

*Jay Ewing is a first-year student from Rogers, Arkansas. While he's thinking about a major in physics or chemistry, he's enjoyed Reed's Humanities course and hopes to take more literature classes. Jay is particularly interested in the outdoors, including mountaineering and kayaking, although he also likes to spend time in the weight room and working on his truck.*

“Right now I’m looking down the barrel at a pretty tough schedule, because I want to take a lot of chemistry courses and I plan to major in physics. I had a marginal physics class in high school, so for the first semester here, I was pretty stumped. My high school had a lot of vocational education classes. I took welding and small gas-engine repair and had a great time. I was pretty excited when I found out there was a physics shop here. Now I think of everything in terms of physics—welding and small engines, even paddling a kayak, which I love to do. The turbulence of the water, the movement and torque on bolts, it’s all kind of related to physics.

“I visited Reed during the summer. It was interesting, because of all the schools I considered, it was the only one that wasn’t begging me to come. The counselors were very intense, and they let it be known that this is a tough place; you can get a lot out of it, but you’re going to have to work really hard. I’ve been trying not to be surprised since I’ve come here. People are different from what I’m used to, but I just say I’m going to take it as it comes, and that’s pretty much been the way it is.

“Sometimes in the past, I’ve been headstrong about my ideas. In high school, I was the class valedictorian but—this sounds bad—nobody would argue with me. Discussions just kind of dead-ended. Here everybody is willing to express opinions. People are—brilliant is kind of overkill, maybe—but they’re not just smart, they have kind of an extra gleam. They all have a little twist that makes it so much easier to get into good discussions and arguments. You’ve got to be ready to defend what you say, and I like that a whole lot. It really is nice to be challenged.

“I’ve gotten real close to the people in my dorm, and that makes a big difference. On weekends we might go to the Reed ski cabin or to the movies or out to dinner—Saigon Kitchen and Chang’s Mongolian Grill are my favorites.

Even the food in the Commons is great. I love it. I went home over break and my mom couldn’t feed me enough, but I had to tell her there was no way she could compete with six entrees, the grill, the salad bar. Except I will say, I could use some biscuits and gravy.

“I spend a lot of time in the weight room. It’s not ever crowded. I mean, this is not a weight-lifting campus. I just got a new plan instituted, where I’m trying to work out three hours a day, three times a week, because I want to get in shape for mountain climbing. In fact, I’m real fired up about that. One of my professors noticed I wear an altimeter, and we got to talking and decided to go up Mount Hood. We went up at night under a full moon and a clear sky. It was fairly cold and took us awhile, but it was worth it when we got to the top. You could see forever in every direction. I guess some people think of me as a jock. I spent 30 days last summer in the Chugach Mountains of Alaska, ski touring on glaciers for about 130 miles. I paddle a kayak in Class 3 or 4 white water. There’s plenty of that out here; within an hour of Portland I could paddle a month without ever repeating. I’ve been kind of toying with the idea of playing on the rugby team, but every time it comes up, I decide to wait another semester.

“Reed is a place for self-starters. Nobody’s going to force you to do anything. Everybody I’ve talked to thinks, ‘I’m never going to be able to get through this, I can’t imagine four years; it has to get easier.’ My first semester I studied all the time, probably six or eight hours a day. But that was mostly because I was inefficient. I’ve got it more under control, now. I can’t say it gets easier. You just get better at handling it. I go through these little notepads by the droves. I make lists all the time. I have one right now. It’s got this interview meeting on it.



"A guy in my dorm just got a letter from the California Institute of Technology, inviting him to come to graduate school there—actually *inviting* him. That would just make my day, if after Reed I got invited to go to such a good school. But I'm not looking that far ahead yet. Next year is my main concern."