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*CPCC alumnus Chris Reith shares his personal experiences about his time at CP on the current edition of Alumni Success. Chris is now pursuing his dream to become a pilot through his commission at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.*

I am 20 years old, and a native of Charlotte. I grew up in the Mint Hill area and graduated from Independence High School in 2005. Since my freshman year of high school, I've always wanted to attend the United States Air Force Academy and began applying during my junior year. The Air Force Academy is ranked among the best schools in the nation and is also one of the most competitive to get into. I was not accepted during my senior year, and without any real university back-up plans, I fell back on CPCC. Going to CPCC was the best thing I have ever done. I started during the Fall 2005 semester, taking general courses so I could re-apply to the Air Force Academy. My experience at CPCC grew to a 2-year adventure. Never have I met such a dedicated faculty or a diverse student body. Everyone brought something unique with them, and I loved that. The courses I took were incredible and I learned a wealth of information. In high school, critical thinking was not really in the curriculum, but at CPCC, it was integrated in every class. I learned how to be more critical and to think for myself. When I had a question, I would not only ask my instructor, but I would do my own research on the topic. However, I did the bulk of my learning from being around and getting to know a great faculty and awesome peers that were just as dedicated to learning as I was.

In July 2007, I entered the United States Air Force Academy Preparatory School, a 10-month program that consists of approximately 250 students and prepares them for entry into the Air Force Academy. I will be graduating from the Prep School in May 13, 2008 and will enter the Air Force Academy Class of 2012 on June 26, 2008. I received my congressional nomination to the Academy from Representative Sue Myrick. I plan on pursuing a degree in either aeronautical engineering or physics. This is the greatest accomplishment so far in my life and I owe 99% of my success to CPCC.

As far as sports goes, I'm a cyclist and a triathlete and hope to join the Air Force Academy Cycling Team this year.