

PUNAHOU COLLEGE PREVIEWS – Alumni Advice 2023

What has been the biggest surprise about college?

- I would say the biggest surprise about college was how easy it was to meet new people. I was nervous about making friends, but everyone is super friendly and looking for the same, so it was a lot easier than I thought it would be.
- How well Punahou has prepared us.
- The number of people attending.
- The amount of freedom I have and having to balance my work and social life
- Living abroad in Switzerland is a totally different experience than anywhere in the US, and I love it!
- How much freedom there is.
- How rich and ahead of the game everyone seemed to be
- My biggest surprise at college is the variety and quality of the students here. In terms of variety, if you have an interest, there are people in college with that same interest. As long as you put yourself out there and lean into the things that you like, you will find like-minded people. In terms of quality, I am consistently blown away by how hardworking people are in college. Everyone has something that they are passionate about and work hard at, even if it isn't class, and it is amazing to get to work with those people when your interests align. Overall, what I want prospective students to take away from this is that no matter your interests, there will be people in college for you. Your peers and mentors will believe in you and push you to be your best, so try your best to live up to it and do the same for others.
- The amount of independence and freedom given to me.
- The sheer amount of clubs and groups on campus.
- The freedom/independence I have. Everything is up to me to do. I have to have the diligence to do my homework, go to class, exercise, get up, etc.
- The biggest surprise for me was how smooth my transition was to a completely foreign place. I was really worried about finding friends, missing home, and struggling with schoolwork, but I really found my place!
- Definitely having to do everything myself. Planning out when to do laundry or cleaning up after yourself can be quite tedious.
- Although college can be more challenging and feel more individual-based than high school, professors are very understanding and there are always resources available to students.
- Nobody really tells you how difficult it is to make friends in the first few weeks. I was not prepared for how many people I'd get to know in just move-in week alone.
- How close you can get with people in such a short span of time
- It was a lot easier to meet others that I connect with than I thought. I've made a lot of friendships who are either from Hawai'i too, or someone who's in the same major as I am.
- The amount of free time
- The endless opportunities that we have and the amount of people who are here to support you in times of need.
- The biggest surprise about college has been the amount of free time that I have. Since I am a STEM student and also a student athlete, I was really worried that my schedule would become too packed and I wouldn't have a social life or I would fall behind in school. However, living on campus 24/7 is a completely different experience than having to drive to school like I did in high school, and I found a nice balance for myself between softball, studying, and making time for myself and hanging out with friends.
- Even though the class size is so much bigger, it wasn't hard to find my place and sense of belonging in college. That doesn't mean you'll never have imposter syndrome or struggle a little, but it means that there so many opportunities to be involved in many communities and spaces.
- Freedom.
- One big surprise to me were that at Notre Dame there are weekly tutorials which are quizzes that are half independent work half group work. I was also very surprised by the students' level of knowledge because I had thought that everyone would be very smart and I would have to work

really hard to keep up with everyone. However, I have found that this is not the case and Punahou prepared me very well in the sense that I am ahead of and have more previous knowledge on topics than my peers.

- So much independence. Finding friends right away can be hard.
- Diversity
- College applications aren't the end... once you're in, you are also applying to clubs, research, internships, etc.
- I was pleasantly surprised with how prepared I was to transition from high school to college. Punahou prepared me for the real world and the importance of time management followed me to college.
- How much more is out there. Being able to travel within states has been some of my coolest experiences ever. Also the people I've met along the way have been people I will know for the rest of my life. You'll meet a few not-so-nice people, but the good ones are worth keeping.
- Finding community within Hawaii club at UCLA. I didn't expect to want to join but everyone is genuinely so sweet and I'm grateful for have them in my life.
- How my schedule at Punahou prepared me to deal with a college schedule that many people struggle with at first.
- The freedom. No one is dictating your free time so you'll need to make sure you make time for both your school work and your normal chores (laundry, food, working out, etc).
- The amazing people and events.
- All of the people and new experiences.
- It's hard to pinpoint one thing, but something that surprised me is the opportunity to learn something new on a daily basis.
- The culture shock, and how much the natural environment can affect you
- I met so many people that I quickly connected with.
- Definitely the freedom and autonomy you get as a person to almost do whatever you want whenever you want.
- How easy you can find people with similar passion.
- The amount of different people you'll meet. Countless people with different backgrounds and story's.
- One of the biggest surprises about going to college is how much I have changed and matured in a matter of a few months. I feel like an entirely different person from who I was before graduating high school, because living alone has allowed me to grow and become incredibly independent. I have learned so many things about myself in the short time that I have been here, and I have made many meaningful connections and memories with my peers already.
- The amount of freedom that comes with choice and how that can really define what kind of experience you end up having.
- The biggest surprise for me was walking onto the UW Women's Rowing team.
- The biggest surprise has been how different the environment is.
- The sense of independence.
- The variety of opportunities and freedoms that come with being a college student.
- The plethora of resources.
- New climate.
- There is a lot less structure and much more you need to balance with classes & homework, friends, sleep, clubs, etc.
- Everyone is struggling to transition to a new place, not just you. Do not be afraid of initiating small talk in the first few weeks of school. That is how you will make your closest friends.
- I was actually really surprised that I wasn't homesick at all when I came here. I think orientation week really helped me to get to know the campus as well as at least a few good friends who I did remain friends with for the rest of the semester. I also think that there's always so much to do that there isn't really too much time to miss home. I also think that clubs and extracurriculars have been really helpful for making friends.
- The myriad of opportunities to work with professionals around campus.
- The biggest surprise was how comfortable I immediately felt with everyone.

- The amount of friends you can make and just how many professional connections there are.
- Your professors are your best friends—get to know them outside of the class and maintain communication with those who have greatly impacted your academic experiences. You never know when it'll come in handy in the future and they are eager to share their experiences with you!
- College is very similar to Punahou and sometimes some of the classes are easier than ones that you've taken in high school.
- How welcoming and friendly people are and how there are a lot of other students who are in the same shoes as you.
- How much I am able to learn from casual conversations with classmates.
- The amount of opportunity.
- How much there is to do! I came into college planning to attend classes and make a few friends. When I got here, though, I met so many people and joined so many clubs/organizations that I am now busier than I ever was (in a good way).
- How many people you meet just casually. You meet so many people that you pretty much never see outside of class.

What was the most important item you brought to college that represents Hawai'i/home and why?

- The Bus Shirt. My friends and I all have one and we go around in a squad wearing it. So bringing it to college keeps a connection to them every time I wear it.
- Music because it reminds me of home and Holoku.
- My film pictures from the summer because they're of all my hometown friends!
- My art prints of Diamond Head and the Koolaus from Lauren Roth.
- A spam slicer because I have used it to introduce my mainland friends to spam musubi.
- A speaker to play the fat playlist of Hawaiian music I have
- I still carry around my hydroflask which I got as a sophomore at Punahou. I carry it around all of high school, and I still take it everywhere. It has a ton of stickers from my different experiences. In particular, I have my Punahou Carnival 2021 sticker from when I was one of the Food Division heads, and I have my Punahou alumni sticker that I got around when I graduated. I also have stickers that I got with my friends at Ala Moana and APB skate shop, and I have stickers from Bean About Town, which is my favorite coffee shop on the island. I drink a lot of water, so it is very important, and more seriously it is a reminder of all my experiences over the past 4 years.
- The most important item I brought to college that represents home is my favorite snack which is the Honolulu Cookie Company shortbread cookies. I brought these to college because they remind me of the taste of Hawaii.
- The stickers on my water bottle because I get to bring them everywhere and always look at them for a nice reminder of home.
- My Punahou football hoodie was probably my most important item I brought up. I gets cold really quick in Portland so its nice to stay warm and represent the high school I came from.
- The most important item I brought to college that represents home is my Hawaiian bracelet. It was gifted to me for my 18th birthday from my parents, and it is so incredibly special to me. It reminds me of all the wonderful memories I had dancing hula (most importantly, memories of dancing in Merrie Monarch) and my journey with immersing myself in Hawaiian culture. I wear it everyday, and it's such a small, but meaningful item that reminds me of my closest family and friends.
- I brought crack seed, so funny to see mainlanders try for the first time. That or my slippers
- I brought a lot of snacks from Hawai'i to Dartmouth, but the one my friends enjoyed the most was my Li Hing Strawberry Sour Belts. I ended up having to ask my parents to send me more because they were so popular. Sharing the Li Hing Strawberry Sour Belts was an amazing experience as I felt I was also sharing an aspect of my home.
- One of the most important things I brought that represents home is my ukulele. I loved introducing it to people and playing mele (songs) that remind me of home.

- While it is not a tangible object, I have a Spotify playlist of over 80 songs titled "Homesick Kine Vibes" that I listen to whenever I feel homesick or when I want to be put in a good mood. It features songs from local artists like Kolohe Kai, Keali'i Reichel, Fia, J Boog , and more. It's something I love sharing with others when they ask about my music taste.
- My junior year carnival lanyard. It's a unique print that only I recognize so its a reminder of home and it holds all of my keys.
- I brought a customized Hawai'i license plate that my mom made for me for graduation and I have it hung up on my closet to remind myself where I come from.
- Tabasco because I put tabasco on everything
- I brought a few prints of Hawai'i like surfing drone shots and the mountains because they remind me of what's waiting for me when I get back.
- I think the most important item I brought to college would be my room decorations; specifically pictures of my life at home. I put pictures of my friends, family and my favorite spots from home on my wall above my bed. It's really simple but fills my space with reminders of the people and places that I love.
- I brought artwork created by Filipino and Hawaiian artists!
- Framed pictures of friends and family. They shaped me to who I am today and play a motivating factor in my academics.
- I brought a pictures of my friends and family to put on my wall and desk and I see them everyday which helps me to feel less homesick.
- Winter clothes. It's so cold in Berkeley!
- License plate from graduation. Not only has my name, high school, graduating class etc. but is in the form of a lei.
- Snacks/photos
- I had transferred back home after attending Delaware State University for my freshman year of college, but while I was on the mainland, I brought the Hawaiian blanket that I'd slept with since I was a child. It was a friendly reminder of home that brought comfort and peace when I was homesick.
- The most important items I bring from home are my Hawaiian jewelry items. I have my mother's and grandmother's rings, along with my own, that hold a lot of sentiment to me!
- I brought up photos from graduation parties (which I discovered is a Hawaii thing as none of my friends from the continent had personal grad parties). It reminded me of all the fun memories I had over our last summer and was cute decoration for my dorm.
- Graduation leis because of how memorable graduation was for me.
- My gerber multitool. My friends and I all bought the same model so every time I use it it reminds me of my friends.
- Pictures
- Crackseed store snacks
- I brought my ukulele and pictures of my friends from home. Whenever I felt homesick, I would play local songs on the ukulele and it put me in a better mindset.
- Just the pictures and Hawaii snacks I brought.
- My ukulele to continue my music hobby with a niche instrument and slippers for the convenience.
- Rice
- Pictures of my family and friends
- Although I did not bring a tangible item to remind me of home, something that makes me think of Hawaii is a local music playlist that is on my phone. I live on the beach, which reminds me of home daily, and some days, I listen to my Hawaiian music playlist to feel more at home. Certain songs elicit such beautiful memories of home, such as going to the North Shore with friends, or driving along the Waimanalo coast with the windows down. Listening to songs that I would play with my friends or hear at family gatherings makes me feel a little closer to home.
- My most important items are pictures of friends and family back home because they are always constant reminders to keep going or stay grounded.
- The most important item I brought were pictures of my friends and family. It reminds me of home, and of the people I always have to go back to and fall back on.

- My most important item is my water bottle, because I bring it everywhere and it has all my Hawaii stickers on it.
- Rice Cooker
- Coming from Hawai'i I think nearly all of us are raised with a sort of disposition to being open. Oftentimes that means being open to people and it means being open to trying new things.
- Without a doubt, the most meaningful item I brought to college that represents Hawai'i and home is a picture of my family. This photograph encapsulates the essence of my roots, culture, and the people who have shaped my identity. Whenever I feel a bit homesick or overwhelmed, looking at that picture instantly connects me to the love and support that my family provides.
- Clothes
- Snacks, I usually miss the food when i'm away and having good snacks from home helps
- I brought a whiteboard for my desk and while I was out at band, my dad left a note saying "We are so proud of you" and signed it from him and my mom. It is the most important to me because I can easily see that they are always there for me.
- Hawaii snacks like kakimochi! It was nice to have a small reminder of home and also something besides dining hall food to snack on :)
- My jesus slippers. They are functional and sentimental.
- I brought a pillow with my dog's face on it.
- Pictures of my family would definitely be number one because even though I am so far from home, seeing pictures of family makes the distance less. On top of that, definitely snacks from home as well!
- Birthday notes from my family. I miss them when I'm away and they're the reason I get to study on the east coast!
- A quilt that was made out of all my Punahou shirts and carnival fabric because it reminds me of home and all my time at Punahou.
- The most important thing I brought to college that represents home for me are pictures and cards from friends and family that I hang on my walls! They remind me of all the memories and people that are at home and makes my dorm more homey!
- A maile lei I wore on the plane from Hawai'i to Rhode Island
- Pictures with friends, family, and the beach. They remind me of home, and I can look at the pictures when I'm missing people or the weather.
- My local music is on my phone. While it seems small, it was a nice and easy way to be reminded of back home whenever I needed it.
- I think for me, it has to be food. I think that the thing I miss most from Hawaii is the food.

What is the number one piece of advice you wish someone had given you before you left for college?

- I wish someone had told me that everything will work out, even if it doesn't seem like it in the moment. I didn't get into my first, second, or even third choice college, but I couldn't be happier at the university where I ended up.
- Don't stress. Focus on living your life and enjoying classes rather than grades. If you enjoy learning the grades will come. Also don't do engineering unless you really like late nights.
- Make sure you prioritize studying, but also make time to explore.
- It's okay to sacrifice certain things for other things. In the end the energy you put out will always come back to you.
- Enjoy your last few months living at home, college will be an incredible, different experience but you'll still miss living with your family and getting to talk to them every day.
- Make friends in your classes because you can study and hang out together.
- Take advantage of opportunities to earn a master's degree simultaneously with an undergrad degree
- The best advice I have for students who haven't entered college is: be present and be kind in your relationships with others. In particular, spend as much time as you can with your friends and especially your family, and treat them well because you likely won't see them as much after this.

Life doesn't slow down ever, and it doesn't get any better in college, and especially not once you're working. It is so easy to get caught up in looking forward to or worrying about the next stage of your life, when in reality you will never be "done". I know that it is hard to have this perspective as a high school student, so I think concretely do this: spend time with people you care about, tell them how much you appreciate them, and do all of the things you can only do in Hawaii.

- The number one piece of advice I wish someone had given me before leaving for college is to not worry about making friends/social life. Everything works out once you get to college and you will eventually find your people.
- Give people a second chance.
- Have a set study plan, or get a grip on your time management
- The number one piece of advice I wish someone had given me before I left for college was to buy a laundry bag that you can carry on your shoulder or, even better, roll. The hand carry laundry baskets are so humbug!
- Everything's gonna be fine, just be yourself and don't try to reinvent yourself
- I wish someone told me to be strategic about when I do my laundry.
- Try to be open to meeting as many people as you can!
- As great as it is to be forward thinking, it is equally as important to enjoy the present. Especially with the thought of college applications, it is easy to get caught in a cycle of wondering what extracurriculars or classes are worth pursuing in order to be a standout applicant. However, you stand out far more when you talk about something you're naturally passionate about.
- Take advantage of as many opportunities your school provides as you can!
- The number one piece of advice I wish someone had given to me before I left for college was to buy detergent sheets instead of liquid detergent for laundry if you're staying in a dorm because it gets really heave lugging that thing around back and forth.
- Pack more cold weather stuff
- Don't do it by yourself. I made the mistake of trying to handle too much and trying to do it all by myself. We're at college for a reason: to meet new people and have someone to lean on. Overall just be in the moment and enjoy it! We only have 4 years after all.
- The number one piece of advice I wish someone had given me is to put yourself out there. During the first week of college, everyone is trying to make friends and even if you are the more reserved type like me, you'll be surprised (and maybe even overwhelmed) with the amount of people that are eager to talk story and make friends with you. I feel that the first few weeks really got my out of my shell because of the amount of times I just had to start talking to random people I had never met before.
- Don't be afraid to speak your mind and make change wherever you go. Also make sure to constantly check in / talk with your family because they really miss you!
- Actively practicing time management.
- I wish someone would've warned me for how hard it is to adjust to not having the same friendships and level of connections that I had back home. When I first started college, I had a really difficult time because I was so close with my friends from home and all my friendships at college felt like friendships of convenience rather than actual friendships. I felt really homesick and wanted to leave, but I stuck it out and found good people. I realized that of course the friendships weren't going to feel the same because it takes time to build those bonds.
- Don't be scared. Don't stress too much.
- Look up your professors and try to get the classes with ones with good ratings
- You won't necessarily find your friends in the first semester and that's okay... everyone reshuffles.
- Two things I have appreciated about my college experience: (1) Having seasons that are gentle! Winter isn't crazy in the South. (2) School spirit! Sports create a great sense of unity at Duke. (3) Make sure your college is easy to get to! I have an airport about a half-hour away."
- I recommend joining clubs that you're passionate about to enhance your college experience. College is a time for one to grow as an individual and adult, but I find it equally important to find balance and passion in what you do to shape one into the individual they aspires to be.
- Don't be afraid to say yes to things, you'll never know who will become your best friend and what kind of experiences you'll have if you don't say yes.

- This is a completely new learning experience and no one expects you to get it perfect or right on the first try. Just try your best to get involved but it's okay if you mess up.
- Decide what is best for you and don't decide based on what other people and friends think what is best.
- Don't be afraid to change everything if you need to. Roommates, classes, major, everything. Some things don't work out and it's important to adjust your path as needed to keep on the right track
- Don't be too hard on yourself. Have fun while also staying on top of your schoolwork.
- Live in the moment and enjoy all of the amazing opportunities. It goes by so quick.
- Give yourself grace the first year of college, especially the first semester. You are adjusting to a new geographical place, new people, a new learning environment, are away from your family, etc. Know that going through college in itself is a learning process that takes trial and error and that it's okay to feel overwhelmed or confused.
- Of course the institution's resources, programs, and measurable factors are important when choosing a college, but the most important thing that will determine how enjoyable and memorable of an experience you'll have is the community. Look for the schools that attract you in terms of the type of community they foster. Bc it's the people around you that help you get far.
- I wish someone would have told me that it was all going to turn out alright.
- **ABSOLUTELY KNOW** what classes you want to do.
- Always keep in contact with your Punahou classmates
- College shouldn't all be academics but also about the experience. Try get yourself out there and be willing to try new things.
- Something that I wish I had known before going to college is that, as cliché as it might sound, to keep an open mind in all capacities. Moving away from home and starting college in a new state was daunting and presented me with many challenges, but I have embraced those challenges, which has led to me learning more about myself, as well as having invaluable experiences. Coming into college from high school, I had a rigid schedule, and was somewhat of a perfectionist. My entire routine was turned upside down and thrown out of the window upon moving here, and I had to accept that I could not be as strict with attaining perfection in my daily life. Once I realized that, I started to enjoy everything so much more, and it has positively impacted my perspective on many things. Having an open mind to new routines, people, and experiences has opened up my world, and if I had known that ahead of time, it would have allowed me to wholeheartedly experience college even quicker.
- It's okay to feel behind in making friends or connections. Everyone has their own pace, and you'll find the right group of people over time.
- It's okay to get a little "tossed around." Going to a big school like UW has a bunch of STEM based "weed-out classes" which are designed to weed kids out that can't handle it. It means the classes are typically harder than you expect. I definitely got a bit rocked in my classes and having someone tell me that it's okay to have this happen would've been great.
- One piece of advice I wish someone told me was to talk and make lots friends.
- It's going to take some time for you to get settle in and really feel comfortable with who you are and the friends you make. Do not just settle for the first group of friends you find because it is convenient, and don't compare your college experience to those around you because everyone struggles to find their place in college.
- Take advantage of the opportunities that are afforded to you
- Don't underestimate the power of time management and self-discipline. College life can be a whirlwind of classes, social activities, and newfound independence. Having a solid plan for managing your time effectively and staying disciplined in your studies can make a world of difference. Balancing academics and social life is key, so finding a routine that works for you early on can help set a positive tone for the rest of your college experience.
- Dual enrollment
- Know the size of the school and city/area of the school before you go also see if anyone else from your year is going to the same school
- I wish someone had told me that you will run into the same people, so you should try to interact with the people in your dorm and your classes.

- Don't take it so seriously. I think Punahou really prepared me with how scheduling wasn't on a universal period system (at least pre-COVID), and the higher-level classes I took at Punahou were definitely on the same level of complexity of thinking expected in my classes.
- Make a habit of taking vitamins every day! (I got sick 3 times this semester)
- Don't be nervous. Everyone is a new student alongside you so you're all in the same boat.
- I would tell myself not to be so nervous about the transition and that things will work out naturally and smoothly.
- Don't be afraid to make new friends and put yourself out there. Freshman friend groups tend to form due to proximity in the dorms, so don't let the rush of new friend groups push you away from reaching out to new people! Get to know as many of your classmates as possible!
- Get involved with clubs and get to know people right when you get to school because everyone is looking for friends and this is the best time to form connections.
- The number one piece of advice would be to get out of your comfort zone and sign up for clubs go to student events and even if you are a bit nervous or scared. There are so many other students also feeling the same way as you who are also trying to put themselves out more and make friends so don't be afraid to meet people and get to know them!
- Don't be afraid to change what you're pursuing. Your passions will change and morph through college.
- Go with an open mind and do the things that interest you.
- Don't be afraid to try everything! So far, college has been a time for me to try different things that may have seemed intimidating or out of character in high school. I feel like I'm experiencing so much more because of this, and I am so glad that I didn't hold myself back and got out of my comfort zone.
- It's way harder to make actual friends. People aren't on campus all day, sometimes they come for one class then leave. Requires more effort on everyone's part if you want to form friendships.