

*Lauren:*

If you were to ask me as a little girl what I wanted to be when I grew up, depending on the age, I would either tell you that I wanted to be a fashion designer or an architect. I'm not quite sure where these two dreams came from. Maybe it was my intense desire to create something beautiful, or maybe it was just because I liked to draw, but for some reason I had my heart set on design. As I grew up and reached middle school, my answer to that stereotypical question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" changed. In sixth grade my mom told me about this article about the top ten riskiest jobs to have and apparently being an architect was one of them, so I decided to switch my dream from becoming the world's best architect to becoming the world's best engineer. Now to some people this might seem like I was being logical. Engineers also create things, and some engineers even work with architects. But my line of thinking was a little different. The reason why I wanted to be an engineer in sixth grade was because another big dream of mine was to go to NC State, the best school in the world. I was a State fan all my life and always planned on going there, it was just a matter of

what major I would pursue. Around the time that I was deciding what to be instead of an architect, I was also discovering the more realistic side of college, including the fact that State was a big engineering school. So in a sense I guess I was kind of logical in my decision: I wanted to go to State and one of its best majors is engineering therefore I decided to be an engineer. So from that point on my answer to that stereotypical question of what I wanted to be when I grew up was “an engineer”.

*Ann:*

Now if you were to ask me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I probably said “A Disney princess.” Now I knew what I was talking about, I didn’t want to literally BE a Disney princess, though that would be great, I wanted to work as a princess at Disney World. In fact, my dad often uses this as motivation for me to get stuff done. “Get good grades so you can grow up and work for Team Disney,” and “Keep working hard so you can one day be a part of Team Disney!” As I grew older this started to seem more and more like a fantasy — the type of answer I would give if someone asked me what my “dream job” was. And when people would ask me what I wanted to do when I grew up, my most

common answer would be “I have no idea, all I know is that I want to go to UNC Chapel Hill.”

I assume most of you know my grandparents, and in knowing them, you know what type of influence I had when it came to cheering for sports teams. I went to numerous Chapel Hill basketball games and football games, and would even dress up in a little Tarheel cheerleading outfit and run around my grandparents’ house. Even when I was at home in my “house divided,” if State and Carolina were playing, I always cheered for Chapel Hill with my mom and sisters, leaving dad alone to cheer for State. Growing up I started to consider UNC more seriously because it just felt like the perfect fit. It is an amazing school, and a good distance from home to where I could still visit whenever necessary. In visiting Chapel Hill, I also just got the feeling of it being a very home-y place where I could see myself living.

*Lauren:*

When I first started seriously thinking about college applications, I realized that I needed to consider other colleges than just NC State. I decided to keep my list small and apply to three other colleges: Georgia

Tech, Clemson, and Virginia Tech. During the actual application process, I wasn't very worried. I knew that Georgia Tech was a reach, but after touring the school and hearing more about their program, I realized that it just wasn't the school for me. My real decision was between NC State and Virginia Tech. Both were schools that I thought I would get in to, and both had similar programs. But as the school year progressed, and I waited to hear from colleges, I proceeded to get more and more nervous about decisions. My first decision came in January from Georgia Tech, and I was denied. The fact that I was denied from Georgia Tech wasn't a huge deal to me, I didn't want to go there anyway, but the denial made me really nervous about the other college decisions I was waiting for. As the decision day for State approached, I was getting more and more worried about getting in. Everyone kept reassuring me that I would get in, but it didn't stop the feeling in the back of my mind that I might not. Finally, the day of the decision rolled around, and I found out that all my worry was for nothing; I was accepted. But my stress about college decisions wasn't over yet; I was also accepted into Virginia Tech, so I had to decide between the two. I

really liked Virginia Tech. The campus is beautiful, the school spirit is amazing, and their engineering program is ranked around the same as State's, but it's also out of state, and it just isn't NC State. When deciding between the two, I honestly decided on State pretty quickly. It has everything I want program-wise, it's in-state, and I'm already a State fan. But I felt a pressure to make it seem like I was genuinely deciding between two colleges because I didn't want people to think I was choosing State just because I grew up a State fan. Eventually I started telling everyone that I decided on State and put down my deposit on the school I had dreamed about as a kid.

*Ann:*

At the beginning of this year when I was getting word back from colleges on whether or not I was accepted, I found out that I did not get into Chapel Hill. At the time, this felt like the worst thing that could have happened. The day I got the letter, I didn't do much other than lie in my bed and cry. I didn't want to be spoken to; I just wanted to be left alone. The only idea of a plan I had for myself was now completely

gone. With this news, I really had zero idea what I wanted to do with any aspect of my future.

Since I didn't get accepted into UNC, I had to tour and do research on other colleges and majors within the other universities that I had gotten accepted into. I had narrowed it down to three schools, Florida State University, the University of South Carolina, and NC State.

Touring and looking at these schools was a long, hard process where I looked at the different programs, different internship opportunities, and spent lots of hours in the car. While spending multiple hours in the car may seem like an insignificant factor, it actually played a key role in deciding where to attend school for the next four years. I loved Florida State and all it had to offer, but being eight and a half hours away from home felt further and further every time we drove it. I didn't recognize how important it was to me to stay close to Raleigh until making the decision to stay close or move away became reality.

*Lauren:*

As it turns out, I am going to the college that I dreamed about when I was young, but I'm not just going there because of my dreams as

a kid. My reasons for choosing to go to NC State may have started with being a State fan, but they became more serious as I grew older. In ninth grade I went on my first mission trip out-of-state to Alabama. To be honest, the only motivation I had for going was hanging out with my friends. I wasn't connected to the place or the work we were going to do, and I honestly wasn't very excited. However, throughout that week, I realized that I genuinely enjoy serving people; watching as we put a new roof on a house in just one week opened my eyes and helped me realize the effect I can have on others' lives. I started that week with the mindset that I would have fun hanging out with my friends and that's about it, but I finished the week with a whole new outlook on my life. When we went back to Alabama in my eleventh grade year, I went with new goals. Goals of making more conversation with the people we were helping and taking a more active role in the work we were doing. On that trip I definitely succeeded in both of my goals. I learned how to shingle a roof on my first day of work, and from there on I was ready to jump into any task. As for my other goal, I didn't have any heart-to-hearts with the homeowners, but I did have some short conversations,

and I was able to see God in various people throughout the week. By the end of this trip I decided that I wanted to use my career to help people. I know now that engineering, for me, is the way to do that. I'm not quite sure how exactly it will happen, but I do know that helping people is a part of who I am and who I want to be. Going to college visits and hearing about all the amazing ways engineering students have used what they learned in the classroom to help people, whether it's building a bridge in Haiti or making cheaper ways to filter water in India, I know that this is my calling.

*Ann:*

My favorite part of doing mission work is getting to see the pure joy on peoples' faces when they see what we are doing for them. I love to make people happy, and knowing you had such a positive impact on someone's life is the greatest feeling. Having the opportunity and privilege to go on six mission trips and serve those in need has allowed my friends and me to bring joy to numerous people and families.

I often get asked why, as a girl in my late teens, I love Disney so much. In answering this question, I normally just keep talking until told

to stop. The thing that draws me to Disney the most is how its main focus is to make everyone happy and make everyone feel like children. One of my favorite Disney World publicity lines is “The world tells you to grow up. Here you don’t have to.” And you all know that, like Peter Pan, I wish we’d never have to grow up. But unfortunately, outside of Disney Parks we have to, and having a job where I get to make people happy every single day sounds like the best kind of job to have. I can honestly not think of anything I would rather be doing.

Though it might not have been exactly the plan I had in mind, God knew the path best fit for me. In my case, God’s plan is helping me to go after my dream job, something I probably wouldn’t even have considered if I attended Chapel Hill. At State, I will be pursuing a travel and tourism major. With this major, I have the opportunity to intern at Disney World, which means I could one day ACTUALLY work as a Disney Princess!

*Lauren:*

Often, we hear “it’s all part of God’s plan” when something terrible happens, when our lives are going a completely different

direction than what we ourselves planned. However sometimes God's plan is our plan as well, sometimes our plans match up with God's; although it may not be a perfect match, sometimes what we plan for our lives is what God plans too. As it turns out, I am going to NC State next year, and I will be majoring in engineering just like I planned in sixth grade, but if I hadn't experienced those two mission trips to Alabama, who knows where I would be going now. In Proverbs 3:5 and 6, we are told to place our trust in God and He will lead us where we need to go. I turn to this verse often because it applies to so many situations. I found myself turning to it a lot during my college decision process. I knew that God had a plan for me and that I should trust in God to lead me where I am meant to go, but sometimes I just needed some reassurance. Mission trips were an important part of helping me realize that I want to use my life to help people, but trusting in God is also what led me to this realization. It's usually so hard to place my trust in God because I don't like the feeling that I'm giving up control over my life. I always struggle with the idea of God having a plan for us because if he has a plan then how do we have free will? Now I still struggle with this idea, but I am

less hesitant to say that I am putting my trust in God and letting him lead me according to his plan. Putting your trust in God and his plan doesn't mean sitting back and letting things happen and then calling it "God's plan"; it means knowing that God will lead you in the direction you're meant to go and having confidence in your decisions because they are part of God's plan. Although my path did not really deviate from my dreams as a girl of going to NC State to be an engineer, my faith and trust in God is what got me to that point, not just the dreams of a little kid.

*Ann:*

Jeremiah 29:11 "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." This verse has been one that I've looked to throughout this whole year of making important life decisions. It is comforting to know that God always has our best interests in mind and wants what is best for us.

As Lauren mentioned, when something terrible has happened, you often hear that "it's all part of God's plan," and when that plan does not

line up with yours, that statement seems terrifying. However, it is also comforting to know that there is a plan out there for you that's bigger than your own.

*Lauren:*

As it turns out, Ann and I are going to the same school, but we took very different paths to get there. So often we hear about God's plan in the most unfortunate situations, so rarely do we hear about it when things are going right. Sometimes our plans do match up with God's...

*Ann:*

...and sometimes they don't. But all of the time, it's our faith and trust in God that helps us get where God wants us to go.

Lauen Teague and Ann Childrey, graduating seniors