



Saints Spotlight: Christine Wu '20

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Christine Wu '20 grew up in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. During her four years at St. Andrew's, she's made contributions to practically every aspect of school life: she plays in the school Orchestra; she is a Residential Leader on III Form (freshman) girls dorm; she volunteers with our Adapted Aquatics program; and she is a leader within the St. Andrew's rowing program. Christine recently shared her rowing journey at SAS, from her discovery of the sport to her future as a collegiate rower.

Freshman year, I ran cross-country, but then tore my meniscus. So I kind of had to stop running. But I still played basketball in the winter. In the spring, I started to row. I liked it, but I wouldn't say that I fell in love with it immediately. But that was the spark that set me on this path to really love rowing.

Rowing's a very intricate and different sport than anything else. If you mess up, it's kind of a whole team thing, so there's a little bit of pressure [on everyone]. But, if you collectively work together and are never off, you feel the power, and you want to go even harder. You're just bonded together automatically—you become so close with those nine girls in your boat, and with Coach Berl—and it's unlike any other sport in that way.

[Coach Berl] talks a lot about showing kindness towards each other, which creates this safe community on the team. At the same time, we're also pushing ourselves to be competitive with each other and pushing each other to go deeper and go harder each practice, but the atmosphere she's created allows us to do that. And, during our winter training, we only strengthen our friendships with each other. Some of those friendships have led me to become the rower I am today.

Coach Berl emphasizes working on really intricate technique, which sets you up for a good future [in rowing]. In the summers, I row at Community Rowing Inc., in Boston, which is a lot more competitive, because their team is double the size—that makes it much harder to be in the best boat. But because Coach Berl focuses so much on our technique, that gives us a leg up when we're rowing for any other team. So rowing at St. Andrew's will definitely help you in tremendous ways when you go out into the big rowing world.

Last winter, I rowed at a Youth Regional Challenge in Sarasota, Florida. They bring people all across the region, and I applied and got in, so I represented the mid-Atlantic. We had a week for practice—you have two practices in the day—and then we raced against all the regions.

I really wanted to continue to row [after St. Andrew's] because it's made such a big impact on me and I don't really see myself stopping. Coach Berl has helped me so much with my journey to rowing in college, by reaching out to coaches and talking with me about my options. Next year I will be rowing at Dartmouth, which is an absolute dream come true. I can't imagine going a day or two without rowing, even if it's just grabbing a buddy and taking out a single or double. It's calming for me... after practice, we're just filled with happiness.