



River Views

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Students Gain New Perspectives During Minimester

Each year on the cusp of winter and spring, students take two weeks to experience a different type of education, one where they can experience the world around them and learn from the new perspectives they gain.

Minimester comes at a crucial time. Winter is not quite over and spring has not quite begun. Everyone in the St. Margaret's community benefits from a change of pace and a new way of learning. Like their traditional courses, students receive course credit for Minimester courses and must complete assignments to receive full credit. Unlike their traditional courses, students have the opportunity to jump in and explore beyond the walls of a classroom.

From the students who stayed on campus to those who undertook worldly adventures, the result was the same. Students emerged from these weeks of experiential learning with a new point of view about themselves and the world they live in.

Junior Virginia Sawyer participated in the "Tale of Two Cities: London and Paris" trip. For her, the trip was an opportunity to do something she has always loved to do—travel.

"I really like to travel," she says. "It allows you to explore new things and really explore the connections everyone shares."

Beyond the initial appeal of the trip, however, Virginia also gained insight into other places and cultures.



Hannah Gibian poses with a student during her Orphanage Outreach trip to the Dominican Republic.

"This trip showed me that no matter where we come from, in some way, we are all alike," she says."

For Virginia, this is just an extension of the diversity she sees on campus every day.

"It's something that we get at St. Margaret's because we are all so different," she says. "We all want to have an open mind. Travel allows you to test whether or not you actually do have an open mind."

Through their Independent Study Projects, or ISPs, seniors use Minimester as a time to further explore subject matter that they may want to pursue in college or as a career.

For Senior Annie Rich, the sailing trip to the Bahamas was the perfect opportunity to explore her passion for marine biology.

"When I saw the course description, I knew that it was right up my alley," Annie says.

Students of all grade levels spent nine days aboard a 47-foot sailboat, cruising the Bahamas and learning about marine life, sailing, navigation, meteorology and astronomy.

Because she will give a formal presentation to members of the staff and student body, Annie also conducted additional research that was not required of her other classmates. She did research on coral reefs, sharks and other sea creatures.

Though the trip did reinforce her love of marine biology, her time at sea had other, unexpected effects.

"It was amazing," she says. "I have passions that I never would have realized had I not gone on this trip."

Students who stayed on campus also had a wide variety of opportunities for exploration and transformation.

(Continued on page 2)

Captain's Corner



Spring is always the season of possibilities, and *possibilities* is a word that our girls most often use to express their appreciation for their St. Margaret's years.

Here we have the gift of knowing each girl very, very well. We know her hopes, her fears, her passions, and her challenges. Experience has also taught us to see her possibilities and encourage her in directions she may never have considered for herself. Spring is the season in which that happens most intensely in every area of her life.

We value profoundly the individuality of our girls. Their passions range from science to sports to singing. The process of discovering how to best incorporate these into their lives is a reciprocal one; they ask questions, and they are challenged to reflect on both answers and additional questions which they might never have considered.

Just listen to Isis Daniels' response to a visiting parent's question about finding a way to explore your own interests here, "If you can think of it, it can happen!" Perceptive words from a member of Soulful Voices, our student-run acapella singing founded in just that way ten years ago!

Spring is also the season when we celebrate possibilities fulfilled:

- For seniors, college choices, commencement, and the legacy each girl chooses to leave behind for the students who will follow her;
- For juniors, the official transfer of leadership and school rings to the entire class at the Lantern Ceremony, the first steps in their college search, and the selection of their senior courses best suited to make that search successful;
- For sophomores, stepping up to one of their most important and challenging high school years when they will combine ambitious course schedules with expanded leadership opportunities;
- For freshmen, the completion of their first year of high school and their exhilarating appreciation for the choices ahead of them as they select courses, advisors, activities, and roommates;
- And for our eighth graders, the joy of knowing they will no longer be the youngest girls on campus and that they now have the opportunity to build on all they've learned about themselves and their possibilities for these important high school years.

Please join us this spring to help us honor each girl's fulfillment of her own possibilities, and celebrate with us the knowledge that for each girl those possibilities are different! This is the special gift of St. Margaret's School, which is honored in both formal ceremonies and informal conversations. Thank you for your part in listening to each girl and offering her your encouragement and support.

With appreciation, *Margaret R. Broad*

Students Gain New Perspectives During Minimester (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

The "Zen and the Art of..." class participated in a variety of activities ranging from visits to Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens to learning how to decorate cupcakes to learning about the importance of water conservation.

Also spending some time on campus, the "Through the Looking Glass: Virginia Adventures" class explored the rich history of Virginia and America by taking trips to Petersburg, Stratford Hall, the Virginia Historical Society, Fredericksburg and Gettysburg.

For many juniors, "Next Steps: The College Process" gives them the guidance they need to look for colleges that are the right fit for them. In addition to a rigorous SAT prep course and writing college essays, students visited colleges and learned first hand from Director of College Guidance Sheri Gross what questions to ask and how to determine if a college is the right fit.

Junior Mia Kingg found that she will take the lessons she learned during Next Steps with her as she selects a college.

"I am glad I did it. I actually took some

"I have passions I never would have realized had I not gone on this trip."

—Annie Rich '11

colleges off my list, based on our visits," she says. "This summer, I can go to colleges and know what to look for."

While college prep was on some students' minds, other students discovered the transformative power of helping others. Through "Hammer and Nail: Service Trip in South Carolina," "Dogtown" and the "Dominican Republic: Service Trip," students had the opportunity to give back.

On their trip to South Carolina, students on the "Hammer and Nail" trip worked on building projects for the United Methodist Relief Center and Habitat for Humanity. "Dogtown" trip participants worked with abused and abandoned animals at the Best Friend's League in Utah.

Mairead Mazan participated in the trip to the Dominican Republic, where students worked with Orphanage Outreach in Jaibon teaching English.

Though the spirit of the trip was service to others, Mairead is convinced that each student walked away with a valuable lesson.

"They inspired us," she says. "We were supposed to be helping them and they ended up helping us more than we could have ever imagined."

Wherever their travels took them, no doubt each student was able to learn from the world around her.

As Mairead puts it, "You learn your possibilities. You learn what you can do."

Minimester Perspectives: In Pictures



The Through the Looking Glass: Virginia Adventures class visits Pamplin Historical Park in Petersburg as a part of their travels to important historical sites in Virginia.



The Hammer and Nail class poses in front of one of their projects.



Ivey Hauptert & Lexie Bruzgul pose with a friend at the Best Friends Animal Shelter.



Tagging along with the Bahamas Minimester trip, Senior Annie Rich explores the crystal blue waters of the Bahamas as a part of her Independent Study Project.



During their Tale of Two Cities trip to London and Paris, Suzy Farmar, Kendra Ganser, Elizabeth Tyson and Ana Megel pose in front of the Palace at Versailles.

River Views Forecast

April

- 15-17..... Closed Weekend
- 21-25..... Easter Break
- 21.....End of interim period
Easter travel after 2 p.m.
- 25.....Boarding students return
by 7:00 p.m.; athletes
by 3:00 p.m.
- 26..... Classes begin
- 29- May 1 Closed weekend

May

- 1-2..... Admission Overnight
- 7.....SATs
- 13-15.....Spring Family Weekend
- 14..... May Ball
- 21-22.....Leadership Retreat
- 27-28..... Closed weekend/
Exam review

Check the online calendar for latest school and sports events:
www.sms.org/calendar

Save the Date for Spring Family Weekend



Don't forget to make plans to attend this year's Spring Family Weekend, May 13th-15th.

For more information, go to
www.sms.org/sfw

From the first time I visited St. Margaret's I knew that it was not a typical school. What I didn't know was that my whole perspective on what a school could be would change. St. Margaret's it is not as though school is a requirement, but an adventure that kids want to have.

The first time I toured I was scared that people would look at me differently because I was new; instead, I was greeted with a barrage of hellos!

During our tour, I met our art teacher, Mr. Konstantinov, for the first time. He was so passionate about his job. He showed us all of the projects students had done and spoke briefly about the art department; this was the first time I knew I wanted to attend St. Margaret's for my junior year.

As we walked around campus I noticed book bags placed everywhere; I was shocked to find that these were students' personal things. These students trusted and expected that other students and community members would respect their personal belongings. The fact that St.

Margaret's is a place where we can trust one another played an important role in my attendance.



Everyone I met seemed so content and genuinely happy to be at St. Margaret's. Not only were these girls getting an education, they were part of a community.

When I visited classes I noticed the wonderful relationships students had with teachers. Students were not only learning, they were engaging in discussions.

At lunch, I sat with a group of students and a teacher. They shared their thoughts, engaged in conversation and peacefully shared a meal together; this was something that I had never experienced before. One of the students explained to me that the teacher we were eating with was her advisor, a faculty member who is there to provide guidance and care about your well-being and success in school.

All of these examples are how my perspective on school has changed; it does not have to be dreary and mandatory chore, but it can be enjoyed and be filled with people who have a passion to teach and learn.

Now I can honestly say I want to go to school, and no matter what issue I have, I am never scared to ask anyone for help. Our main goal is education, but along the way, we grow together and unite as a community.

Catherine Chappell is a member of the crew team, a junior and first-year boarder from Fredericksburg, Virginia.



Claire Hamilton's photo, Tappahannock Bridge, won first place in the Women's Club of Essex County Art and Poetry Competition. Her photo will move on to the next round of competition in Richmond, Virginia.



St. Margaret's School

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