[00:00:00] Welcome everyone, and thanks for listening to today’s episode of the UW HELP Podcast. I’m Randy Parvin, a student services coordinator at the University of Wisconsin System in the UW HELP office. Well, today I thought it’d be real interesting to talk with a current college student about his journey around searching for the right college. My guest is Matthew Morgan, a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We’ll be talking to him a few minutes but make sure you stick around at the end of this podcast, as I’m going to make Matthew reveal some secrets about a Sheboygan tradition. Welcome, Matthew.

Matthew: [00:00:35] Thank you for having me.

Randy: [00:00:37] You bet. Well tell us, what is your major at the University of Wisconsin Madison?

Matthew: [00:00:41] I actually am going to double major. I haven’t declared the other major yet. The first one is Communication Arts, and that is a focus in Radio, TV and Film. And then the major I’m planning on declaring, the second one, is History.

Randy: [00:00:56] Oh wow, I love History. We are going to have to visit that on a different podcast. But tell me, out of curiosity, you probably have an idea of what your dream job is when you get out with that major. Now what would that be? So that, you know, we can tie that major to your job just for the folks listening.

Matthew: [00:01:14] You know, I actually do not have a dream job with the Radio/TV/Film. I think it would be really cool, definitely behind the scenes, whether it’s being a cameraman for a film, or editing a TV show. Those are some of the things that interest me. But a specific one I haven’t found that out yet.

Randy: [00:01:32] Alright but that gives me a general idea of what you mean by Communication Arts, because I wasn’t sure. So maybe like Jeremy here whose recording this. You could be an audio recording engineer.

Matthew: [00:01:42] Yes, that could be cool. If I could be that official that would be great.

Randy: [00:01:46] We must say Jeremy is our behind the scenes audio recorder who never talks. Alright, well, I know you're from Sheboygan. What high school did you attend in Sheboygan and tell me some of the activities you were involved in there.

Matthew: [00:02:00] I went to Sheboygan South High School. During my time in high school I participated in Cross Country, Tennis, Forensics, regular Marching Band, Jazz Band and Drumline.

Randy: [00:02:14] Wow, that's a lot. Now, my daughter is a swimmer, and she always says that the only people who work harder or just as hard are the Cross Country runners. Do you think that's true that you work really hard?

Matthew: [00:02:27] Yeah, I would like to think that we worked very hard. It's definitely not for everyone. I can understand, you know, after running the multitude of miles, after a while you would just be like "I'm done, like I get it running is cool." But it was a nice activity because it really helped me get more comfortable with working out.

Randy: [00:02:45] Okay. Now one of the things that's really important for high school students is to make sure they're well prepared coming out of high school. What were some of the tougher classes you took at Sheboygan?

Matthew: [00:02:58] I would say the two toughest classes, or maybe the two classes that best helped me prepare for after high school was AP US History and Broadcasting. Broadcasting was offered as a special course through UW-Sheboygan. Because it was offered through UW-Sheboygan, it transferred over to UW-Madison as an elective. And then with AP US History, and I feel like this with a lot of AP classes, because they're a little more rigorous, they can help high school students kind of prepare for what entry level college courses may be like in terms of class work, and the work you have to put in to get a good grade.

Randy: [00:03:46] At the end of the year, did you take the test to see if you could score a 3, 4 or 5? You don't have to reveal if you don't want to. But did you score a 3, 4 or 5?

Matthew: [00:03:54] Yeah, I did score in the higher levels. I remember the week leading up to the test there was a lot of stress. But the studying paid off so I'm very thankful.

Randy: [00:04:06] So I should make sure I'm clear, and that everyone understands me and that you understand. In the University of Wisconsin System, if you take a high school AP course, and score a 3, 4 or 5, you're going to get college credit. And you were successful in doing that.

Matthew: [00:04:20] Yes, yes. I was lucky enough to do that.

Randy: [00:04:24] Well good for you! You know not everybody thinks about going to college. I know I didn't when I was in high school. When did you first start thinking about that you wanted to go to college, something beyond high school? How did that work for you?

Matthew: [00:04:42] It was junior year, second semester towards the end of the year. That's when a solidified plan started forming in my head. Up until then, I always had a rough idea. But it wasn't until the end of junior year that I sat down and tried thinking about what I could do following high school.

Randy: [00:05:01] What was your initial plan that you had in your head? We know you finished at Madison.

Matthew: [00:05:08] My initial plan was going to be studying film at UW-Milwaukee. I knew that the entertainment business was something I wanted to pursue. And Milwaukee, to my knowledge, still is the only campus with an undergraduate focus on film. It was close enough to home and it was something that I was interested in studying. So that is where I made the decision, or at least thought I had made the decision that I wanted to go to Milwaukee.

Randy: [00:05:38] So in this initial phase when you're looking at colleges, did you look at other colleges or universities?

Matthew: [00:05:43] No. For that initial phase the only college I really thought about was Milwaukee. Because I knew, and I know I'm saying this again, but it was the only school that offered specific film studies.

Randy: [00:05:57] Did you tour Milwaukee? Because I always encourage students to take a tour.

Matthew: [00:06:02] Yes, and I definitely agree. I did take a tour at UW-Milwaukee, and I learned a little bit about their program and the campus. And because of that tour I realized that Milwaukee and that plan I had wasn't the right fit for me. I was really glad I took that tour. Because had I not taken that tour, and just assumed that I would have liked film at Milwaukee, I would have been on a completely different path.

Randy: [00:06:27] How do you set up a tour? For those who don't know how to set that up at a college campus.

Matthew: [00:06:33] I believe the easiest, or most general way you do it, is if you search, let's say you want to go to UW-Platteville. If you search in an Internet browser, "UW-Platteville Campus Tours," it will take you to the website. And then if you search around on the website, that's where you will see what days they are offered. You can also call the admissions office and they will tell you "we are offering tours this day."

Randy: [00:07:01] So it's real easy to set up. I think what we would both emphasize that it might be a little unnerving to do if you are a high school junior or senior to set it up yourself. But, it's real easy. So, in that tour you did, you did a walking tour and then a little bit about the major and Milwaukee. We should say that Milwaukee is a great place for some people. But you decided it might not be the place for you. What did you next?

Matthew: [00:07:30] I went home, and kind pounded my head against the wall. That was the only the plan I had, so I wasn't sure what was going to happen. I kind of debated back and fourth if I should apply to colleges or not. After talking with my parents and my counselor, I realized that there were still options for me to go to college. So I applied to a few. I applied to Platteville, Oshkosh, Green Bay and Madison. And then after receiving admission decisions, I couldn't really come to a full conclusion. So the plan was to study at UW-Sheboygan.

Randy: [00:08:11] Why were you thinking the plan was to study at UW-Sheboygan? What advantage was there studying at Sheboygan?

Matthew: [00:08:19] There were a few. With the two year colleges, they're really nice for saving money. They do have lower tuition than the four year schools, and that comes with not only tuition but getting to live at home. And not having to pay for housing. Also, with going to a two-year college, I thought I could still take classes, still get some credits, and then take some more time to figure out which campus may be the best fit.

Randy: [00:08:47] That seems like a very reasonable plan under your circumstances or anyone's circumstances. So, that plan didn't work out. Tell us what happens next.

Matthew: [00:09:02] So that was the plan for UW-Sheboygan, and I made this plan before getting accepted to Madison. For UW-Madison, you can apply by November 1st, and if you apply by November 1st, you get an early admissions decision by the end of January. So I did apply before November 1st, and the admissions decision I got at the end of January was being put on the wait list. So because I wasn't confirmed for getting into Madison, that's where the plan for UW-Sheboygan came in. But then, I'd say about, like three days before spring break started senior year, I got the notification from Madison that I was accepted into the school. So, when I first found out I cheered. I think I found out at home. And I was like, "this is awesome!" And then I took a couple days before I actually accepted the admission offer. And I talked with my parents and I talked with a few friends. And based on that and kind of what I've been told growing up, I thought that Madison would be a cool place to go to. So I accepted the admissions offer.

Randy: [00:10:10] Did you ever tour UW-Madison?

Matthew: [00:10:12] No I did not. I had been to the campus one time when I was in 7th grade. My sister's friend went to school at that time, so I went to campus then. But I had a lot of friends, older than me in high school, and two of my cousins who also went to the University of Wisconsin. So they always told me, "it's a great school. You will love it if you go there." So I based my decision more off that than doing the practical thing of taking a tour.

Randy: [00:10:43] But it sounds like it's worked out here

Matthew: [00:10:47] Eventually it worked out. The first couple months it was a little difficult to adjust. Because I hadn't taken the tour or taken the full time to learn campus, I wasn't as used to a bigger city atmosphere. And I know Madison's not the biggest city. But it was bigger than what I was used to growing up. So that was a little tough for me to adjust. Thankfully it ended up working out.

Randy: [00:11:10] Just a bigger city atmosphere in terms of, the size of the campus, or the number of people, or all of the above?

Matthew: [00:11:17] I would say all of the above. The way I viewed it my first couple months here was Madison is a big campus, but it still could feel congested at times, especially downtown. And with the congestion, the amount of people was huge. It was something I had never experienced up until that point.

Randy: [00:11:38] I came from a real small community too, and I remember going to a big college campus, a big 10 campus. And I was one of the few people who turned around when I saw or heard a siren. I'd be like the only guy looking around. And then suddenly you don't anymore. Anyway, so that's a really interesting story on how you got here to Madison and the college. So what suggestions do you have for juniors who are just starting their college search process this fall or spring?

Matthew: [00:12:10] I would say the biggest thing is taking their time. And giving yourself enough time, whether it's on the weekend or maybe a weekday where you don't have extracurriculars or as much homework. Take a decent amount of time and just go through all the schools. Think about what you might want to study, think about how far away you would want to be from home, think about what you might want to get involved with extracurriculars while at school. I would say there's no need to rush necessarily. It's better to take your time and make a well-rounded, informed decision about what school you think might be the best fit.

Randy: [00:12:48] And I'm betting you would encourage them to tour?

Matthew: [00:12:50] Yes. I would highly stress that touring is a very, very useful thing to do! Because it can give you a real good sense of the atmosphere of campus, and how busy or quiet it is. And whether you can see yourself going to school there for the full four years.

Randy: [00:13:07] Kind of get that feel or that vibe, whatever the vibe is. And whether you connect to it. I love that advice. So, last time I had Mary Vilmo, and you know Mary Vilmo, she was the director. And she gave some advice for parents. So coming from a guy who’s only a couple years away from this college search process, what advice would you give parents of high school juniors who are going through that college search process?

Matthew: [00:13:36] I would say nothing out of the ordinary. I can't really speak because I'm not a parent. But I can imagine a child coming back and being like, "I'm so stressed. This is stressing me out, and I just can't and don't know what to do." I think the best thing for a parent to do would be what they probably always have to do. Which is be to be a calmer for their kids. And just say, "It'll work out and be okay." And if the kid seems frustrated, it's not at them. It's just that they probably feel a lot of pressure to make sure they're making the right choices and doing the right thing. So, the parents shouldn't take it personally if their kids feel stressed, or get a little snappy. Because I'm almost positive it would have nothing to do with parenting skills. More that the kid is feeling a lot of stress.

Randy: [00:14:27] I like that advice. That's good, solid advice. Well, let me get to the real reason I brought you in here. It is a question I have been dying to ask. I was in Sheboygan last spring and saw some signs that said "Sheboygan style brats." What does that mean? I never went into these restaurants. What does that mean? You are from Sheboygan.

Matthew: [00:14:52] I am from Sheboygan. So a Sheboygan style brat, after some intensive research, and checking in with some hometown sources...

Randy: [00:14:59] Secret sources? You're probably not willing to share those are you?

Matthew: [00:15:03] Just hometown friends. A Sheboygan style brat is a brat. But instead of putting it on a hot dog bun or a regular hamburger bun, you put it on a hard roll. And for those who may not know what a hard roll is, it is pretty much like a hamburger bun but it is more grainy. So it adds a little bit of extra goodness for the taste.

Randy: [00:15:26] So do you have an opinion, or does Sheboygan have an opinion, on ketchup or mustard?

Matthew: [00:15:32] I'm guessing ketchup. Not that mustard is disqualified from using on the brats. But in my experience I feel like I've seen more ketchup around than mustard.

Randy: [00:15:44] One final important question: do you suggest anybody out there who is going to make brats this weekend-should they...you know my mom likes to par boil them in a little water, and then grill them. I like to grill them, and just nice and slow. What's your opinion?

Matthew: [00:16:00] I would say just straight grilling and not putting them in water. That is how my dad has done it ever since I was a little kid.

Randy: [00:16:06] And he's from Sheboygan?

Matthew: [00:16:07] Yes. Grew up in Sheboygan his whole life. That is what I'm basing my answer on. I'm just envisioning him, and I can't ever see him using water first.

Randy: [00:16:19] Yeah that's what I think about my mom. But she didn't grow up in Wisconsin. So we'll give her a chance. Matthew, is there anything finally you want to tell people about the college search process, or anyone out there listening like a school counselor or a parent? Anything else you want to add after we got done with this important topic of bratwurst?

Matthew: [00:16:38] I would say if you feel frustrated, and whether that's the counselor trying to help a student, a parent trying to help a student, a student trying to figure it out, it can be a frustrating process for any or all of the individuals. But if you take the time and just really try and focus on what would be the best fit for you, and you allow yourself enough time to go through and make a decision, it will work out. And that's for everyone.

Randy: [00:17:04] Yeah and I agree. We both work in an office where there's a lot of support out there for students and parents. Students or parents who are struggling with this process can call Matthew or myself, I’m Randy, at 800-442-6459. And you can also text us, so that's kind of nice. I love your advice, Matthew. Thanks for joining me and doing this podcast from this perspective that you have, which is a unique perspective. A unique journey that you have.

So that wraps up another episode of the UW HELP podcast. If you have suggestions for future podcasts, email us at uwhelp@uwex.edu. Until next time, this is UW HELP, your guide to the college process.