

Where I Belong

Attending college is a big decision in the lives of many, and deciding where to go is equally significant. However, I consider myself blessed to say that I always knew my heart belonged at IUP Punxsutawney (Punxsy). From the moment I stepped foot into orientation, the friendly faces, positive attitudes, and welcoming environment make it clear that I chose the right campus for me. My decision to attend the regional campus at Punxsutawney benefits not only me, but those in my family and community, as I am able to participate in college experiences while living locally with the people I grew up with. Of course, many factors influenced my decision to be a Punxsy student, but the outcomes and experiences I have had here are the ones that will help to shape my future academic career and my life.

The main reason I was thrilled about starting my freshman year at the regional campus was because I already live in Punxsutawney. It is a wonderful opportunity that our little town offers such an enriching academic experience. I enjoy still being a part of my community and having the people I love surround me and support me through the first year in my educational journey. The small class sizes are enticing to me because they allow me to develop a relationship with my professors and classmates that have created a strong bond. The classroom dynamic clearly reflects the same dynamic of the town of Punxsutawney; small, accommodating, and friendly. Also, I appreciate the fact that I am able to save money while attending this campus. I am thankful that I can live at home and save on housing and food costs. Keeping my student loan debt at a minimum has always been a top priority for me, and I am grateful to save money that I can invest in my future at IUP. When I first decided to attend Punxsy, I expected my life to remain the same; the same town, the same people, and the same atmosphere. I was okay with this, but I never considered all the new perspective I would take on. My professors taught me to look at situations from a different approach, whether it be in literature, media, or just everyday life. Of course, I knew there was a world far beyond Punxsutawney, and my professors were able to give me a taste of these different ideas and cultures. Each of them offered unique insights that I never thought I would experience. These were new waves of perception in an environment where things seemed to remain the same. Also, my fellow students made my freshman year such an enjoyable time. Though I knew everyone would get along at such a small campus, I never imagined to be so connected to the students in my classes. Whenever people ask me what it's like at IUP Punxsutawney, I saw "We're one big family".

Finally, my choice affected my future plans at IUP because it was the perfect steppingstone for the rest of my college career. I feel as if I have been given a head start because I can adapt to college at my own pace. I am getting a taste of how college works without having to navigate through a busy campus, large auditorium classrooms, etc. Because of this, I can solely focus on academics and develop skills of time management that will be incredibly useful in the following years. IUP Punxsy laid the foundation, providing me with the knowledge and confidence to succeed in the future, not only college, but in my professional life, as well. All in all, I will forever cherish the time I spent at IUP Punxsutawney. This campus is situated minutes from my home, but it has provided me with an education where I have been able to think outside the boundaries of my community, where I can balance a home life and college life, where I have learned valuable skills that will benefit me in and out of the classroom, and where I met some of the friendliest, most loving people. College is so much more than becoming educated in your field; it's a place where you can establish who you are as an individual, and I have had the great pleasure of seeing everyone's individuality blossom at this campus, including my own. IUP Punxsutawney may be small, but the impact it made on my life was immense and definitely unforgettable.

Maggie Prutzal

IUP '18