

In one month, our daughter Nicole will have completed her freshman year at Westmont. Nicole has always been a high achieving and hard working student. In high school she excelled in swimming and water polo. Due to her hard work, she was accepted to several colleges. Nicole came up with a list of schools she wanted to visit and we embarked on a road trip. Nicole soon decided she wanted to attend college in California.

One of the colleges Nicole wanted to visit was Westmont. Nicole liked Westmont's proven academics and emphasis on Christian values. Nicole attended "Preview Days" in November 2008. That first evening the devastating Santa Barbara "Tea Fire" erupted above the Westmont campus. Nicole was evacuated to the gym (a protected building) where she spent the night with Westmont staff, students, and prospective students, as the fire burned around them – destroying several Westmont buildings. Without going into detail about the incredible success of Westmont's Crisis Response Plan, Nicole's experience in the gym that evening cemented her decision to attend Westmont. Despite destroyed buildings and acreage, Nicole's comment to me was, "Dad, this is the college for me." After several conversations with Westmont admissions staff, Nicole made the decision to apply. Nicole is nearing the end of her freshman year. She has never been happier with her decision.

Now, a father's perspective and research: I'm clearly not the academia type of personality. I recently retired with 29 years in law enforcement – over 20 working homicide. I've taught Nicole that it's important to always have a destination in mind; however, it's the journey itself that often times defines you. The college years are transition years, a time when students not only equip themselves for a career, but a period when they formulate convictions about faith, values, and philosophy of life. While Nicole was doing her research, I was doing my own on her top college choices.

This is what I learned about Westmont. Westmont is a distinguished college and a rigorous academic institution. Westmont offers a course of study that gives students the highest level of preparation for their future. Westmont believes in educating the whole person – intellectually, of course, but also socially and spiritually. It's clear that Westmont believes the college experience should be about more than just earning a degree. They want their students to gain an understanding about the world and their place in it. Westmont emphasizes Christian values and, I believe, teaches students how to apply those values to everyday life. As Nicole is about to complete her freshman year, she has received incredible support and attention from her professors.

I talk with Nicole several times a week. The professors know her by name and are committed to providing the best of teaching in their classes. They care. Nicole's most difficult class is also her favorite. There is no doubt that these professors believe deeply that their calling in life is to invest in individual students. That's incredible. In this very short period of time, I've watched my daughter grow incredibly, both academically and spiritually. I'm very proud of her and I just can't say enough great things about Westmont. Is the journey itself what often times defines you? At Westmont it is.

Bill Cody
(Nicole '12)