

## My Belmont Why

The college search is *quite* intimidating! I am the youngest sibling, so I started going on college tours in middle school, and yet, when it was my turn to start applying, I still had **no idea** where I was supposed to be, or what I was to pursue. I grew up on Hannah Montana, so obviously, my dream job was to be a pop star. However, if any adult asked, I would smile politely and tell them the very mature and adult answer of psychology. I applied to 13 colleges, desperately hoping that if I put myself out there in enough places, one would stick.

Then, one day, my parents did a half-marathon (crazy, right?) in **Nashville**, Tennessee. They came home beaming about the **gorgeous** school they ran past called **Belmont University**. “You just *have* to check it out, Shannon,” they insisted. So, one weekend, I came with my mom to tour the campus, and do an overnight stay with a current student. After just an hour on the campus, having just completed the tour, I sat down in the admissions lobby and cried. (*Quite* embarrassing to admit, and quite ironic that this is where my office is now.) I grew up in sunny Florida and planned to stay there, however, having just been on the greatest tour of my life, I cried knowing that I would have to say goodbye to the sunshine state, as **I had just found my home for the next four years.**

During my overnight stay, the current student I was paired with asked me, “how’s your heart?” At the time it felt like the most peculiar question, but then she elaborated. Saying, “I just want to make sure that you feel **seen, known, and at home** here.” The next day as I sat in on two of her classes, went to a Greek sing practice, and saw an A Capella rehearsal, it became quite evident that she was not the anomaly, but the standard for the kind of people you will find at Belmont. I had never experienced the kind of **community** that I had felt there in just 24 hours. The faculty *and* students embraced me and encouraged me to pursue my passion for music. I was accepted into the Commercial Voice program and made the executive decision that **I was being called to Belmont.**

My next four years I grew not just as a student, or a musician, but as a person. I worked for University Ministries as a worship leader all four years of undergrad, had a leadership role in my sorority, was a towering traditions leader for incoming first-year students, went to RUF, was a Bruin Recruiter, and a tour guide. Some could argue that my biggest college accomplishment was winning intramural basketball spring of senior year, having never played before, (others would say that only happened because the opposing team did not show, regardless I have the winner’s T-shirt). Some semesters at Belmont were tougher than others, but I always came out of it with a lesson learned. I learned that I might be solar powered and purchased a sunlamp my first winter on campus. Learned the only person who determined if I got up in time for church or not, was me. Learned you do not necessarily meet your future bridesmaids the first week of college. Learned office hours were going to be my best friend. Most importantly, in my time at Belmont, I learned that I was so much more than my best and worst day.

I was in **Nashville**, Tennessee, at one of the best music schools, studying music, and yet it never felt competitive. Consistently I felt seen and sought after in the classroom. Professors reminded me that comparison is the thief of joy, and it is a privilege to witness each other’s gifts. Belmont’s community taught me that regardless of the burdens I might be bearing or the joys I might be celebrating, I will be loved just as deeply and fully. From the moment I stepped on the campus at 17 to tour, to the moment I walked across the graduation stage at 21, carrying on now, as I sit in my BU office writing this, *people* are what make Belmont University magic. Never in my life have I met people like I have here at Belmont, who pursued me so intentionally. That is why I **chose** Belmont, **stayed** at Belmont, and regard it as **the best choice I have ever made.**