

# Finding the Perfect Fit

by RV staf writer

Callie inhaled deeply and stepped out onto the promontory, committing the compact campus to memory. Gothic structures nestled against modern modular buildings, creating a visual time line of the university's history in stone and cement. Callie tried to imagine herself taking classes in ornately embellished classrooms and making new friends in her high-rise dorm, gathering a gang of fellow freshmen to shop at the farmer's market on the outskirts of campus.

"It's rather desultory, don't you think?" her mother asked rhetorically, breaking Callie's reverie with an expansive gesture to the shorn cornfields and two-lane roads surrounding the campus. It was true—the college was an oasis in the middle of cow country, family farms, and lonely little stores dotting the landscape—but Callie still bristled at the comment.

Any hopes for a contemplative ride home were vaporized before she buckled her seatbelt. "Ready to put on the old black and gold?" her dad asked, meeting her eyes in the rearview mirror with an over-exaggerated wink.

He was referring to his alma mater, the state university just a few hours from home. The sprawling campus was a scene from a movie, but the walking tour they'd taken had ended in blisters for all. Her dad had been so proud to show her his favorite haunts—the low-ceilinged engineering building, the hallowed student union, and the picturesque quadrangle featured prominently on every piece of recruitment literature. Callie had been overwhelmed by the sheer size of the campus, not to mention the hordes of co-eds clogging the sidewalks and streets between classes.

Callie's mother playfully admonished her husband with a click of her tongue and a wag of her finger. She had attended a prestigious school in the city, studying philosophy and political science with the rest of the Midwest's young intelligentsia. That family visit had been less of a tour than a slide show featuring the university's highly successful and influential graduates. It was intimidating and pretentious, and Callie's mother had beamed throughout the entire thing.

Callie recognized her parents' good intentions—they were mirror images of the whispered recommendations and unsolicited advice she'd received from relatives and acquaintances since she was fifteen. Callie did her best to separate the opinions from the facts, but now it all tumbled in her brain like clothes in the dryer, a jumbled mess of teacher-to-student ratios and entry-level earning potential.

From the back seat, Callie felt squeezed by the juxtaposition right in front of her. On one side there was the quintessential college experience from the movies, complete with homecoming parades, fraternity brothers, and a sense of school spirit as deep as the Marianas Trench. On the other side was the camaraderie of fellow intellectuals, enthusiastic late-night debates, and a voracious thirst for knowledge and truth.

Her parents' chosen schools fit their respective personalities perfectly, but they felt awkward hanging from Callie's athletic frame. Maybe, Callie surmised, finding the right college was like finding a good running shoe—the most important thing was a comfortable fit.



