

Student Q&A: Jaci Tourtellott, SGA president, discusses leadership, building community

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Hailing from Gaylord, Minn., Jaci Tourtellott is a senior health humanities and biology student and is currently the president of the Student Government Association (SGA). The Script sat down with Tourtellott to get the scoop on student government, her memories of Homecoming and a game of word association.

What drew you to CSS?

My older sister and my mom both went here; they're nursing alumni. My sister was super involved with band and cheerleading, so we'd come up to CSS for that. And also the physician assistant program—when I was a freshman in 2018, it was its first or second year, so it was pretty new and there was a lot of hype. A lot of colleges prefer their own alumni, so I thought I should go to a college that has a physician assistant program. I knew of this one, and I really liked it. I originally didn't want to go here because I felt like I had to do something different. My mom said, "Maybe just do an official tour. You never know." And I really liked it after my tour. I just liked the feeling, and I knew this was it.

What are you involved in on campus?

I'm the president of SGA, a member of CAB [the Campus Activities Board], I work in the Student Activities office and I'm a Dignitas MTA this year for Sarah Stewart's Dignitas section. It's super fun. I'm really enjoying it.



Jaci Tourtellott: "I think people's stories are super interesting." Submitted photo/Jaci Tourtellott

What are some of your favorite aspects of those roles?

I like each of my roles for different reasons. I do like to get to know people. I like to meet more people, especially when as a junior or senior you maybe don't meet as many people, unless you're involved on campus. I'm becoming more intentional about that. I think people's stories are super interesting, just getting to know them, their lives, who they are. And now being a little bit older and more of a mentor, and helping them kind of figure out who they want to be and want to do—it's just the best part.

What does the role of SGA president entail? What does it mean to you?

There's a lot of different pieces to it. I do like that; if I get bored of one part, I can switch over and focus on something else. A big part of it—which I'm feeling comfortable with now—is being a part of meetings. I'm usually the only student, or one of a few students, in these meetings with faculty, staff and administration.

So trying to figure out the social cues of how to be in a meeting: how do you talk? What's appropriate to say, and what isn't? It was a learning curve. Also, how to be present and have your voice heard, but also how to listen to get knowledge to bring to the student body. But then there's also a lot of interaction with the general senators—there's 30 or 35 of them, so it feels like a club. I work closely with the coordinating board, and we do more of the nitty gritty work. That's what the week consists of, in general: being a presence and being around for faculty and staff and being approachable and open ears for students. I want to be accessible and a part of the student body, by being a part of clubs and stuff like that.

This edition of The Script is coming out the Friday of Homecoming Weekend. Any particular memories of Homecomings past you'd like to share? What are you looking forward to most this year?

I went to the Homecoming game as a freshman, but I don't think I went my sophomore year. I just

love the food trucks and the environment. It's really fun to see, as a freshman or sophomore, upperclassmen here on that weekend. It really creates that community vibe. I have more special memories of Harry Potter Week because I'm a part of Student Activities. This year we purposely coordinated Harry Potter Week with Homecoming Week. I think it's definitely a morale booster.

What are some of your hobbies?

I try to be active; I like to go for walks. I'm a morning person, so I try to walk right away, and when I do, I feel more productive and better about my day. I'm trying to get out more and explore Duluth. Last year I realized there are so many things I haven't done. I also like to spend time with family and friends.

What is the most valuable piece of advice you've ever received?

My grandma says, "Sometimes you do it because it's the right thing to do." It always puts things into perspective for me when making big decisions in a leadership role or in

friendships and family situations. Sometimes it's not about how the decision affects me, but how it plays into the greater good.

And finally, a quick round of word association:

Learning
Love
Leadership
Fun
Homecoming
Football
Harry Potter
Movies
Duluth
Lake Superior
Fall
Leaves

Anything else you'd like to add?

SGA meetings are open to the public. They're on Sunday nights at 8:00 p.m. in T3121. Anyone can go, and you can hear what student government is doing, how they're allocating your funds, what we're choosing to advocate for. And it's a space where students' voices can be heard even if they're not a part of SGA.

This conversation has been edited for clarity and length.

Getting Out There: S.S. William A. Irvin, Duluth's Haunted Ship

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It's the spooky season in Duluth, and nothing screams October spirit more than a haunted ship!

Until Oct. 31, the SS William A. Irvin will be transformed into a terrifying haunted ship that is open for tours. The William A. Irvin sits in the Duluth Harbor, and when it's not the season of scares, it serves as a museum. The ship is a lake freighter

that hauled iron ore across the Great Lakes from 1938 to 1978, according to Wikipedia. This beast of a ship also holds a record for unloading speed, managing to unload 13,856 tons of iron ore in only two hours and 55 minutes using Hulett Unloaders.

Holding haunted ship tours may seem like it's just a smart gimmick to pull more visitors during October, but this ship allegedly has a history

of actual paranormal activity, unlike the spooks it manufactures for the season. While the ship itself is decorated for the tours with blood, flickering lights, scary scenes and terrifying actors, there have been documented paranormal sightings outside of the scripted tours.

Paranormal investigation groups such as St. Croix Paranormal, Midwest Paranormal Files, Minnesota Paranormal Study Group and the Duluth

Paranormal Society have investigated this spooky ship. These groups have reported unexplainable shadows, footsteps when no one is there, items thrown and other spine-chilling events. It's believed that some of these paranormal events are caused by the ghost of William Wuori, a sailor who lost his life aboard the William A. Irvin.

So, if you are looking for some heart-stopping spooks and a hair-raising atmosphere, this is the event for you! The tour

itself is self-guided. The tickets are only \$10 for college students and the tours go every weekend in October.