (SECOND FROM LEFT). THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME SOMEONE FROM HER FAMILY COULD VISIT HER AND EXPERIENCE THE CULTURE. (COURTESY PHOTO)

Despite his worries, Trent knew his daughter would benefit from this experience.

"Living in a different country forces you out of your comfort zone—you're navigating a new language, a new culture and a completely different way of life," Trent said. "Brennan had the chance to travel to several other European countries, meet all kinds of people and make some amazing friends along the way. I think that kind of experience helps you grow in ways that a classroom alone just can't."

When deciding where to study abroad, Brennan had the option to travel to one of a few places but ended up choosing Seville

due to the warm temperatures.

"Honestly, I wanted to do Spain or Italy, but everyone goes to Italy. I always thought Spain was so cool, and also the program fit in my scholarship that I have," Brennan said. "So Spain, I was drawn to it...I chose Seville because it was warm."

Another reason Brennan chose Seville was because of the financial benefits.

"It was actually cheaper than my tuition right now at Creighton because you have to live in the dorms for freshmen and sophomore year at Creighton. It was cheaper to live in Spain than it was to live at Creighton. That was beneficial," Brennan said.

Brennan lived with a host family during her five-month stay, which was a challenge with her limited Spanish.

"The host family I lived with, the parents spoke no English, and in Spain, in Seville, the region is Andalusia. They speak the fastest Spanish in the whole world...It's so difficult...but, I think we did a really good job using Spanglish," Brennan said.

Thankfully, Brennan said most people her age spoke English in addition to Spanish, which helped her immensely, especially in the school aspect. In Seville, Brennan studied high-level marketing classes, European politics, strategic planning, public relations and education. Brennan's schedule was the same each week, but each day had a different routine, similar to college in the United States.

"A normal school day really varies, There wasn't much of a routine, but in a good way!" Brennan said. "During the weekend, it would vary as I would usually spend the evenings with friends."

When she had the time between classes, Brennan toured the area as much as she could to experience the culture and surroundings.

"The architecture is so beautiful. It's very vibrant and colorful there, which I thought was amazing," Brennan said. "I thought that was really cool because we got to see a lot of different traditions."

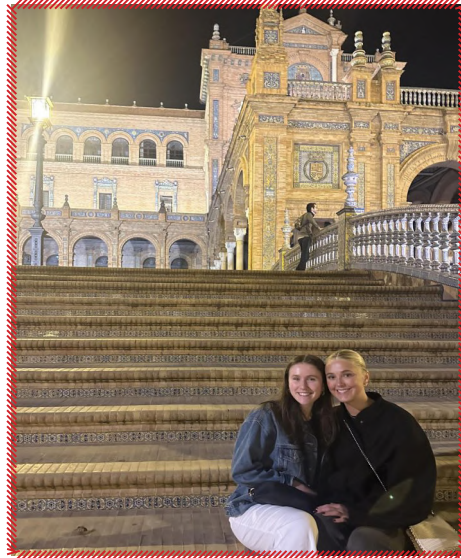
Brennan got to see many of the sights Seville had to offer, including some of her favorite spots like cathedrals, parks, places to watch the sunsets and her favorite by far, Plaza de España, where a "Star Wars" scene was filmed.

"It's got little boats and is in the middle of the park. It is jaw-dropping for sure and my favorite area in Seville," Brennan said.

While offering many beautiful views, one thing Brennan did not have in Seville was air conditioning.

"It's very, very hot there. They don't have air conditioning, and by May, it's in the hundreds, so at night, if you have your window open, they don't have a screen on it. So you're either gonna be sweating or get bitten by a million bugs," Brennan said.

Another culture shock Brennan experienced and expressed to her parents was eating the evening meal later than she was used to. In the United States, families eat dinner around 6-7 p.m., but in Spain, it is common to eat dinner after 10 p.m.



BRENNAN JACOBS (RIGHT) AND A FRIEND SIT ON THE STEPS OF PLAZA DE ESPAÑA. JACOBS USED MOST OF HER FREE TIME TO TRAVEL AROUND SPAIN AND THE SURROUNDING COUNTRIES LIKE ENGLAND, FRANCE, IRELAND, PORTUGAL AND MORE. (COURTESY PHOTO)

"That really stood out to her—and to me—as a major lifestyle difference. She also mentioned how laid-back and social the culture felt overall, which was a big change from what she was used to here," Trent said.

Regardless of the extreme heat and culture shocks, Brennan truly enjoyed her time in Seville. Her biggest takeaway from studying abroad was that everybody is in similar situations, even though people all have different lives.

"It really changed my views on everyone in the world because I made friends from all these different places," Brennan said.

"We all have the same problems, you know? We're all the same people; we're studying right now. We have maybe a problem with friends, maybe a problem with our family, and we're all so similar. We just grew up in different places...No matter where you're from or your upbringing, we really are all the same people."

Her parents agree that this experience has helped her become more confident in traveling and other ways.

"Brennan has really developed a love for travel. She's much more confident now when it comes to navigating airports, unfamiliar cities and different cultures," Trent said.

As a result of all her experiences, Brennan would definitely recommend studying abroad to current or incoming college students.

"For those considering study abroad, just do it. You are young and you only live once. Worse comes to worse, you can always go home," Brennan said. "You are young and you never get this time back, so do it and I promise you won't regret it. From traveling, you learn so much about who you are and others around you when you are immersed in another culture."

By Ashtyn Anderson

When most people think of going to college, they picture attending one place. However, according to the Institute for Higher Education Policy, nearly 40 percent of college students transfer at some point in their postsecondary journey. Multiple Yutan graduates are among those ranks.

Yutan graduate Jude Elgert (class of 2023) previously attended Central Community College (CCC) before transferring to Concordia University in his junior year.

"I transferred to Concordia University because I wanted to complete my bachelor's degree, and I also had the opportunity to continue playing golf while doing so," Elgert said.

Because Elgert was able to continue playing golf, his coaches helped him through his transfer process.

"Both of my coaches—at CCC and Concordia—have made the transfer process really smooth, which has helped a lot...Both of my coaches helped me through it, and all I really had to do was apply and send over transcripts," Elgert said.

It wasn't just the coaches who made the transfer seamless for Elgert, as he knew some of the players on the golf team.



Jude Elgert (left) poses with the Central Community College golf coach, his brother Sam Elgert. Elgert is majoring in business administration at Concordia. (Courtesy Photo)

"I didn't feel like I had to start over because I already knew some of the guys on the Concordia golf team. We had played in a few of the same meets before, so that made the transition easier," Elgert said.

As he adjusted to life at Concordia, Elgert found the biggest differences were in size and class requirements.

"The two schools are very similar, but Concordia has a lot more students than Central does. Concordia also requires you to take a few religion classes in order to graduate, unlike Central," Elgert said.

Although Elgert noticed some key differences between the two schools, the transition to Concordia ultimately provided the community he was hoping for.

"Concordia has been what I expected—a close-knit, faith-based community, which I really enjoy," Elgert said.

Although Elgert transferred for academic reasons, Yutan graduate Zach Krajcek (class of 2023) transferred from Concordia University to Midland University his sophomore year to be closer to home.

"Ultimately, it was just to be closer to family in

NEW PATHS, BRIGHT FUTURES GRADUATES DISCUSS COLLEGE TRANSFER EXPERIENCE



Kaitlyn Bisaillon (second from left) snaps a picture with some of her college friends after a Creighton volleyball game. Bisaillon is majoring in accounting at Creighton. (Courtesy Photo)

Yutan. Being able to go back home to Yutan pretty much any day is a blessing," Krajcek said.

As he adjusted to his new campus, Krajcek noticed several differences between the two universities.

"Concordia University is a lot more of a religious university compared to Midland University, even though they are both private schools. That was really a culture shock for me coming to Midland University. Another big difference is the town of Fremont compared to Seward. Fremont is quite a bit larger and has more of a traditional college environment," Krajcek said.

Adjusting to those changes took time, but the transition ultimately gave Krajcek a chance to start fresh and find his place in a new college community.

"I definitely felt like I had to start over. I had spent an entire year at Concordia, and it really was a fresh start. I wouldn't change that, looking back on the situation. College is an entirely different situation than high school, and having that second opportunity to 'start over' actually made it easier to adjust to my new environment," Krajcek said. "The people at Midland are fantastic. Especially on the football team is where I've made some pretty awesome friends."

Krajcek found a family on Midland's football team, and like Elgert, sports helped make the transition easier.

"College football is one of the hardest things someone can go through. Having people next to you going through the same things you are, such as long meetings and hard workouts, makes it 100 times easier," Krajcek said.

Another Yutan graduate who transferred from a public to a private university is Kaitlyn Bisaillon (class of 2022). She transferred from the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO) to Creighton University before her sophomore year because it was her dream college.

"One of the main reasons I transferred is because I wanted to go to Creighton for as long as I could remember. At the very end of senior year in high school, I made a last-minute decision to attend UNO. I didn't want to regret not attending my dream school later in life, so I made the decision to transfer," Bisaillon said.

Bisaillon was also drawn to Creighton for the community she would become a part of.

"I found the individualized curriculum and sense of community at Creighton appealing to me. The professors care about each student and their success. Another pro is that most of the students are from out

of state or even out of the country, so I am exposed to a diverse group of people," Bisaillon said.

Once Bisaillon decided to transfer, she had to go through a specific process.

"To transfer, I had to meet with the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Programs at the Heider College of Business. We discussed what classes would transfer over and how they would transfer over into Creighton's curriculum," Bisaillon said. "After I made it certain I was transferring, I had to attend a transfer orientation to learn more about Creighton and meet other people who were transferring into Creighton as well."

Like Krajcek, Bisaillon felt like she was starting over at Creighton.

"Most of the classes that transferred to Creighton transferred as electives, and I had to take their core classes that most students take as a freshman. Additionally, I didn't know many people, so I had to meet new people in my classes," Bisaillon said.

As she was meeting new people, she noticed a major difference at her new school.

"The main difference I saw between Creighton and UNO is the community and diversity. Creighton is such a tight-knit community because everyone is from all over the country, so everyone comes in knowing no one. Naturally, as a result of this, everyone gets to know everyone, which creates a big community as opposed to different small groups," Bisaillon said.

This community is ultimately what made Bisaillon feel like the transfer was worth it.

"Creighton was even better than I had imagined. I have an incredible network of people from all over the world, and I haven't even entered the workforce yet," Bisaillon said.

As a result of their transfer experiences, these graduates have advice for students who are still making their college decisions.

"I would say take your time in the process. Go on as many visits as you need. Also, know that college is the start of your adult life. With that comes a lot more responsibility that can be hard to adapt to," Krajcek said.

While weighing their different options, Bisaillon advises students to go with their gut.

"My advice to students applying to college is don't play it safe," Bisaillon said. "Don't go somewhere because you think that's what someone else would want you to do or because you want to know someone else is going there. Don't worry about not knowing anyone there. You will find your people."



Zach Krajcek stands in front of Midland's football field after a game. Krajcek is majoring in digital marketing at Midland. (Courtesy Photo)

COLLEGE COSTS

Q & A: FAFSA with school counselor Missy Chvatal

Q What is the FAFSA?

A The FAFSA stands for Free Application for Federal Student Aid. It is a student application for federal, state and college-based financial aid. Colleges and career schools use the FAFSA form to determine how much financial aid you are eligible to receive, which could include grants, scholarships, work-study funds and loans.

Q When is a good time to start applying for the FAFSA?

A Students and parents could begin applying for the FAFSA on October 1st. The sooner a family completes the FAFSA, the sooner they may know what types of financial aid is available to them. This can enable them to develop a financial plan to help pay for college.

Q How does financial aid work?

A Once a student and their parent complete the FAFSA, the Federal Government will send the results to the schools the student has chosen and the student. The results will indicate the amount of a family's Student Aid Index (SAI). Colleges will review your application, using the SAI and cost of education to determine financial need.

Q What are different types of financial aids that colleges give out?

A The first would be a scholarship. So scholarships, basically, I call it free money that they don't have to pay back. Those can be awarded based on academic performance or activities like athletics and the fine arts. They may get a scholarship based on financial need. So that's where the FAFSA comes into play. So if the FAFSA shows that their families cannot contribute as much to their college education, then they may qualify for a scholarship or a grant. Then other types of financial aid would be loans.

Q What are the benefits and downsides when getting student loans?

A Loans can help students afford a college education when they would otherwise not have the financial means to pay for college. Loans can have their downsides too. Students should budget carefully and understand that they will need to be paid back with interest. This means the \$5,000 loan they took out will mean they pay back \$5,000 PLUS interest, so the total amount will be more than the original \$5,000 loan.

The yearly average public college tuition in 2025-26 is

\$10,340

The yearly average private college tuition in 2025-26 is

\$39,307

The yearly average amount of grants per student given through FAFSA is

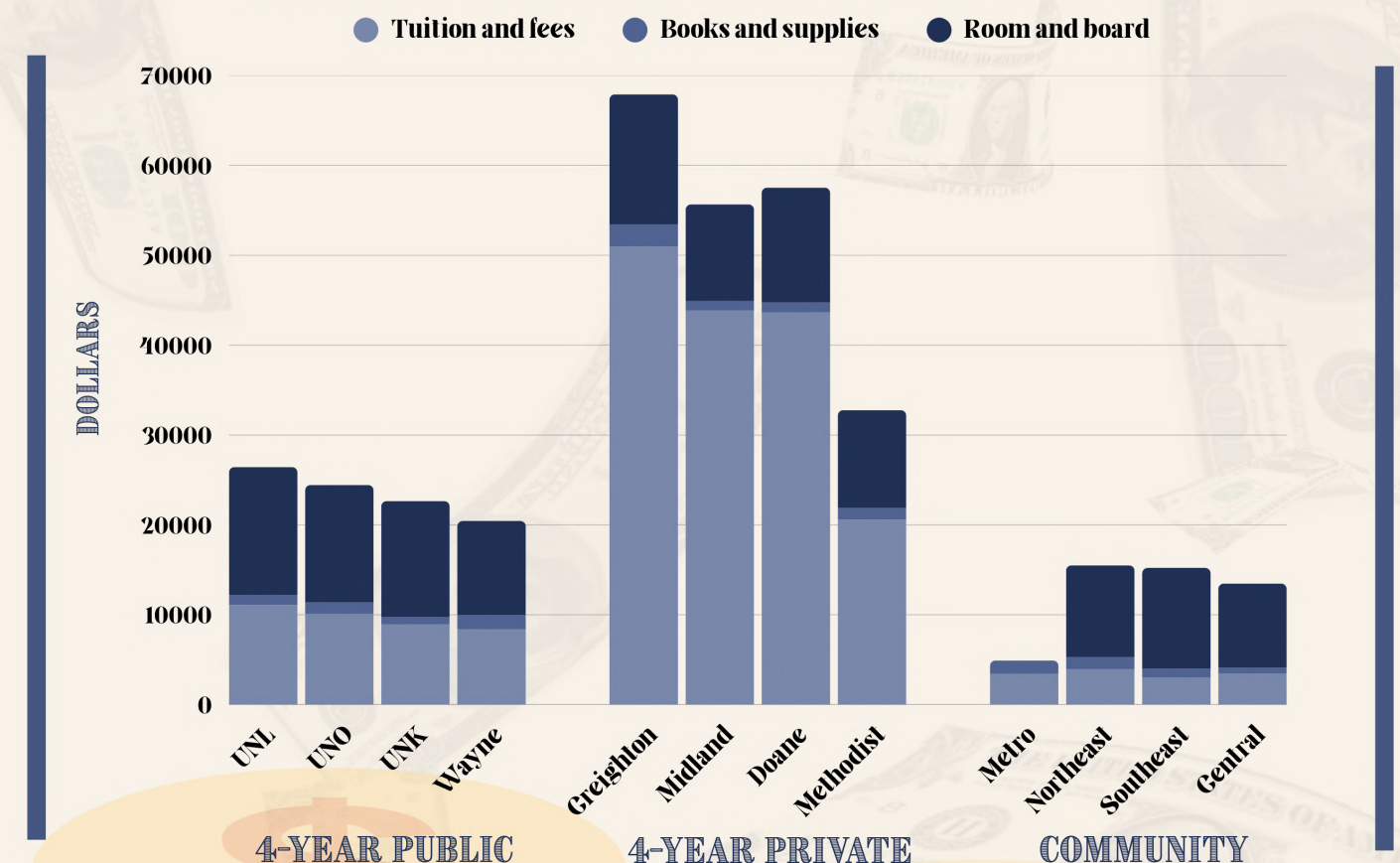
\$4,883

The average amount of student loan debt in the United States is

\$42,673



AVERAGE NEBRASKA COLLEGE COSTS



Information found at educationquest.org and savingforcollege.com. Infographic by Morgan Long

COLLEGE ADVICE FROM YUTAN STAFF

"Time management is vital. If you've never used a planner/calendar, start now so it isn't new to you next year. You will have a ton more free time than you've ever had before. Learning how to use that to your advantage is key. Schedule time for class, homework and studying first. Then you'll be able to enjoy naps and socializing without having those things hang over your head."

School nurse
Amy Krajicek



University of Nebraska Kearney, 2003
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, 2010

"Go to class, work hard but have fun! If it all possible, try to graduate college with the least amount possible of college debt! Take every opportunity to get as many scholarships possible! Your future self will thank you for it."

Band teacher
Nate Capron



Midland University, 2002
Wayne State College, 2012

"There are many resources in colleges for you to use to get help, apply for scholarships, network and find opportunities. Don't let fear keep you from reaching out to people. These relationships may be incredibly important for the rest of your life."

English teacher
Nealy Freeman



University of Nebraska Omaha, 2004
College of Saint Mary's, 2015



Kansas State University, 1997
Western Kentucky University, 2008

"Choose something to get involved in outside of your classes. The activities I was involved with outside of my college classes are what I remember most about college. It helped me to meet a variety of friends and learn about what was going on around campus."

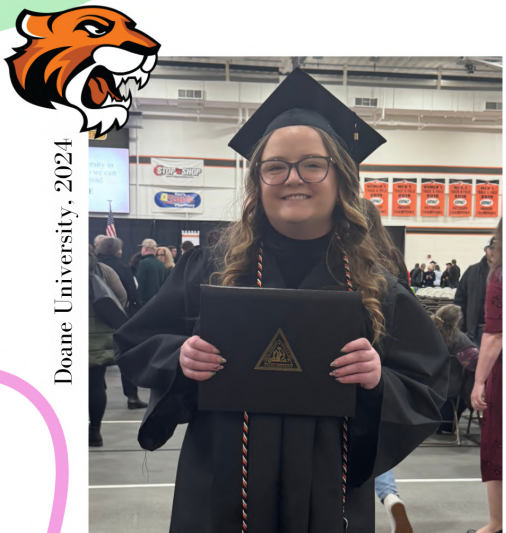
Media specialist
Shannon Coleman



Simpson College, 2016
Master of Art in Teaching, 2021

"I would take advantage of all the random and awkward freshmen things the school puts on! They are actually a really good way to meet friends and experience campus. Just remember, you are all feeling awkward, so you might as well make it a fun time!"

Science teacher
Megan Encarnacion



Doane University, 2024

"Do not let one assignment, quiz or test define you. Let your discipline, dedication and commitment to your future define you. Someone is remembered educationally because of their effort, not their scores."

Paraprofessional
Mya Hays

"Try something! Like working out? Go to the rec. Like being creative? Find a student group that does that. Another hint: prop your dorm door open when you're hanging out in your dorm. You will meet so many more people!"

Science teacher
Leslie Heise



University of Nebraska Lincoln, 2011
University of Nebraska Omaha, 2021

"Be responsible, trustworthy, on time, adapt to changes and put forth your best effort. These are qualities that employers look for in employees."

Career and technical education teacher
Brian Fitzgerald



University of Nebraska Kearney, 1986

"College is your chance to try things you've never done before. Say yes to new experiences, meet different people and don't stress about having it all figured out. You grow the most when you let yourself get a little uncomfortable."

Family and consumer sciences teacher
Harleigh Claussen



Wayne State College, 2025