



A PARENTS GUIDE TO THE

Vanguard Gap Year of Wheaton College



A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Wheaton College offers a world-class gap year program—called Vanguard—for students who want a year of transformational preparation before college. Vanguard is a remarkable opportunity to enrich the mind through reflective study, discover purpose through vocational discernment, and build a firm foundation of faith within an authentic Christian community. I invite you to launch your student's higher education experience with Vanguard!

PHILIP RYKEN,
WHEATON COLLEGE PRESIDENT





We firmly believe a gap year can benefit *anyone* who's curious and ready for a healthy challenge. Read on to learn what students experience during the Vanguard Gap Year of Wheaton College. ↓



What role could a gap year play in your student's life?

While many high school seniors jump from high

school to college, it's not the right path for everyone. A carefully crafted gap year makes space for students to grow in confidence, discover purpose, and build lifelong friendships.

For the past five years, I've walked families through the gap year decision-making process. As you're walking alongside your student at this time, I recommend asking a few questions:

- **College & Career:** Is your student excited about making a college choice? Choosing a major?
- **Community:** Does your student have a solid, Christ-centered support system of peers and mentors?
- **Academics:** Is your student thriving in the classroom? Are they excited about collegiate-level learning?
- **Maturity:** Does your student have the level of maturity, responsibility, and judgment needed to make a solid return on the college investment?
- **Faith:** Does your student have an intrinsic desire to grow in the faith? Will their faith flourish outside of their home environment?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, a gap year could be the right next step for your student. Vanguard helps high school graduates build confidence, discover purpose, and build lifelong friendships.

Charlie Goeke
Vanguard Gap Year Program Manager



“In the end, what we loved most about the Vanguard experience is the way that it helped our daughter discern her calling.”

ANNETTE BURLET, VANGUARD PARENT

Discovering Purpose

with a step-by-step approach to help young adults discover what they were created to do



These milestones mark significant conversations in what we call our vocational discernment process. Every part of the Vanguard Gap Year contributes to these conversations. Read on to explore how this happens.

MILESTONES:

The Sacredness of Work – We start by reframing commonly held beliefs about work and vocation.



Understanding Self – What does it mean to be uniquely created by God and rooted in Christ? Vanguards examine their strengths, limits, personal values, weaknesses, challenges, and passions to gain a better picture of who they are.




Understanding the World We Live In – We have to understand the challenges and struggles of the world we live in and how we can use our gifts, passions, and talents to build the kingdom of God here on earth.



Practicing in the Present – Vocation isn’t just a future thing – it’s in the here and now. Vanguards explore how they can live out their vocational callings in the present.



Making Choices – You can’t just think about the future! Discovering and living out your vocation means making decisions and choosing a path. We equip students with the tools to make sound decisions.



“This past year has been a whirlwind of growth, laughter, new things, new experiences and new friends. I am so beyond grateful for each of these amazing people that I have had the privilege of living with.”

EMILY NORBECK, VANGUARD '17

Flourishing in Authentic Community

in a place that makes space for people to support, challenge, and encourage one another



Here are a few examples of how we form community:

Daily Devotions

Every weekday, the HoneyRock community gathers for morning devotionals. Every lunch and evening, Vanguards lead themselves in a short midday and evening prayer which provides a time to re-center and put our focus on how God is speaking to and working within each day.

Outdoor Adventure

From kicking off the year with a backpacking trip to all of the incredible activities HoneyRock offers on site (year-round!), Vanguards learn to see Christ at work in and through his creation.

Local Church Involvement

Vanguards get connected with a local church in volunteer opportunities, community service projects, leading worship, and weekly events.

Technology Fast

For the first 6 weeks of Vanguard, participants go “tech free” and live without phones, Netflix, streaming T.V....basically anything that requires a Wi-Fi signal is off limits! This creates space for Vanguards to practice presence and learn about who they’re with for the year.

“The low-tech atmosphere is also really refreshing. Your brain isn’t going crazy all of the time...I just like being where your feet are. It’s really, really good on the brain.”
ALLIE LAMBERT, VANGUARD '19

“Vanguard taught me how to care – for myself and for others. I was at a point where I didn’t really care about myself anymore. I hadn’t learned how to love people who weren’t similar to me. But Vanguard brings together a lot of different people and puts them in a small community.

With the way it’s designed, you begin to change. You learn to love people who aren’t similar to you.”

BRIAN KELLER, VANGUARD '19



“I built meaningful friendships, broadened my global Christian perspective, learned more about relating with others, and formed a firm foundation in my faith – I’ve gotten a wider sense of how God can work through me.”

TIM CLARK, VANGUARD '17

Building a Christ-Centered Identity

with a community that values wrestling with life’s big questions



A Christ-centered identity is more than how you fill your Sunday mornings. It impacts and informs every aspect of life – mind, body, and spirit. Our identity in Christ informs and shapes our purpose and calling. It helps us see how to serve and lead others.

MIND

Reflective Learning and Study:

We ask questions and consider central theological issues that shape how we live our lives. This helps develop a carefully constructed Christian worldview and a transformed life.

BODY

Work, Service, and Outdoor Adventure:

We use our strength each day to serve God and glorify God in everything we do. Working during the day, serving the community, and enjoying God’s creation can all be an act of worship.

SPIRIT

Spiritual Formation, Disciplines, and Life in Christian Community:

Vibrant small-group mentoring and personal reflection invite us to grow in spiritual disciplines that can help transform us into the people we were created to be.

“Going to HoneyRock and having a trusted group of people that we could turn our daughter over to for a year, under the Lord’s care, was a great blessing to me as a parent and I am so thankful this option was available.

I have a debt I will never repay to the Vanguard program, and I will tell our daughter’s story for the rest of my life. For a kid fresh out of high school who isn’t sure about a lot of things, Vanguard is just a phenomenal place to spend a year.”

VANGUARD PARENT



Exploring the World

through a variety of trips both near and far

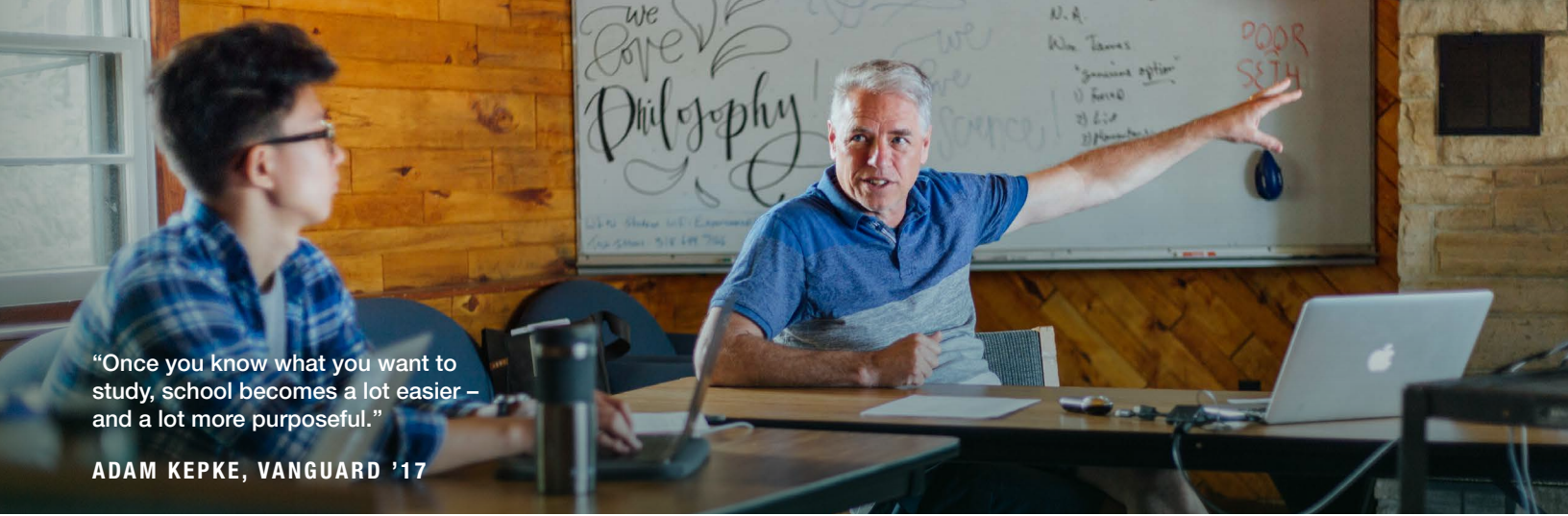


Over the course of the year, Vanguard's will dive into new cultures to observe and participate in the Great Commission at work in the world.

- **Munising, MI - Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore**
Jump into community with a backpacking trip – no experience needed! In January, we'll return for a day trip to explore the ice caves.
- **Eagle River, WI – Rural Immersion Trips**
Visit artists homes, cranberry bogs, logging sites and more to learn what makes rural economies tick and the beauty within them.
- **Baraboo, WI or Marquette, MI – Rock Climbing Trip**
Climb real rock and enjoy scenic views.
- **Calumet, MI – Cross Country Ski Excursion**
Enjoy a popular Northwoods pastime on this day trip.
- **Costa Rica – International Immersion Trip**
Explore working internationally by partnering with local and long-term missionaries for two weeks in February.
- **Chicago, IL – Urban Immersion Trip**
Explore ministry sites, landmarks, and community centers to learn about the diverse and vibrant culture of the Woodlawn neighborhood.

“The reason for all of this is to explore things like race, politics, poverty, and wealth. Those things carry through from trip to trip. Undergirding all of that is the idea that the way that we truly begin to experience how huge and wide and high and big and deep the love of god is through encountering other people with different perspectives and backgrounds. And that’s what it’s all about.”

MADDIE JOHNSON, VANGUARD RESIDENT ASSISTANT '15



“Once you know what you want to study, school becomes a lot easier – and a lot more purposeful.”

ADAM KEPKE, VANGUARD '17

Asking Big Questions

alongside friends, mentors, and Wheaton College staff and faculty



Over the course of 5-6 seminars led by Wheaton College staff and faculty, Vanguards explore the following questions to build a robust, informed, and practiced faith.

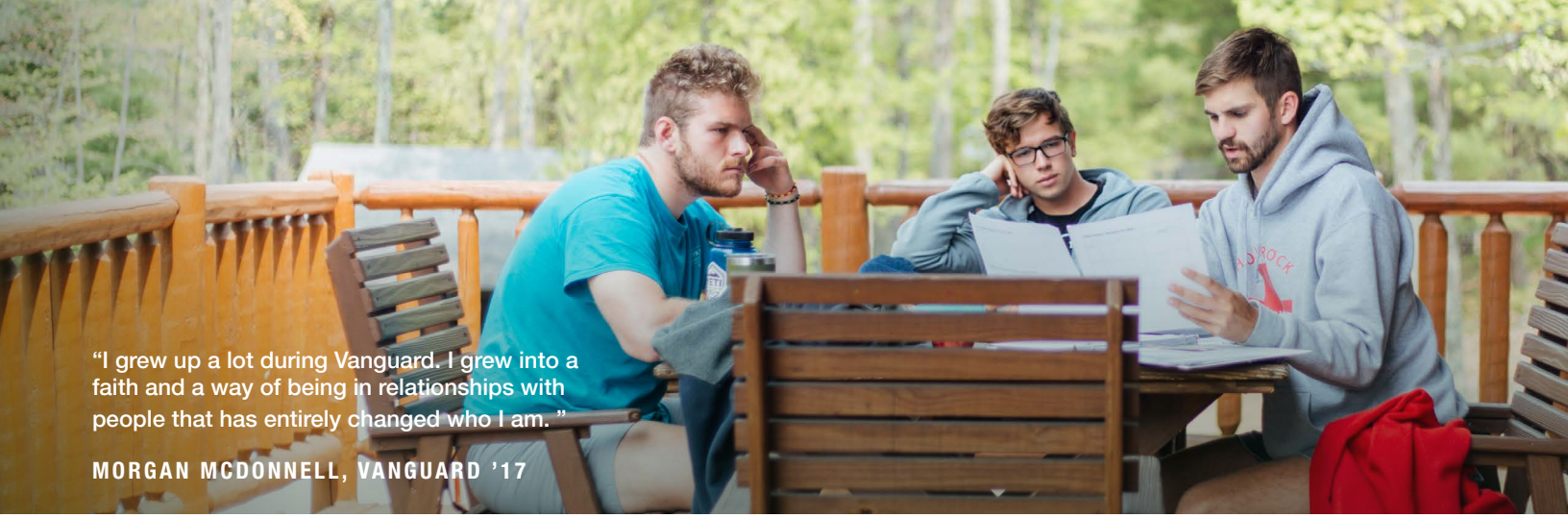
- How do we know what's true?
- What is God's big story and what is my part in it?
- What does it mean to be made in God's image?
- Why should we care about God's creation?
- How do we respond to evil and suffering in the world?
- What is my purpose in light of the Great Commission?

Hear about what this looks like from Vanguard Autumn Cosman '18, Professor of Physics AJ Poelarends Ph.D. and Professor of Environmental Science, Chris Keil, Ph.D. [Watch the video.](#)

“I wanted to take a break from academics before jumping into college. At Vanguard we were able to learn for the sake of learning – not looking for a grade or a GPA or a scholarship.”

ALAINA ARMSTRONG, VANGUARD '18





"I grew up a lot during Vanguard. I grew into a faith and a way of being in relationships with people that has entirely changed who I am."

MORGAN MCDONNELL, VANGUARD '17

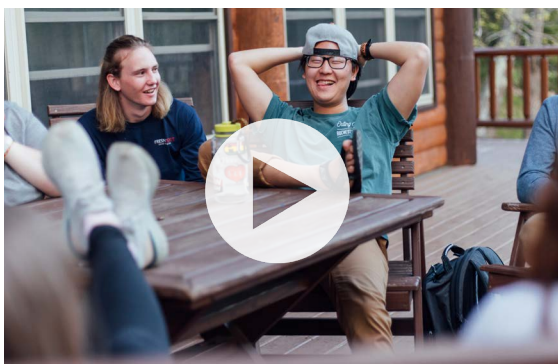
Moving Towards Maturity

by learning how to navigate challenges well



How to navigate life away from home

Hear about our community from Vanguards.
[Watch the video.](#)



	From	To
Searching for Identity	Do whatever you want, be whoever you want	Being rooted in Christ; living with purpose and meaning; redefining what the "good life" is
Fighting Anxiety	Constantly comparing and connecting	Knowing and trusting who God says you are and being comfortable in your own skin
Experiencing Loneliness	Hyper connected but not knowing who true friends are & feeling lonely	Feeling deeply known, loved, and supported
Struggling for Balance	Over involved and headed towards burnout OR floundering without direction	Understanding a healthy rhythm for life that helps us thrive in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work and Rest • Community and Solitude • Striving and Contentment
Feeling Entitled	Focused on me	Focused on others

"Vanguard gave me the time and space to process my life, surrounded by such wise people who loved and cared for me so deeply. That process may stretch you more than you thought possible, but it is incredibly rewarding and so encouraging to come out the other side with tools and lessons to help you move into the rest of your life."

SARAH LAMBERT, VANGUARD '16

LIVING AT HONEYROCK, THE OUTDOOR CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF WHEATON COLLEGE



These are the values we hold central to the HoneyRock experience. This informs all that we do in the Vanguard Gap Year.

- Other's Oriented Service
- Purposeful Challenge
- Enthusiastic Engagement
- Rhythms of Rest and Reflection
- Authentic Community
- Truth-Infused Programming
- Experiences in Creation

"We like to say he found both "a passion and a program" during Vanguard. A Christian gap year program like Vanguard helps young adults grow their faith, develop good habits, learn the importance of Christian community, and build relationships with role models who speak truth. If your student does not feel confident about going to college due to social, vocational, or motivational reasons, we recommend Vanguard!"

ANN KEPKE, VANGUARD PARENT

900+

acres in the Northwoods of Wisconsin

20+

year-round staff and faculty

1951

year founded

25+

adventure activities offered on site

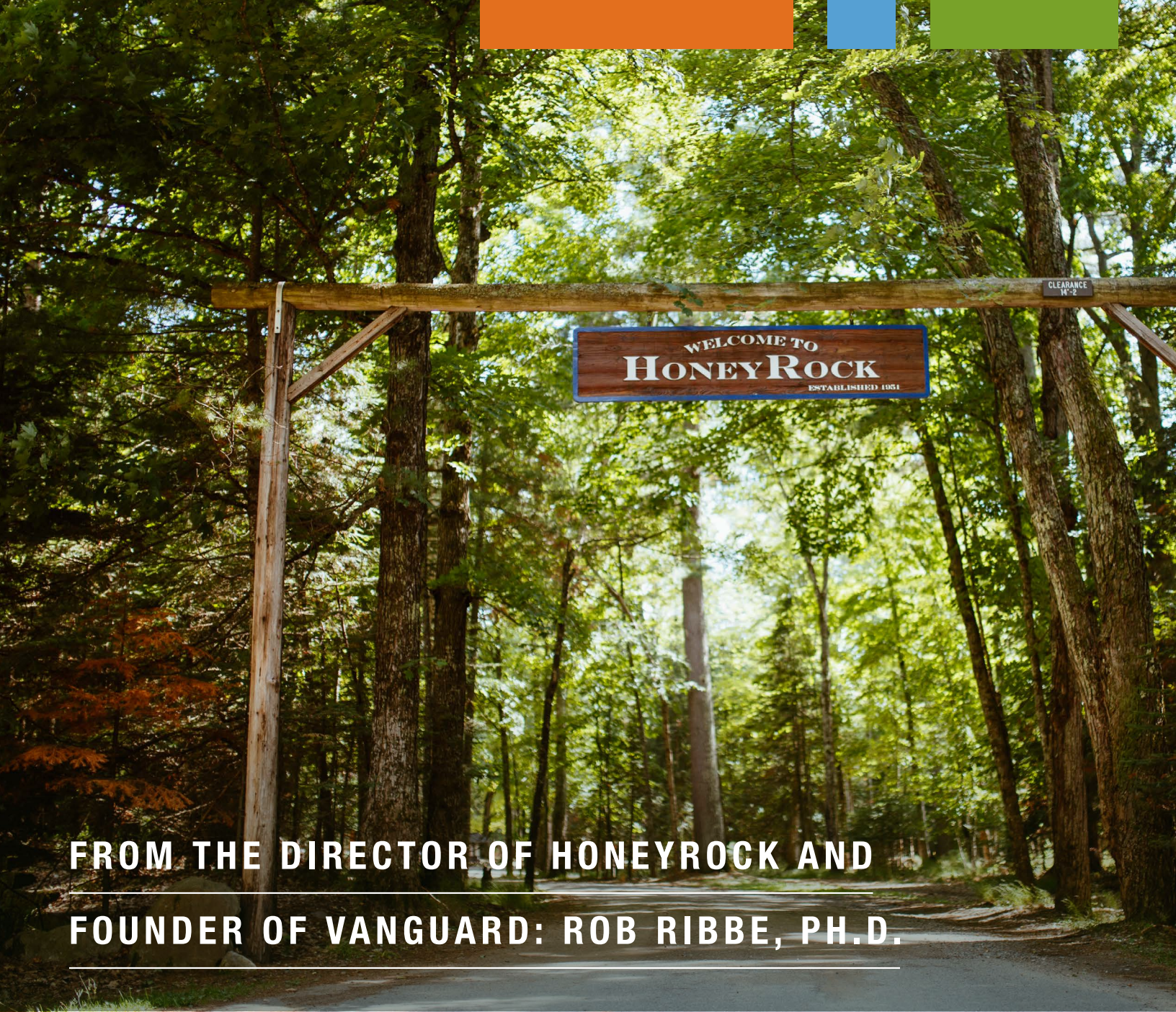
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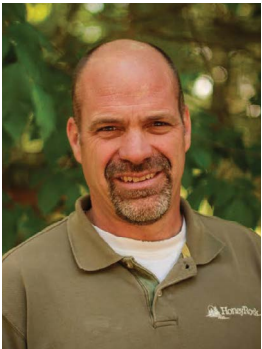
- leadership
- spiritual formation
- character development
- rites of passage
- outdoor adventure

Want to see more photos?

Click over to wheaton.edu/HRtour.



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF HONEYROCK AND FOUNDER OF VANGUARD: ROB RIBBE, PH.D.




As a dad who recently walked his four kids through the “what’s after high school” discernment journey, I know how you might be feeling. At my house, we were all over the map – highs, lows, many college and gap year visits, and hours spent on the web. We had fun trips, difficult conversations, and felt incredible joy in making a final decision.

As you read this, I imagine you are wondering “What’s next?” for your student. We believe a well-crafted gap year can benefit anyone who is curious, ready for a healthy challenge, and has a desire to grow. Vanguard was built with this kind of student in mind. Whether your student is academically-apt or trade-minded, questioning or firm in their faith, outdoorsy or not, Vanguard

helps young adults envision where they want to go and plan the route to get there.

We invite you to embrace this adventure and continue to consider Vanguard – our team is excited to connect with you!

ROB RIBBE, PH.D.
DIRECTOR OF HONEYROCK
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN FORMATION
AND MINISTRY
FOUNDER OF THE VANGUARD GAP YEAR OF
WHEATON COLLEGE



CONNECT WITH THE
VANGUARD TEAM TODAY!



Wheaton College
For Christ and His Kingdom