

Goldiloxin' and My Search for the Best College Merch!

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Introduction

Welcome back to CHRHS! I hope everyone had a great summer and is excited about the start of a new school year. Over the summer break I had the chance to reflect upon my Goldilox sophomore year. Mr. Lammert has coined the term Goldiloxin' to explain a great way to start the college search. Essentially, Goldiloxin refers to taking a low pressure and fun approach to checking out a bunch of different universities or colleges during your 9th and 10th grade years before the pressure of thinking about future plans starts to heat up. Mr. Lammert has even created a great bingo game to help get you thinking about the school search. The bingo game allows students to check out a bunch of schools in different

locations, settings, sizes, and affiliations to get a feel for what representative schools feel and look like.

My parents are a bit nuts and ran with this concept! They have actually been forcing me to look at colleges for a few years. They pretty much find at least one or two near every vacation spot or family member we go see. And also near every field hockey or sports event throughout this state. So by now I have had the chance to check out over 30 different schools. As much as I haven't always loved seeing buildings and sometimes trees all over the east coast, I have to admit that this tactic has given me a good feel for many of the different options out there. I really started out just going along with this because I was promised I could get some great school merchandise from each place we visited. Below, I will share some of the details of my Goldilocks road trip to South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. I will give my impression about the different types of schools and of course fill you in on my search for the best college merch!

The Trip (some boring logistic stuff for parents)

I wanted to check out some schools that were a bit further away from home and get away from some of the cold Maine winter weather. My grandma had a great idea to go on a girls only road trip (my sisters and me, my mom, and my grandma) to the south over February Break of my 10th grade year. So we Goldiloxed it! We wanted to be able to fly directly from Portland, so we chose schools near Atlanta, Georgia. We decided to rent a minivan and plan to see schools in close proximity to Atlanta, and all within a few hours of one another. We chose Clemson University, Auburn University, and the University of Georgia as the places to stay because I'm most interested in bigger land grant schools, and also in having that big school football experience. We also checked out a few colleges that we could easily drive to on the route (for example, Georgia State and Emory). For our stay at each college we tried to pick a hotel right on campus or directly in town so that we could walk to campus and get a great feel for the campus and surrounding college town.

Staying true to the Goldilox philosophy, we did not schedule formal tours of any of the schools and simply took the opportunity to explore things on our own without the pressure of a more formal visit. If possible, we tried to do activities on campus or check out things in the town. We also took the opportunity to tour attractions near those areas, for example

we went to a few national parks and historic sites (like Tuskegee Airmen, Ocmulgee Mounds, and Horseshoe Bend). Of course, we also made sure we checked out the college book store at each school and the merchandise available in each college town.

Stop #1: Clemson University

The School:

Clemson University is home to the Clemson Tigers. Go Tigers! It is located in the far western part of South Carolina in the town of Clemson and is part of the Atlantic Coastal Conference (ACC). The rural campus is really beautiful and located near Lake Hartwell. Clemson is a Land Grant R1 research university with an undergraduate enrollment of about 21,000 and is current ranked at #77 in best national universities and #31 best public universities per the [US News and World Report](#).

Clemson has a first year acceptance rate of 49% and is considered competitive with respect to admission offers. Clemson University has over 80 college majors and is well known for strong engineering, business, management, marketing, agriculture, and veterinary science programs.

I loved walking around campus as the older buildings are mostly brick. At the center of campus is a huge fountain and amphitheater near the library. I thought that was the prettiest spot on campus. Memorial Stadium is right on campus as well and is known as "Death Valley" for opposing football teams. There are many activities and clubs to join and being outside all year is a big draw for students.



While at Clemson I had the chance to participate in a dance camp hosted by the Clemson Rally Cat dance team. I got to meet the coaches and current squad members. I really got the feel for the great school spirit learning the words and dance moves to Clemson's fight song known as the Tiger Rag! I also scored some free Tiger merch!

The Town:

The town of Clemson surrounds the university. It is a small downtown area with limited shops and restaurants.

The Merch:

Clemson University has tons of school spirit and I had ample opportunities to find Clemson merch at a few stores in town. I was surprised to see that there was not much in the town

other than finding gear and swag. The town is cute, but very small and wasn't super lively while we were there.

Overall experience:

I really enjoyed my time at Clemson University. Although Clemson is a bigger school, the rural location felt comfortable. The student housing and campus layout are really accessible and there are ample educational, research, and recreational activities. I did not realize that the university was so far away from the South Carolina coast but would be a great place to spend 4 years for college.

Stop #2: Auburn University

The School:

I loved Auburn! War Eagle, y'all! Auburn is located in Auburn, Alabama and is a member of the Southeastern Conference of Schools (SEC). Auburn is a few hours away from Atlanta, Georgia and is close to Montgomery, Alabama. Auburn University, home of the Auburn Tigers (yes, they are the Tigers but their chant is "War Eagle"), is also a land grant R1 research university. It is similar in size to Clemson with an undergraduate enrollment of 24,000. Auburn is ranked #97 in national universities and the #41 best public schools in the country per [US News and World Report](#). Auburn has an acceptance rate of about 78% and has a nationally ranked business school along with highly ranked programs in engineering, life sciences, and agricultural sciences.

From the minute I walked on campus I could tell Auburn students love their community. There is a ton of school pride. Auburn is focused on the student experience and it gets high acclaim as one of the [best undergraduate student experiences in the country](#) according to Niche surveys and US News and World Report. The campus is clean and beautiful. Fun fact: Auburn and Clemson had the same architect design the layout and major buildings.

My Auburn experience was enhanced by catching up with a family friend named Hope. Hope is an Auburn senior majoring in Marketing. Hope showed me and my family all around campus and shared her enthusiasm for her school. She could not say enough great

things about her time at Auburn. I learned about some of the great Auburn traditions, like decorating the tree at Toomers Corner after Auburn football home games, The Yard Milkshake Bar, and War Eagle! Below are a few pictures of the campus from our time with Hope. If you get a chance to take advantage of an informal talk or tour with a current or past student, I would definitely recommend that. It made a huge difference in my impression of the school. Enthusiasm is contagious!



Auburn has tons of student opportunities and clubs to get involved in. I was surprised to learn that housing at Auburn is limited and many students live off campus after their first year.

The Town:

Of all the college towns I have visited, Auburn was the best! The town was fun, clean, and felt safe. It had quite a few restaurants, shops, and student services. The size and scale felt comfortable and had many adorable and fun things to do. The neighboring town of Opelika is also really nice and provides other options for food and shopping.



The Merch:

Auburn had a great and well stocked student bookstore on campus. In addition there were endless shops in town to buy swag! I scored big here with a great haul of college gear (the whole family ended up with merch on this visit).

Overall impression:

Auburn University was a great place to visit and is definitely on my list to seriously consider attending. The university has great educational opportunities and the campus community is warm and welcoming. There is definitely tremendous pride and the surrounding town seems like an ideal place to spend 4 years away from home.

Stop #3: The University of Georgia

The School:

I would describe the University of Georgia as big... really big. It is spread out in an almost rectangular way, so the distance from the town end to the opposite end is quite a lengthy hike. Longer than any other I've seen. The University of Georgia is located in Athens, Georgia a few hours from Atlanta. The University of Georgia (UGA) is also a member of the SEC like Auburn and is a land grant R1 research institution. UGA has the biggest total enrollment of the schools I visited on this trip, with over 30,000 undergraduate students. The UGA is highly ranked academically being the #49th best university in the nation and the #16 public school in the country per the [US News and World Report rankings](#). Admissions are competitive with an acceptance rate of only 40%.

The University of Georgia has over 125 majors to offer students and has well known programs in Engineering, Accounting, and Computer Science. In addition, there are over 700 student run organizations to get involved in. The University of Georgia is consistently ranked in surveys indicating that it has the best student life. [According to the recent Niche survey the UGA is ranked #2 in the country for best student life.](#)

The campus is absolutely huge and is over 750 acres in size. It took us over two hours just to walk the length of the campus. The buildings are big, beautiful, and well maintained. Like Auburn, UGA has tons of traditions on campus including ringing of the campus bell, finding UGA the bulldog (the university mascot), and visiting the university gate for good luck. The student housing is plentiful and seems to be well maintained and recently updated. The student union is impressive and Sanford Stadium, home of the defending NCAA D1 football national champions, is in the center of the campus, which I hear makes game days a blast!





The Town:

As far as a college town is concerned, Athens is a much bigger place than the others. It definitely has a city feel with lots of business, restaurants, and amenities. Students seemed to congregate on campus and also in the town.

The Merch:

By far the UGA is the winner. There is a massive book store (in the center of campus by the stadium) which sells a ton of merch. There is no lack of UGA wear and we found ourselves drawn to the adorable bulldog mascot. However, the town did not have a lot of school-related stores.

Overall impression:

The UGA is a huge SEC school with endless opportunities and activities. The UGA is a great place for college athletics and the campus is vast and has some beautiful spots. I was surprised by the length and layout of this school, and I am not sure I'd love the long walks

between areas of campus and the town, but I definitely see the appeal of this highly rated university.

Lessons learned from our Southern Goldiloxin Experience

Touring a few schools during my winter break was a great experience. It was fun to hang out with my family and enjoy some warmer weather. I am grateful to Mr. Lammert for giving me the inspiration to visit schools during my Goldilocks year!

I can say that visiting schools with the idea of having a low pressure experience is really helpful. I had the chance to check out schools in different settings and really get a feel for what I liked and did not like. The visits also gave me some clarity on how I envisioned my future college experience.

I would highly recommend visiting schools early and attending a campus event such as a football game, summer camp experience, or other cultural event. I would also recommend having a current student show you around during your school visit as this can be a really great way to get the real scoop and learn things you will not get on a standard college tour.

I hope you also decide to Goldilox your year ahead. It has helped me a lot to know what type of schools to narrow my focus on and also has created some good memories I would otherwise not have had.