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Claire Wayner (student guest) ([00:00](#)):

... and I took the intro course my freshmen fall in CBE and realized after that course that although I was able to do the work, it wasn't bringing me joy. And I think that's when it hit me that the major that you choose, you really just need to be excited about taking the courses for that major. So when I looked over the courses for chemical engineering, I realized that I was really only excited for the electives, which were all in the environmental engineering department, and at that point, I asked myself, why don't I just major in environmental engineering?

Vivian Slee (host) ([00:41](#)):

Hello, everyone. Welcome to Meet Princeton, a podcast to introduce prospective students and their families to Princeton University, brought to you from the Office of Admission at Princeton. My name is Vivian Slee, and I'm a Senior Assistant Dean in the Office of Admission, and I'm so happy that you've tuned in to join us, to hear from current student voices and others about our community and about what it's like to be a student at Princeton just now.

Vivian Slee (host) ([01:12](#)):

So into 2021, we go with Meet Princeton. Welcome everyone, and thanks so much for tuning into our fifth episode this season. There is so much happening, mostly virtually, on campus right now with many students physically back and lots of snow on the ground that doesn't seem to be going anywhere and the reading of first year applications in the admission office. Yes, it is that time of year, our reading season.

Vivian Slee (host) ([01:37](#)):

At any rate, we've got a great show for you today. Though we're releasing this episode in March, we recorded in the month of February, which was also Black History Month, though at Princeton, black history is celebrated every month. With that in mind, I hope you'll stay tuned to hear an amazing poem read by Pulitzer Prize winning poet Jericho Brown, recorded at one of our winter session events in January. What is winter session you may ask? Well, check out our show notes to learn more about it and for links to anything else discussed on the show today. We'll be hearing from our student guest, Claire Wayner in a little bit, but in the meantime, let's drop in with another Claire, that is Professor Claire White, Associate Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering in conversation with our very own wonderful Meet Princeton cohost, Bryant Blount.

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([02:27](#)):

My name's Clair White. I'm an associate professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and the Andlinger Center for Energy and the Environment. I sit in the engineering school, the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, and in terms of area of focus, I really focus on materials for engineering and specifically construction materials, and also looking at ways to sequester carbon dioxide, so looking at things like carbon capture processes as well.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([02:58](#)):

Thank you. We're going to return to those interests, I think, but first I want to hear how you, how you came to Princeton.

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Prof. Claire White (prof) ([03:03](#)):

I did all of my education in Australia. I did my undergraduate there, and I got my PhD there. And then I came to the United States to actually be a post-doc at Los Alamos National Labs, so doing research in New Mexico at the Department of Energy lab there. And then I happened to be looking for what to do next and had opportunities back in Australia. But I also interviewed at Princeton. By coming over here, having a look at the town when it was the middle of winter, it was nice and all lit up and displayed, and things went well and c'est la vie, right? I ended up here.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([03:41](#)):

So you've been at Princeton how many years now?

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([03:44](#)):

I have been at Princeton for seven and a half years.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([03:48](#)):

Okay. So you're well settled in now?

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([03:50](#)):

Well, well settled. Yeah. So six years as an assistant professor, and then I was promoted to associate professor a couple of years ago.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([03:59](#)):

And so again, with seven years, and you said quite a bit, it sounds like of work in different departments, can you talk a little bit more maybe about the relationship, I guess, between your work and sort of Princeton engineering, perhaps?

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([04:11](#)):

Yes. So in terms of the Princeton engineering school, there's quite a few departments, engineering departments that make up the school. And so civil and environmental engineering is one of those departments, and that's where I am a faculty member. And so the research that we do and the teaching we do relate to civil and environmental engineering aspects. So things from building bridges and buildings, to how we, as society, interact with the environment and the engineering side of that. So things like water treatment, water quality, urbanization, those kinds of things.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([04:48](#)):

And among those, do you consider yourself more on the construction engineering side or do you consider yourself more on the environmental engineering side?

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([04:56](#)):

So my work is straddling both. So I would say that my research is very much focused on sustainability and reducing CO2 emissions whilst also allowing for urbanization to occur because the world's population is growing and we need to work out more sustainable ways of providing infrastructure for society. And so that's where, on the civil side, the material science of construction materials is

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important. Can we make construction materials more sustainable? But also because of the sustainability aspects and how we as society interact with the environment, there's quite a bit of environmental focus there as well.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([05:43](#)):

You also talked about, because you said research and obviously you have a long experience in that, but something obviously at Princeton that you would have known when you were arriving you would have to do, and certainly after seven years, you would know is, the teaching of undergraduates. What's that been like for you?

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([05:59](#)):

That's actually one of the reasons I chose to be a faculty member was for the teaching side of things, being able to interact with undergraduate students and see how, when they learn new concepts, they really can light up in terms of their understanding and become very interested in new areas that they are learning about. And so I teach a number of courses. I teach an undergraduate course in civil and environmental engineering on construction materials, and that includes lab. So the students actually get into the lab. They make concrete, they test steel, they break things. They really enjoy doing that. And I really enjoy doing it as well because I get to see how they become very interested in these new topic area that most have not seen before. And I also teach an undergraduate course in the Andlinger Center for Energy and the Environment.

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([06:56](#)):

And so they're learning about all different types of sustainable energy technologies and the intricacies, the materials, that are important for those technologies. And so it's really, I think the main thing is the interaction with the students, how interested they are in the material and how they come up with some very interesting questions that you haven't thought about before. And there's a overlap between that and also faculty research. So undergraduates, it's not just in terms of teaching formal classes, but the undergraduates can also get involved in independent study and the senior thesis side of things as well.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([07:36](#)):

So you not only teach students, you advise them in a different way. Can you talk a little about advising students and how that's worked for you?

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([07:43](#)):

Sure. So in terms of advising, I do a number of different aspects of advising for undergraduate students. I advise first year students, and for the students that have enrolled in engineering, they're actually assigned a engineering faculty advisor. So we talk to them about what Princeton's like, what's it like in the engineering school, what kind of courses they're going to take and get them thinking about potentially what... Well, they have to choose a department at some stage. So also learning about what the different aspects of engineering is.

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([08:20](#)):

And so that's one aspect to advising, and then other types of advising are independent study. So if a student is interested in a specific topic that is not covered by an existing course, they can elect to do

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independent study with an advisor. And so often for the students that have worked with me there they've actually gotten into research labs and done research as part of their independent study. And then the big thing is the senior thesis. So they're interacting with a faculty advisor throughout the year on their thesis, including design or set up of their thesis, conducting whatever kind of research that forms part of their thesis, and then also the writing of the document and presenting their thesis to people at Princeton.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([09:15](#)):

So that's almost as much work for you as it is for the students it sounds like, just being involved in all aspects of the lifecycle [inaudible 00:09:19].

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([09:19](#)):

I think so. As undergrads here, I think because there's a very high ratio of faculty to students, students get a lot more interaction with faculty at Princeton compared to some other places. And so therefore we know individual students, we follow them as they go through their undergraduate years, and we get to see them grow and go out into the world and be very successful.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([09:53](#)):

That's terrific. Certainly you'll have successful advisees, I suppose, join you as a peer one day. But even thinking back in advance of that, if you could give advice to someone who's aspiring to come to Princeton or to study engineering, what would you suggest to them?

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([10:09](#)):

I would say that in terms of aspiring to become an engineer and thinking about potentially engineering as an undergraduate education, they should think about what they really enjoy doing. Often this can come back to what high school subjects they enjoyed, because one thing when it comes to undergraduate education is, it's going to keep you very busy. And so you want to be studying something that you really enjoy.

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([10:39](#)):

Now, the other thing to keep in mind though, is that as a first year student in engineering, you haven't yet declared which engineering major you want to do, so there's opportunity to explore and to learn about the different engineering majors. So if, from the outset, you're not sure, there's a lot of opportunities provided at Princeton so that by the time you finished your first year of study, you have an idea-

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:11:04]

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([11:03](#)):

... instead, so that by the time you finished your first year of study, you have an idea of which major you want to enroll in and get a degree. So I think it really comes down to also thinking about, do you like problem solving individual problems for how to build a building? There's a lot of mathematics and physics that goes into that. For say, chemical engineering, do you enjoy chemistry? Because there's going to be a lot of chemistry in that. So it's really thinking about what are the fundamental aspects that

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you enjoy say at high school and then that can give you an idea of coming to some place like Princeton and thinking about doing engineering, that can give you an idea of what you want to pursue.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([11:49](#)):

Just thinking back, I don't remember exactly. What was your fundamental enjoyment that brought you to where you are now? Was it environment, was it building? Was it some other discipline? I'm curious.

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([12:00](#)):

It's a long story. So, I mean, starting off though, I would say I had a hard time choosing what I wanted to major in as an undergraduate because I really enjoyed math and physics, but I also enjoyed music. I did a secondary language, a second language. I did Indonesian, and there was just so many options in terms of what to major in. In the end, I decided to major in engineering and also science. So I was able to do a double degree. And so I did physics. I really liked physics in high school and continued on as an undergrad. And the engineering was new because I hadn't done any engineering before, but I found that I liked the structural engineering side. So I majored in that.

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([12:44](#)):

And then once I was close to graduating, I was thinking, what next? And what I really learnt is that I love problem solving. And especially when it comes to quantitative problem solving, that's what I really like. That's why I decided to go to grad school. And that's where I really got interested in sustainability aspects.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([13:04](#)):

The last thing, and this is a little off book then, I'm curious to hear again, you have seven and a half years behind you now, what do you really love about Princeton?

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([13:12](#)):

I really love being able to interact with very motivated students, very passionate students, passionate faculty, really focused towards how we can make the world a better place. And I know that sounds very cheesy, but I think the energy that I get from undergraduate students, I am able to help invest in my research side of things. And it really helps focus towards how we can make the world a better place. When it comes down to the research I do, that's about how we can make it more sustainable.

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([13:55](#)):

The other thing I would say is because it's a smaller university, in terms of number of students, there's a lot more interaction you can have one-on-one with the students, which means that you follow their trajectory and you get to see them grow. And that's really rewarding. I mean, I've had my first year advisees progress through and they're graduating and meeting their parents and all of the rest. And they've been around for the four years. And you're like, where did four years go? It completely disappeared. And then seeing what they're up to nowadays, I have students checking in and giving me updates, and it's really exciting to see what great things they've gone on and done since being at Princeton.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([14:37](#)):

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Well, thank you for sharing your excitement. Thank you for sharing your future with us. And I really appreciate your time in this interview.

Prof. Claire White (prof) ([14:47](#)):

Thank you.

Vivian Slee (host) ([14:52](#)):

So Bryant, we haven't seen each other really since the fall and a lot has happened since then. I think there are students on campus now, which is very exciting. We've had a couple of snow storms, also exciting.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([15:06](#)):

Yeah. A lot of students, a lot of snowfall. And I think we had a visit from the groundhog who told us that spring was supposed to be coming sooner than later.

Vivian Slee (host) ([15:15](#)):

Oh, did we? I missed that.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([15:18](#)):

And the Groundhog Day came and went as it does every year. And I feel misled, I'll say this, looking at snow flurries right now, I feel misled, but we still have [crosstalk 00:15:26].

Vivian Slee (host) ([15:27](#)):

Looking at my car completely covered in snow. Oh my goodness. Well, we just heard your conversation with Professor Claire White, which I really enjoyed. I just thought it was marvelous. And I learned a lot and I'm hoping that our listeners will have learned a lot as well.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([15:45](#)):

Yeah. I feel fortunate myself. I've known Professor White for some time. The things I've learned from her about engineering and perspectives, I myself am not an engineer, but the plain way in which I think she explains that, hey, engineering is about solving problems, right? I think we heard her sort of allude to things that people who are not engineers care about quite a bit often. The environment, for example, how people live and quality of life, and engineering is just a tool to address some of those things.

Vivian Slee (host) ([16:12](#)):

So we've got a really wonderful guest student today, and I'm very excited for our listeners to hear from her. But before we introduce her, I wanted to ask you, Bryant, do you ever go birdwatching?

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([16:28](#)):

Never, never. From time to time, birds watch over my car I can tell from certain signs, but they're watching me more than I'm watching them.

Vivian Slee (host) ([16:38](#)):

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You could not identify a short eared owl if you had to, or a red tailed harrier. No, I'm getting those names mixed up.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([16:48](#)):

Depends. Are these things all side by side? Are they with a similar birds of their species or am I comparing these to pigeons and Canada Geese? Because only then.

Vivian Slee (host) ([16:57](#)):

Yeah, I'm sure you could identify geese. I have another question for you, Bryant. What do you give a sick bird during COVID treatment? Tweetment.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([17:08](#)):

That's pretty good. That's pretty good.

Vivian Slee (host) ([17:09](#)):

Oh, I thought that was very silly. Okay. Sorry, listeners. We will get serious again. Let's get back to one of the stars of our show today. Our student guest, Claire, who besides being an avid bird watcher also narrates a really great video series for the Office of Sustainability called Your Favorite Spot, which I highly recommend.

Vivian Slee (host) ([17:29](#)):

Anyway, Bryant, I'll let you take it from here.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([17:32](#)):

Delighted to. So today we have Claire Wayner, who is a junior from Baltimore, Maryland. Claire is an engineer, majoring in civil and environmental engineering and seeking certificates environmental studies and sustainable energy. At Princeton, Claire has been actively involved in making the campus more environmentally friendly, working for the Offices of Sustainability and serving as the inaugural Sustainability Committee Chair on the USG student government. In Claire's free time, she's an avid bird watcher, she rock climbs, and is a member of the university climbing team. She also co-founded The Birding Society Here at Princeton. She's previously served as the president and vice-president of the Student Climate Initiative and is an opinion columnist for the Daily Prince, our student paper.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([18:22](#)):

My name is Claire Wayner and I am in the class of 2022. I'm from Baltimore, Maryland. Baltimore is, it's about a two and a half hour drive south of Princeton. And I would say it's a very diverse city. I really enjoyed growing up there. I grew up within the city boundaries, went to a large public high school, about 1400 kids. So I guess medium sized. There are very public perceptions about Baltimore from TV shows like The Wire. And then what happened with Freddie Gray in 2015? And I think the city has a lot of racial segregation to reckon with, but I think in many cases, that has made communities and Baltimorians even stronger and prouder of our city.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([19:22](#)):

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My dad is an alumnus. That's how I initially kind of heard about the place. He wasn't one of those alumni who took me to every single reunions, but every so often there would be Princeton themed things that would tumble out of the closet.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([19:37](#)):

I remember visiting Princeton my sophomore year of high school, and somehow going to a talk by President Eisgruber. And he was talking about how diversity is really important to the Princeton community, but how, at that time, they were looking at expanding energy and environmental portions of the curriculum. So they had been building out the Andlinger Center for Energy and the Environment.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([20:00](#)):

The Andlinger Center for Energy and the Environment is a multidisciplinary research and education center with a mission to develop technologies and solutions to secure the world's energy and environmental future. The center supports a program of research and teaching with a chief goal of enabling sustainable energy production and the protection of the environment and global climate.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([20:21](#)):

Which was completed a year or two before I got to Princeton. And so I was drawn to both the fact that not only the academics, that I was interested in, environmental and energy topics, not only did they exist at Princeton, but Princeton was actively strengthening those because they saw those as an important area of study, which they are with all the challenges facing our society. But then also from a social aspect, feeling that I could find a variety of different communities to explore while at Princeton.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([20:51](#)):

I went to a STEM magnet high school.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([20:54](#)):

Magnet schools typically offer specialist curriculums, such as in STEM or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, while leveraging real world hands-on problem-based activities that help students discover new passions and academic futures.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([21:08](#)):

And I was surrounded by all these people who just said, I want to be an engineer or a scientist, or go into data work or whatever. But when I came to Princeton, I was pleasantly surprised by the number of students who were pursuing non STEM disciplines, including many disciplines that I had never even heard of or thought about studying like sociology or anthropology or the classics department. And what I've really valued about my time at Princeton is I've been able to take electives in those departments while also pursuing an engineering degree, which I know would not have been as possible if I had gone to a non liberal arts institution.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([21:56](#)):

I think I was definitely worried just about starting out in engineering.

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Claire Wayner (student guest) ([22:02](#)):

... just about starting out in engineering, partially because as a female in engineering, it's not as common to pursue engineering.

Bryant Blount (co-host) ([22:10](#)):

Actually, at Princeton, our data shows that women make up 42% of the engineering population. Data made available by the Society of Women Engineers and updated in 2019 shows that nearly 20% of bachelor degrees were awarded to women in engineering and computer science.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([22:26](#)):

So I think freshman fall was a moment of reckoning for me to realize that I belong here and that I can do well even if I didn't have the same exposure to higher level coursework before coming to Princeton. There's really help most places you turn. I found it in peers who were in the class with me. So my freshman fall, I took this core sequence and it was only 60 kids in the class total. So because it was smaller, we really bonded. We had problem set sessions Mondays and Tuesdays, and most people in the class would show up partially to work and check answers and work through problems together, but also just to see fellow freshmen engineers suffering and to bond over that. So it was interesting. Yeah, the problem set sessions really became social times too. And those sessions also had upper classmen peer tutors who had taken the specific course before. So they were immensely helpful.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([23:36](#)):

I've also found though, like my professors, they're almost always willing to talk. They would set up office hours and, oh my gosh, if I could tell like a first year, you can go to office hours whenever you need help. I have made use of office hours so many times since coming to Princeton and it has been immensely helpful. I felt like when I went to office hours a lot and showed up and wanted to not just be able to solve the problem but really learn and get the concepts, I feel like the professors appreciated seeing that dedication. And I feel as a result that I've been able to bond with a lot of my professors just because I showed interest in the subject material. They're really there to help you and they want to see you thrive in their class, not just get by or do it just for the grade. I've been struggling with this idea even since choosing to change my major of choosing to study something that you think will have maximum social good and social impact and choosing to study something because you really love it. I came in as a chemical and biological engineering major because I thought that it would give me a really technical foundation in sustainable energy, which is what I was ultimately interested in pursuing after college to help address climate change and lower our world greenhouse gas emissions. When I switched to environmental engineering, I found that I was still able to take elective courses in energy while taking core courses for my major that I really enjoyed. So to sum it all up, I would advise first years coming in to really look through what each major requires and then to think about what major will give you the most joy and the least pain. Like if the courses are hard but if you enjoy taking them, then do it.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([25:36](#)):

I also, I took creative non-fiction in my sophomore spring with John McPhee who has written for many decades for the New Yorker. I heard about John McPhee before coming to Princeton. I read one of his books called Encounters with the Archdruid, but didn't know somehow that he taught at Princeton. And then a friend told me to try applying to his class. So I applied on a whim, had a blast in that class because you were essentially writing kind of New Yorker style, nonfiction pieces every other week. The key to

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getting good at writing is just to write regularly. So getting the chance to write these pieces regularly in a style that I really fell in love with, creative nonfiction, but then also having feedback from John McPhee who's really well known in the area of creative nonfiction was very inspirational and kind of made me rethink how I want to mesh writing and using writing to tell stories with more STEM, tactical disciplines.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([26:57](#)):

I think there's a strong sense of community among the students in your major, especially civil and environmental engineering because we're the smallest engineering department. We have a group chat for people in my year. We'll meet up to discuss problem sets and work through them together. There are a lot of problem sets in engineering. That's a fancy word for quantitative homework. I know a lot of my peers in engineering frequently do research as undergrads. It's very normal here to do that. I know that's not always the case at college.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([27:38](#)):

Claire White was my freshman year advisor. She was very nice, partially because her name was Claire, but also, oh my gosh... She's from Australia initially and she had this giant inflatable Wallaby or kangaroo in her office. I just walked in, this timid first year, and I see this blow up Wallaby and I'm like, "Everything's going to be okay." So yeah, Professor White was a fantastic advisor my first year. I'm actually going to take a course with her in the future, I think next spring, a material science lab that she teaches, which is supposed to be really interesting. I've heard really good things from those who've taken it. Heard that it really helps you apply engineering knowledge to practical skills. You're working in the lab with things like cement and concrete and having fun doing it.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([28:38](#)):

I started birding when I was 11. Came to Princeton. Birders are not super common, I guess. So I just wasn't sure what to, because there wasn't a birdwatching group at the time that I came to campus. And then in February of my freshman year, I got an email from a guy, at least of our campus, basically to a bunch of students saying that he was trying to start up a bird feeding project. I flipped out. I was like, oh my gosh, there's another bird nerd here on campus. I need to connect with this person. So I asked to get lunch with the student. He's a year above me. So he's a senior now, his name is Joe Cole Wallach. We started nerding out about birds over lunch, and that was great. And then we both commiserated about the fact that there was no birding group at Princeton.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([29:35](#)):

So we decided to start one. So it's really, I would say, quite common for new student groups to form if students don't see their interests represented. We went through the process and we held our first bird walk in May of my freshman year. So May, 2019. And gosh, I think we got 30 or 40 people at that bird walk, and that was during finals season two. I was shocked. I was telling Joe, "We're not going to get anyone at this bird walk. It's during finals." But it was bird migration and I wanted to go birding regardless. There were so many people who just showed up and since then, we have held a lot of trips. We've gotten people. The people who join, most of them have no experience prior to coming, but that's totally fine because we help them learn and they help us learn in some ways too by showing us new things about birds that you start to not notice as you get more into birding.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([30:38](#)):

Another group that matters a lot to me is the climbing team. So it's a club sport, and I joined that January of my freshman year. That I think is one of the most tight-knit communities I've experienced at Princeton and is really one of the... Yeah, one of the places that I would call home on campus is the climbing wall, which is inside the football stadium actually. It's kind of tucked in there, a convenient use of space. But it's small, it's cozy. We have practices four times a week. And after Tuesday and Thursday practices, we also have something called team dinner, which we call nutrition practice affectionately. We have movie nights and we do trips over fall and spring break. So I think it's, yeah, I mean, climbing itself, the act of rock climbing, it's allowed me to push my boundaries physically and mentally, helping me to overcome my fear of heights, but it also just introduced me to a bunch of fabulous people who I can connect with now after I graduate from Princeton.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([31:58](#)):

I think COVID was also like a silver lining. Last semester, I actually ended up living remotely with some friends from the climbing team and I think that experience, like living off campus with friends, helped me to even further reflect on what campus had meant to me. It's funny, you don't really miss a place or realize what it means to you until you aren't there anymore. And I think for most students, not during COVID, they're on campus for back-to-back semesters and maybe they don't get that chance to pause and reflect, but having last fall semester be remote and not being able to be on campus forced me to think a lot about what time on campus meant for me. That has allowed me to come back to this semester, when we're back on campus, with kind of a renewed vigor and idea of what I want my remaining three semesters at Princeton to look like.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([32:51](#)):

Two ways that I felt the Princeton magic, one was at reunions. I worked reunions my freshman spring, and I know that's a common answer, but really reunions is a very special time on campus because...

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Claire Wayner (student guest) ([33:03](#)):

... answer, but really reunions is a very special time on campus because you get so many alumni back from so many class years and there's so much Princeton pride going around all the time. I just feel like the sense of community that kind of underlies everything that we do on campus really comes full surge during reunions.

Claire Wayner (student guest) ([33:20](#)):

Another moment of Princeton magic was one evening where just some friends who I'd met through my first-year courses had started a game night. And we decided to play hide and seek in the neuroscience building, which I'm still not sure if it was entirely permitted. I mean the building was unlocked, so we were there from 9:00 PM to maybe midnight or a little later and just had a lot of fun goofing off. I think that really drove home to me how Princeton students are... Yeah. The amazing thing about Princeton students is they're incredibly smart and dedicated, but they also don't take themselves super seriously to the point where they aren't approachable. And I've had plenty of moments like that night of hide and seek where I've gotten to see how down to earth students at Princeton are and unafraid to do silly things. So, that was a fun night.

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Vivian Slee (host) ([34:42](#)):

Welcome to the mailbag, the place where prospective students questions are answered live on each episode. This week, Sid from Texas writes, "Do y'all have any advice for the alumni interview if offered? Also, it would be great if any Princeton students involved in research could share their experiences like the PCUR blog." Great question and suggestion, Sid. Thanks so much. I'll answer the alumni interview question first. So, in a nutshell, after students submit their applications to Princeton, we send their names to alumni interviewers who then reach out via email to schedule an interview, which during the pandemic are all done virtually. And we do try to interview all students who apply. Advice for the actual interview, I think, first of all, try not to think of it so much as an interview but more of a conversation around your interests, questions you might have and so on.

Vivian Slee (host) ([35:35](#)):

The other best piece of advice that I can give you is to just be yourself. We realize that interviews sound really scary. And if you just come in there being yourself, you'll be fine. We really want to get to know you, and our alumni help us to do this by volunteering to meet with you. And they really enjoy doing this to help answer any questions students might still have about Princeton and also maybe to share some of their own experiences or perspectives. So, there's no real right way to do a college interview, but I will say it helps a little bit to know about the school you're applying to, so make sure that we have the degree programs that you're interested in. Do a little preliminary research on our website so that you can ask questions that will most help you to learn more.

Vivian Slee (host) ([36:20](#)):

In terms of the second part of Sid's question, I love the idea of Princeton students sharing their research experiences on our podcast, so stay tuned. We do hope to do just that in future episodes, and really appreciate the suggestion, Sid. And for those of you who might be wondering, the PCUR blog that Sid mentioned stands for Princeton Correspondence on Undergraduate Research, and it's a blog where Princeton undergrads write about their research experiences. And you can find that link in our show notes on the Meet Princeton webpage. And that is also the place where our listeners can continue to submit such great questions to our mailbag. Thanks for the question, Sid,

Vivian Slee (host) ([37:05](#)):

We hope you enjoyed listening to this episode of Meet Princeton. As I said earlier, this podcast was created with prospective students and their families in mind. And so, with that, I'd like to direct all of our listeners to our admission website at [admission.princeton.edu](http://admission.princeton.edu). There you can watch, read, engage virtually, and learn more about Princeton University.

Vivian Slee (host) ([37:29](#)):

Meet Princeton's audio engineers, Nick Donnoli of Orangebox Pictures. Mary Buckley and I, Vivian Slee, are executive producers. Bryant Blount is our co-host and consultant. And Veronica Salazar is our editorial consultant. Original music was composed by Molly Truman, who is also our sound designer and engineer from the class of 2024. We'd also like to give a special thanks and shout out to our guests, Claire Wayner and professor Claire White for their great contributions to this episode, and to the Office of Winter Session and Campus Engagement and to the Lewis Center for the Arts who were the co-sponsors of the event, Tracy K. Smith in conversation with Jericho Brown and Danez Smith recorded on

This transcript was exported on Mar 09, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

January 22nd, 2021, from which the audio clip that you are about to hear is from. And a big thank you, especially, to our listeners for tuning in.

Vivian Slee (host) ([38:17](#)):

As promised in celebration of black history month, we'll be leaving you now with Pulitzer Prize winning poet, Jericho Brown, reciting his poem After Avery R. Young recorded at our winter session event. The full recording of the conversation with Tracy K. Smith is available to view on our show notes page. Thank you so much again for listening, and we hope you'll join us next time on Meet Princeton.

Jericho Brown (poet) ([38:39](#)):

This poem, the title mentions Avery Young who's one of my favorite people on the planet, a wonderful performer, poet, singer, musician, extraordinaire.

Jericho Brown (poet) ([38:53](#)):

After Avery R. Young

Jericho Brown (poet) ([38:56](#)):

Black is not a country, but I live there. Where even the youngest call you baby. Sometimes you ain't we, sometimes you is Everybody. Washboard rains come. We Open our mouth for a drink. Rather be radical Than a fool. Oh and no, We're not interested in killing White people or making them Work. Matter of truth, some snorted Cocaine until folk started calling it White lady. Slavery is a bad idea. The more you look like me, the more we Agree. Sometimes you is everybody. The black mind is a continuous Mind. There is a we. I am among them. I am one of the ones. I belong. Oom boom Ba boom. I live there where We have a right to expect something of the brother. Hooking and crooking or punching the clock: It's got to get done. That Expectation. Stunning. Incantatory. Black. Power in our 24-hour Barbershops. Power in the Stateville Correctional Center. Power broke Whether I have a car or not. Power under a quilt that won't unravel, though I never met the woman who sewed it Or the woman for whom it was a gift Before it finally came to me. The black mind Is a continuous mind. I am not a narrative Form, but dammit if I don't tell a story. All land owned is land once stolen. So the blues people of the world walk On water. We will not die. Black music. Black rage. Black city of the soul In a very cold town. Black ice is ice you can't see.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [00:40:55]