



Left: Meredith Chenault '05 doodles ring designs on her fingers. Due to her husband's rugged lifestyle, the couple plans to get ring tattoos. Above: Warren Claflin '05 looks on as his fiancée Anne Hagerty '05 prepares dinner. "It was never a formal thing," said Claflin of their engagement. "It was more just decided."

# The odd couples

by Sophie Nye

Marriage is probably a scary word for the average Grinnellian. Popular Grinnell mythology says the culture on campus is polarized. Many students' primary romantic interactions are within the context of "hooking up." On the other end, there are those people who are in serious relationships, and who usually stay in them for an extended length of time. Even among these people, though, marriages and engagements are few and far between. Still, as the students below indicate, they are not impossible to find.

## Meredith Chenault

As Meredith Chenault '05 sat down a couple of weeks ago, her hands were covered in doodles. Sinuous, swirling black ink motifs flowed over the back of her hands to ring the base of almost every single finger. The patterns on each digit were different, experiments in design. Her hands were particularly noticeable as she emphatically tapped her fingers on the table, as though the Morse code was helping her remember the story of how she got married in Las Vegas over fall break.

The marriage wasn't planned. In fact, Chenault and her boyfriend only decided to enter into a monogamous relationship a couple of weeks before fall break. When Dollar visited him in Utah over fall break, their decision to marry was impromptu.

"Earlier in the week we had been discussing different things we might go and do," Chenault said. "He made a flippant comment about 'Well, we could just run off to Vegas and get married.'"

It remained a running joke throughout the trip until Chenault and her boyfriend found themselves driving down a highway in Utah and nearing an exit to Nevada. Her boyfriend mentioned that Vegas was down that exit, recalling the idea that they get married. "We spent about a half-hour making fun of it," Chenault said. "After about a half-hour we said, 'Okay, let's be serious about this really ridiculously horrible, obviously inappropriate idea.'" So Chenault, née Dollar, assumed her last name by marrying Dave Chenault '03.

Chenault and her husband seem to have taken a very pragmatic approach to their spontaneous elopement. "We talked about some of our major concerns and discussed the idea that if we do this, nothing changes for us in the short-term," she said. "If we do things to be together in the short-term, they're going to have a negative effect on the long-term. So we came to the conclusion that as long as we both go into this with the same ideas about what it's going to be like and knowing that we need to think about the long term and not our immediate desire to be together, then it will turn out well."

Thus, while Chenault will continue to finish her degree in theater at Grinnell, Dave will remain at his job in Utah. After graduation, Chenault plans to get a job in theatre, and follow wherever that may take her, even if it is not near Dave.

"We're pretty much resigned to not really being in close proximity for the next three years or so," Chenault said. "It would be wonderful if it did work out that way, but there are so many question marks in the equation right now that it's really hard to plan."

Looking back, Chenault seemed amused at the reactions she got from

her shocked family and friends. Her mother took some convincing. "I just started going through all the practical things I needed to know, which I think, first off showed her that we had thought about some of the implications," Chenault said. "I reassured her about eighteen times that I was not in fact, pregnant, and I was in fact going to finish college." Chenault's sister, who has a two-year-old, suspected the same thing. "She reassured me that she had plenty of baby clothes to give me," Chenault said, adding, "which was very nice—the thought."

"We didn't do rings," she said, holding her thoroughly-inked hand up in front of her eyes and examining the doodles. Dave has a rugged lifestyle and can't wear a ring, she explained. "When he comes back in December, we're probably going to run out and get some coordinating tattoos. So I have a legitimate excuse now for designing my marital tattoo!"

## Anne Hagerty and Warren Claflin

Compared to Chenault, Anne Hagerty and Warren Claflin, both '05, have a relationship that's progressed so slowly and naturally that they can't even tell when exactly they started dating or even became engaged. Sitting across the table from each other at Saint's Rest, where Claflin works, they seemed very much in tune, more like a couple who has been married for forty years rather than one that's only been engaged for a year and a half.

"I can't tell you when we started dating," Claflin said.

Hagerty nodded in agreement. "The closest we could get to a date for anything is the day we met, because that at least is set."

Hagerty and Claflin met on their first day at Grinnell. "He saw me move in with a horse trailer—who brings so much stuff that they have to have a horse trailer to move it in?!" Hagerty exclaimed. "We just ended up in the same circle of friends. Then he asked me out to the Dari Barn one night . . . we were friends at the time and ended up figuring we were dating at some point in there."

Engagement happened during a conversation about their futures after college in June of 2002.

"We engaged ourselves, talking about what we wanted to do," Hagerty said. "Both of us kept talking about the other one being there."

"It was never a formal thing," Claflin added, "It was more just decided."

"I actually expected, coming to college, to have to do the hooking up and the partying. I just didn't want to do it," Hagerty said, adding, "It's sort of a relief."

## Electra Allen-Tonar

Electra Allen-Tonar '06 met her fiancé Roy Huggins '99 on the Reed College campus in Portland, Ore. Huggins was a founder of the Dagohir club on Grinnell's campus and after graduating, he continued playing it in Portland, where he took up residence. Allen-Tonar met him while walking across Reed College's campus where he was playing Dag with a group of people. He convinced her to try Dag.

"I got to know him by making my own weapons. We just started

talking over the foam sculpting," Allen-Tonar said.

It was Huggins and his friends who convinced Allen-Tonar to apply to Grinnell. "I discovered that it wasn't so much the academic program that I wanted, it was more the people that were at the college that I wanted," she said.

When Allen-Tonar left Portland to attend Grinnell, she and Huggins created an open relationship because of the interesting people she was expecting to meet. "Grinnell is a place where it's not just random hooking up in bars," Allen-Tonar said. "There are really interesting people [with whom] there would be a really big motivation for not just hooking up." She and Huggins agreed that they would give each other priority over other people.

However, priority seemed to be too vague a term for them. "We weren't sure how to work out the whole, 'how do you get priority and stuff,'" Allen-Tonar said. So when Huggins visited at last spring's Dag field day, he took her out to dinner and they talked about it. Allen-Tonar said she jokingly commented, "Well, if we were engaged, that would sure make it clear who has priority."

Huggins raised the stakes and did ask her to marry him. Allen-Tonar agreed.

As far as trying to fit into Grinnell's cultural life, Allen-Tonar emphasized her communication with Huggins. "I think a lot of it is solved by the fact that we did sit down and talk about what would be acceptable," Allen-Tonar said, "We just made simple rules about when the other person's not here, this is acceptable, because it's got to be an inevitability that something might happen."

"I got engaged to Roy because I really care about him," Allen-Tonar said. "I wouldn't have gotten engaged to him if I didn't think I could be fascinated by him for the rest of my life."

## Impressions

Although married and engaged people on campus don't find that their social life is all that much different from those of other students, they do find that people react differently to them.

"People don't expect me to want to go and hang out and have good time," Chenault lamented. "I'm not going to sit in my room and stare at a photo of Dave all night mourning the fact that I'm not with him."

"The sort of people who aren't familiar with [my] relationship, [and who] aren't comfortable with it, are like, 'So . . . how do you react to a married woman?'" Chenault continued. "I feel like there's a bit of a change in acquaintances . . . the sort of person you'd potentially hook up with."

On the other hand, Hagerty found it a relief to have an excuse to stay home. "I think it's a lot less stressful," she said of being in a steady, permanent relationship. "You don't have to try so hard."

Allen-Tonar had some advice for her fellow affianced students. "If one was going to be married or engaged in this environment, I would say, make absolutely sure it's the thing that you want," she said. "The relationship itself is the important part and I think anything less than that would be subject to Grinnell's culture doing weird things to it or breaking it up."



## A day in the life



### Rohan Mandelia '05

**9:40 a.m.** Wake up to rude beeps of alarm clock. Blindly hit snooze button, knocking several things off bedside table in the process.

**9:55 a.m.** Really wake up this time.

**10:05 a.m.** Reach class five minutes late, finding comfort in the fact that in the larger

scheme of things, it doesn't really matter.

**10:55 a.m.** Hurriedly complete Calculus homework, just in time for the *Cosby* Show.

**12:00 p.m.** *Cosby* Show and frozen pizza for lunch.

**1:00 p.m.** Check e-mail to discover that wire transfer from India is "lost somewhere."

**1:15 p.m.** Go to voice lesson and struggle with pronouncing umlauts.

**2:00 p.m.** Make appointment with CDO for "five weeks from today."

**2:15 p.m.** Go to Calculus class and hope that in the larger scheme of things mathematics is helpful.

**4:15 p.m.** Finish with classes; seriously reconsider "larger scheme of things" theory.

**4:30 p.m.** Meet with advisor and, for some reason, pre-register for more math.

**5:30 p.m.** Scrape together dinner from leftovers and more frozen things.

**6:30 p.m.** Play "Grand Theft Auto" on computer and derive sick pleasure from stealing and killing.

**7:30 p.m.** Go to Joint Board and struggle to put computer game thoughts out of head.

**9:00 p.m.** Meet with Econ. Stats partner to start seven-page paper—due tomorrow, of course.

**12:00 a.m.** Give up on paper and do other homework.

**1:00 a.m.** Set alarm for 9:40 a.m. and get into bed, mulling over the day's events.

**2:00 a.m.** Finally slip into narcoleptic oblivion.

—Jess Ward

# Getting a head start

Grinnell High School offers their students the chance to take college classes free of charge. Though high schoolers enjoy the challenge of college, scheduling logistics can be tricky.

by Chistena McIntrye

They're in your classes and you don't even know it. A number of local high school students take advantage of the opportunity to take college classes. Many of the students' parents are affiliated with the college and thus find classes at the college rather convenient. But the convenience makes the classes no less difficult.

"I wanted a new challenge out side of the high school," said Peter Sullivan, currently in a computer science class.

"Classes here are infinitely more rewarding," added Woody Schneider, a student in Calculus II.

High school students must apply to enroll in college classes. This process helps the college to evaluate the likelihood of a student's academic success here. "The college draws students who are good, or think they are," Schneider said.

"It's mostly the top percentage of students," said Adam Coster, a classmate of Schneider's in Calculus II.

Once accepted, though, students are encouraged to take advantage of the college classes. "Our high school said that it was a free opportunity," said Laura Gross, who's in Aural Skills I and Harmony. "And with Grinnell being such an expensive institution it's hard to pass up."

There are some difficulties that are associated with taking college classes. Corresponding the class schedules at the two schools is a common one. The college's semester system differs from the high school's trimester system, which sometimes makes it difficult for high schoolers to take classes here. "I was able to do it," said Sullivan, "but it did take some shuffling around of other classes and stuff like that."

10. Give blood. They have free cookies!

9. Compete in S.I. Basketball.

8. Learn how to really appreciate the Pub: go some day other than Wednesday.

7. Keep a plant alive in your room for more than a semester.

6. Read the S&B every week. Cover to cover.

5. Go see Grinnell Singers, YGB, Student Recitals, Dance Troupe, One Acts, Grinnell

Orchestra, Band, Percussion Ensemble and student art exhibits. There are some talented people walking around out there.

4. Live off campus—it does wonders.

3. Experience a wind advisory.

2. Get a Davis Buddy, or be a Grinnell Mentor. Meet the kids who grow up here.

1. Return all your library books. They won't give you your diploma otherwise.

—Jess Ward

"[Royce Wolf] can explain things so much better than my high school teachers."

—Laura Gross, high school student

To add to the confusion, the high school's classes run over an hour, while the college's range from 50 minutes to three hours. The difference in the starting and ending times of classes can also complicate a high schooler's ability to take college classes. "This is the first time schedule-wise it's worked out," said Calculus I student Erica Reaves.

Scheduled class times aren't the only timing issues high school students face. "All the professors I've had this year are first-year professors," said Gross. "They're not used to having [high school students] in their classes. Sometimes they expect impossible things [in terms of scheduling]." Arranging meeting times with professors can be challenging due to a full course load at the high school.

"Mid-terms were hard," Gross continued. "I had to come in at a special time because I had a class at the original time."

But not everything is difficult with the professors here. "[Royce Wolf] can explain things so much better than my high school teachers," said Reaves. "It's the only class I've had at the college level, but compared to my high school classes I like it a lot."

Most of the students aren't seriously considering attending Grinnell, including Gross. "I'll apply to Grinnell," she said, "but I won't go to

Grinnell."

Gross is looking for a school that's similar to Grinnell, however. "I want a small liberal arts college that's diverse like Grinnell," she said. "But since I'm interested in music, I'm going to look for a really strong music program."

But Grinnell College has drawn at least one application from the high schoolers here: Reaves is planning on applying early decision next week.

