

What makes Behrend special?

Ed. Note: The Lion Ambassadors held an essay contest to find out why students think Behrend is special. The following is the winning essay. The author of this essay is Vail Weller, a seventh semester English major. The essays were judged by Dr. Richard Mester, Annette Chartron and Chris Dubbs.

As I leave the Reed Building and walk toward class, I always linger at my favorite place. I find myself looking into the stream, and downhill toward the bridge. Depending on the season, and on how much rain has recently fallen, the water level varies. So do the flowers that reach out from the banks of the stream.

I get a rush of good feeling in this place - to me it represents an ideal college

scene. That the bridge is my favorite place is perhaps symbolic. Behrend has acted as a literal bridge for me - a link between my youth and my adulthood. The professors I have been educated by have taught me invaluable, indelible lessons which will guide me throughout the rest of my life.

If I had chosen to attend another college, I doubt that I would have learned what I have here. I have realized that involvement in university activities is crucial to receiving a well-rounded education. Each student must search out the special events which occur frequently here. There are fine theater productions, current movie showings, dances, contests, visiting musicians and nationally respected lecturers. I have also been taught, most importantly, the ability to think critically.

This allows me to objectively look at every side of an issue, and this is relevant not only in a career, but in personal relationships as well.

I came to Behrend expecting to move on to University Park. As my first and second years passed by, however, I realized that I couldn't give up the way of life I had become accustomed to here: the extremely close friendships, the personal attention my professors gave to me, and the leadership positions that are available (to those who look hard enough), not to mention the great social opportunities. I know that people complain that there isn't much to do here - I disagree. Behrend is brimming with diverse people. I never walk to class without passing an interesting face that I think twice about.

I am firmly convinced that I made the best possible decision - I am not just a number here. As I write this, I am a senior who can look around and feel that I am a part of this place. That is what college should be about: noticing the friendly spark of recognition in a passing classmate's eye, and knowing that at any time I can call a professor at home for assistance.

I am of course not without a few complaints, but I can honestly say that Behrend is a special place. It is made special by its faculty, campus and students, but my favorite part of my stay here has been my long walk across that bridge to adulthood, surrounded by flowers.

- Vail Weller

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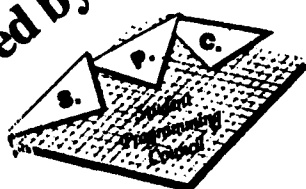
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