



# Staten Island Advance

**'The U' brings college tours to the living room**

**New DVD series lets students view campuses from the comforts of home**

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Doug Imbruce was sitting in his Columbia University dorm room one day watching MTV's "Cribs" when his mind started to wander.

He began thinking about the arduous and important process of finding the right college. Half the people at his Manhattan college woke up every day happy with their choice, while the other half weren't so sure about theirs, he said.

"I was thinking there has to be a better way," Imbruce said about finding the perfect college. "This whole experience I had been through was trying, troublesome and wrought with potential error."

That's when he decided to take action.

Imbruce, now 24, recently saw his dream of a college guide come true with the release of "The U" earlier this month. The U is a set of DVDs told from different students' perspectives at 50 colleges across the country.

"There was no way, I felt, to understand what life on each campus is like," Imbruce said. "College guidebooks are so boring and the importance of the decision isn't reflected in the materials that help you make it."

Imbruce shot a pilot of "The U" over his sophomore and junior years of college. He showed it to Gregory Smith of WB's prime-time show "Everwood" his junior year, when he was working as an assistant on the set. Together, they sent the pilot to the WB's chief executive officer, who "thought the content was spot-on." Smith became an executive producer of the DVD.

Senior year, Imbruce said he was running the operations of "The U" out of his dorm room. He had 300 interns doing production at their respective campuses, helping to pick the students who'd be interviewed on each campus and developing the content.

Imbruce feels the series is the best way to connect to his audience since it is centered around real students. It is a way for potential applicants to get straightforward information from people around their age.

## **THE FORMAT**

Hosted by WB stars including Smith and Kristin Kreuk of "Smallville," the DVD gives students a look at the average grades needed for each school, how many students are enrolled in the school and the cost. Different students give their take on different aspects of college life such as academics, the party scene, dorm life, food and the surrounding area.

"The U' is all about presenting the unauthorized guide. It's not endorsed," Imbruce said. "The content at the colleges is really candid, honest and helps students make the right decision."

The DVD set is divided into five parts: "Ivy League," "The West," "The Midwest," "The South" and "The Northeast." Each DVD contains about 10 colleges, each with about 15 minutes of air time.

"The U" is an easy and affordable way to get a feel for several different colleges, Imbruce said.

The DVD will hit stores in the spring, but can be found online at [www.theu.com](http://www.theu.com). The set costs \$39.99 or \$14.95 per DVD.

Some of the colleges featured are: Brown University; Columbia University; University of California; Los Angeles; University of Arizona; Northwestern University; University of Michigan; Duke University; Emory University; New York University and the University of Delaware.

### **SOME DRAWBACKS**

Two local guidance counselors said they believe "The U" can augment a visit and serve as preliminary help when it comes to choosing colleges to visit, but they said students should ultimately visit colleges to get the real feel.

"It may help you exclude a college that you're lukewarmly thinking about and maybe help you narrow your list," said Larry DiPietro, college advisor at Monsignor Farrell High School, Oakwood.

He added, however, that nothing takes the place of a college visit.

"When it comes to distance, DVDs and college tours on Web sites play a significant role in the process," said Michael Acquilano, director of college guidance at Staten Island Academy, Dongan Hills. He said if a student from the Island is interested in a school in California, a DVD might help them decide whether or not they should apply. But when it comes to deciding, "one must visit."

Acquilano said, like the DVD strives to do, it's a good idea to get student input. He said he always tells his students to approach random students when they visit a campus, to get a feel for the college.

"When it comes to searching for colleges, there's a lot of different ways to do it," he said. "Students should try to experience it every way possible and videos and DVDs are one way."

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