

Julia McMurray, Grinnell Class of 2008

[Fritz Schwaller '69] Why did you decided to attend Grinnell? Do you know why your parents chose Grinnell?

[Julia McMurray '08] Much like my dad, I thought I'd never end up at Grinnell because seemly everyone in my family went there. In the small space on the application allotted to list family members who attended Grinnell, I had to write, "Please see attached" to accommodate the long list of extended family members who went before me. Plus, I'm a city girl. While I enjoyed visiting my grandparents in small town Iowa, did I really want to go to school in the middle of nowhere?

The turning point came for me when I visited Grinnell. I was incredibly impressed by how interested the students were in class. Most of them had obviously done their homework and were actively participating. The professors were engaging and seemed to really care about what the students had to say. I also liked the feel of the campus. It was laid back and community focused.

[F.S.] Do you and your parents share any Grinnell activities in common: *S&B*, athletics, theatre, music, etc.?

[J.M.] While at Grinnell I double majored in psychology and French and studied abroad in Aix-en-Provence. One of the things my dad and I share about our college experience is that we both had a strong desire to study abroad and expanding our horizons. My mom is half-French and I was eager to explore my French heritage. It comes to me as I write this that in choosing my path through Grinnell and in looking for independence, I ended up returning to my familial roots — both in rural, small town Iowa and in France.

At Grinnell, I was active in Community Meal and Community Chorus. Community Meal allowed me to continue the tradition of giving back I was raised in, and Community Chorus let my love of singing shine through in a non-judgmental environment. Both activities allowed me to get to know not only my fellow college students, but also people from town who I wouldn't have gotten to know otherwise.

[F.S.] Have you followed your Grinnellian parents in any other way? Did you pursue the same career, do you have the same interests, or share any other activity?

[J.M.] Since graduating, my path has not much overlapped with my dad's. I am currently the operations manager for a healthcare quality improvement program dealing specifically with trauma patients. We help hundreds of hospitals across the U.S. and Canada improve their patient care for this vulnerable population. Like many Grinnellians, I ended up in the nonprofit field because I enjoy feeling like my work makes a difference in the world.

[F.S.] Why do you give back to Grinnell? Do you know what caused your parents to also give to Grinnell?

[J.M.] I give to Grinnell because I loved my time there and I think Grinnell profoundly influenced who I am today. Grinnell honed my writing and critical thinking skills and has given me an incredible community I know I can always fall back on. At Grinnell, I met my husband, **Max Kuipers '09**. I am still very close with many of my college friends. Since graduation, I have made friends with Grinnellians in Chicago that I didn't know during my time there. I find that in a room full of strangers, Grinnellians have an instant connection, the easy ability to talk to each other without the much celebrated awkwardness of our time on campus.

I love that so much of my family history includes Grinnell. I love that my grandparents met and married at Grinnell. I love that my great-grandparents met and married at Grinnell. I love that everyone involved in my parents' meeting and their wedding were all Grinnellians.

[F.S.] What advice can you offer to other children of Grinnell alumni about maintaining a culture of giving across the generations? If you have children, would you like for them to also consider attending Grinnell?

[J.M.] I give to Grinnell because of what the school means to me and what I hope Grinnell can offer generations of students to come. But I find the general tone of Grinnell's giving pleas confusing — give because everyone else does. The school that I went to prizes independent and critical thinking above all, so I find it discordant that the Grinnell donations call encourages lemming-like behavior. I graduated from Grinnell confident that I would make an excellent scientist. I hope that Grinnell will give my fellow scientists more data off of which to base their donations. It would be helpful to know what my donation will benefit specifically. How can I help continue the high quality of education that I received? How can I help underserved populations attain a college degree? Will my donation support the hardworking staff and professors who so influenced my time at Grinnell?

With its very health endowment, Grinnell needs to provide alumni with more reasons to donate their hard-earned money. After all, my class and the few years after mine graduated into the worst economy this country has seen since the Great Depression. I was lucky to graduate with a job — English teacher in France — but it was a temporary job. When I came back to the U.S., there were no jobs for new college graduates. I sold phone service door-to-door for two months. I nannied. Max moved from Chicago to Des Moines to find work. Times were much harder for my generation than for our parents. Some of us are still recovering. For all of my classmates still looking for a steady career path or drowning in student debt, Grinnell needs to provide concrete reasons to give to the school. It is helpful to know, for example, that a high percentage of alumni donations proves that our alumni are engaged and highly value the education they

received at Grinnell to outside sources considering giving the College money. A high percentage of alumni donations proves that Grinnell is worth investing in. And Grinnell is worth investing in. Grinnell has invested in four generations of my family. I hope that Grinnell will invest in the values we were raised on for years to come.

I will certainly encourage my children to attend Grinnell one day, but I hope that like my parents, it won't be a hard sell. I hope my children will find their own path, but I do hope that that path will include Grinnell.