



A New Perspective

I've endured the bare university experience of just taking the courses, and believe me, living on campus in residence enhances the university experience so much more.

I came to UBC in a somewhat less than common situation. I took my first year of studies on Vancouver Island at Malaspina University College. Coming out of high school, I made a choice to take my first year of courses without moving out of the house, so I could be spared the double burden of studying university material and adjusting to being ripped from my home of eighteen years.

I took the half-hour commute faithfully from my Ladysmith home to Malaspina, took my classes, and returned home. And that, pretty much, was my first year university experience. The message here is that all of you first-year and veteran UBC students living in residence have made a choice more positive than you can imagine. In my first three weeks at Place Vanier, I have already felt that sense of community that many of you must think just comes with university. It doesn't.

University in its most raw form is nothing more than taking the courses required until you've reached your specific goal. All of us living in Place Vanier are lucky enough to be in a situation that will increase our university experience immeasurably.

The differences between just taking courses at a community university such as Malaspina (where there is single residence no bigger than one house in Vanier) and actually living on campus at UBC are so overwhelming I felt compelled to share them with you.

First, you have a greater opportunity to become directly involved with the campus through volunteer organizations, intramural sports, and a multitude of other activities. At Malaspina, everyone was just interested in driving home at the end of the day. There was no spirit. There was no character. University was just a lot of buildings that I went to four days of the week to sit and learn. UBC is going to mean much more to you than that. Feel thankful that you're part of a university and a residence that has personality and opportunities.

Second, you are surrounded twenty-four hours a day by people who have similar hopes and dreams to you. Take advantage of that support system. Everyone here is in the same boat as you. At Malaspina, I spent some of the day at school, and the rest of my time back in little Ladysmith with my parents and the same-old people. Almost none of them could give me advice or assistance with university studies. Here, that aid is all about you. Help is only an arm's reach away when living in a place like Vanier where there's sure to be many other students who are taking, or already have taken, the same courses you have. Take advantage of it.

Even some things that are considered disadvantageous are actually better than taking courses at a small community university. Large classes may seem to be somewhat of a disadvantage. Malaspina's first-year class sizes were about twenty to thirty on average. However, at Malaspina the majority of the teachers had a bachelor's degree. I was amazed that at UBC the majority of professors are doctors. That's quality.

On a lighter note, perhaps some of you think that the food in Vanier leaves something to be desired. It isn't mum's home cooking, but at least you can classify it into plant, animal or mineral categories. The food at Malaspina was made by the students in the ten-month chef training program! (As the year went by, and the students advanced through the course, the food did get better.)

There are many other advantages to living on campus, and I hope you'll take the time to appreciate the lucky position you're in right now. I've endured the bare university experience of just taking the courses, and believe me, living on campus in residence enhances the university experience so much more.

Appreciate it—and take advantage of it.

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