

Campus Survival 101

Tips for first years from a wily vet

By Angela Balinbin

As I start my senior year of college, I can't help but reminisce about the anticipation that danced through my frizzy 18-year old head as I waltzed into my new 10-by-12-foot castle. Ah, dorm living and the first year-experience. What a zoo.

This year, universities across the country are welcoming some of their largest freshman classes ever. Oh-so-learned college vet that I am, I offer my sage analysis on this paramount life transition.

The first couple weeks, new students bring a myriad of emotions to campus. You have the hesitant "I'm-leaving-my-parents" folks and the joyously unrestrained "**T'M LEAVING MY PARENTS!**" folks. There are the students who think college is just one giant party, and those who've just been dying to live among "mature adults".

Whatever the illusion of choice may be, students should be aware of a couple of things before they call the new roomie and stock up on Cup O'Noodles.

First of all, every student enters college with two fears: 1) I'm going to fail, and 2) No one's going to like me.

Then there are all the other subfears: What if my professor is psycho? What if I do something dumb in front of the cute guys down the hall? What if I'm taking a shower during a fire drill?

All of these are valid anxieties. Why? Because everyone arrives with the same agenda: they just want to be successful.

Academically speaking, here's some good advice on being successful: Go to class. No one calls your mom if you skip, but you're paying for each class session whether you're there or not. It's not fun when you break down your tuition, and realize you're paying roughly \$75 or so for each hour of class and by the end of the quarter have more or less wasted 450 bucks. Ouch. Go to class. It's the best way to get the highest return on your tuition investment.

Here's another: Avoid becoming chemically dependent. Aiding in your own belittlement isn't a good think. Getting into a steady pattern of abdicating self-control to a substance, whether it's alcohol, something herbal and illegal, or that sneaky drug caffeine, is dumb. And "becoming dumb" is kind of the anti-point of going to college.

The end goal of college, we hope, is to learn. And not to be trite, but some of the most growing, profound life lessons truly are learned out of class. Outside the cocoon of mom and dad, students are confronted with, well, themselves.

Consciously or unconsciously, students will face big questions: Do I have my own set of values, or am I just a paltry reflection of morals that are not my own? Can I think and act by myself? Can I own up to the choices I make?

Personal growth aside, most students and parents are concerned about career opportunities. This often prompts students to choose majors with a high potential starting salary rather than one that incorporates their talents and passions.

Hopefully, college will be a time when students can have their cake and eat it, too. After all, what's the best indicator of career success? It's when you find something you're passionate about, and someone who'll pay you to do it.

I now lend my last little pearl of 21-year-old wisdom. Make a point in college to have adventures, to explore different subjects, and to really learn from professors and peers alike.

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