

Finding Your Place

~Social Life ~Academics ~Wellness ~Community ~Activities

Making Your Place at College

This is your place – the campus community that you'll be calling home for the next few years. And everyone here *wants* you to succeed! They are definitely on your side.

Making your place at college is about more than just fitting in and making friends. Sure, that's a big deal. Yet, it's also about seeking a place to belong during your stay. Don't worry, you'll find your place on campus! It just requires a big of effort.

Finding Your Place

The concept of belonging makes a lot of sense. After all, you want to belong to a group of friends; you want to belong within the campus community... As you're trying to figure out where you belong, here are some things you can do to make it a big easier:

Reach Out

One of the best ways to step outside of yourself and your own issues is to reach out to others. So, reach out to someone else who may be struggling with the whole belonging thing, too. You'll be able to help each other navigate this new environment.

Stick Your Neck Out

Start by saying "hello" to a perfect stranger. And then progress to talking with that girl in your Lit class. Put yourself out there, at your own pace, and you'll soon feel more connected.

Find Common Ground

Check out an organization that might attract people with similar interests to your own. Go to that newspaper organizational meeting your give student activities a whirl. Take that first step and you're bound to find folks with whom you have something in common.

Seek Connections

Ask a few people to go to lunch. Talk with someone when you're standing in line at the bookstore. Connect on basic levels and deeper connections will soon follow.

Stay True to Yourself

College is not about impressing other people and putting on an act. Instead, just be yourself. There are enough different types of people on *any* campus that you'll find those with whom you click – and who like you for who you are.

Connecting with Others

You're going to experience many different types of people and ways of thought here on campus. That's what makes it interesting. People from different backgrounds, cultures, lifestyles, family situations... they're all here. And when you open yourself to ways of doing things that are different from your own, your world will widen, too.

During your time on campus, you'll likely interact with:

- People of different races/ethnicities
- People with varied religious beliefs
- People with disabilities
- People with other sexual orientations
- People of varying socioeconomic classes
- People from different backgrounds
- People of different ages
- People from urban, suburban and rural areas

Being a Good Neighbor

*Don't rely on "people-harming humor" for a quick laugh

*Show interest and be respectful to everyone

*Visit each other's rooms/homes

*Be kind, open and friendly

*Don't make assumptions

*Value your differences, as well as your commonalities.

You may or may not feel comfortable with difference. That's an important question to explore for yourself – and be honest! You won't be expected to instantly feel right at home with every single difference that's out there. Yet, be sure to try expanding beyond your comfort zone. You don't want to miss out on the wonderful wealth of people out there. And they shouldn't miss out on you.

Joining a Community of Learning

You're entering a community of learning. This learning happens both in *and* out of the classroom – it's a life on campus!

Lectures, class notes, papers and projects...all of these are bound to be part of your academic experience. Yet, overall, collegiate learning focuses more on personal responsibility and taking initiative. For instance

- College course work is typically based more on independent study
- No one will be looking over your shoulder
- Asking questions and voicing opinions is an excellent opportunity

Dig Into the Learning Life

- When you get to choose a topic for a project, select something that you're really interested in, not just the easiest or most popular topic.
- Don't let grades be the end-all/be-all. Put yourself into your academics and focus on the *learning*.
- Attend extra credit, out-of-class opportunities to complement in-class learning.
- Do the reading so you're prepared for class discussions.
- Pull your weight when you are part of a group project.
- Keep up with lab work and other experiential assignments to help you put learning into action.
- Talk informally with friends about what you're learning. Make academics come alive!

Faculty Facts

- >They expect respect & attention
- >They notice if you're absent
- >They provide a syllabus to help you map out the semester
- >Titles and degrees don't automatically make faculty good. Adjunct professors, teaching assistants...all can be quality educators if they take interest in students and their learning.
- >The easiest professor isn't always the best. Challenge is good!

Taking care of your mind isn't the only thing that college should be about. Giving your body and spirit the same attention will help you stay well. It's all about balance!

12 Ways Smart Students Keep Themselves Healthy

1. Balance your hobbies and interests with your academic responsibilities.
2. Get yourself into a fairly regular sleep pattern.
3. Stay connected with family and old friends while also meeting new people.
4. Don't rely on cramming and all-nighters to get your through.
5. Find ways to get outside of the campus bubble to keep things in perspective.
6. Eat a balanced mix of healthy foods in the dining hall.
7. Work out on a regular basis.
8. Reach out to others and develop solid friendships.
9. Make smart choices about alcohol and other drugs.
10. Give time to good causes.
11. Renew your spirit in ways that feel right, whether it's out in nature, in a place of worship or elsewhere.
12. Make your well-being a top priority!

Sleepy Savvy

An all-nighter might sound like a good idea- for now. Yet messing with your sleep patterns can have long-term effects. It can:

- ~ Play with your memory
- ~ Cause tasks to take twice as long
- ~ Make you irritable
- ~ Make you a dangerous driver
- ~ Impact your health
- ~ Affect how you look

Making Good Choices

You're now in a position to make your own choices and taste a bit of freedom. And the key to truly *enjoying* this freedom is taking responsibility for your choices.

Smart Choices

There are many choices facing you these days. Some things to remember:

- **Be safe on social networking sites.** Don't make everything public, guard your reputation (everyone from employers to stalkers are watching!) and meet online friends in public.
- **Don't walk alone after dark.** Walk with friends or call the campus service for a safe way home.
- **Don't give away your social security number or other personal information to unknown sources.** Identity theft is fast becoming a big problem-don't become a victim.
- **Don't engage in high-risk drinking or drugging.** When your judgment is compromised, you get hurt or hurt others. Most student sexual assaults occur when one or both people are under the influence, as do drinking and illegal use of prescription meds and more.
- **Don't accept drinks from strangers.** The number of "date rape drugs" being slipped into drinks makes it important to know exactly where your drink is and what's in it.
- **Don't leave your room unlocked.** If you're in there, someone intending to do you harm has easy access. And if you're not in there, your belongings and your roommate's are fair game.
- **Don't leave your belongings unattended.** Where you are, iPods, laptops, your wallet and more are easy pickings for thieves.
- **Keep an eye on text books.** Write your name along the binding on a certain page in every book. This may allow police to identify them more easily should they be stolen.
- **Take care with credit/ATM cards.** It's tough to keep track of finances when you're always using a credit or ATM card – and it's easy to spend beyond your means.

Asking for Help

Whether you're feeling down, having difficulty with a certain class or needing some guidance, getting help is *never* a sign of weakness. It's actually a show of strength to be able to say, "I'm just not sure how to handle this on my own." It's a smart thing to do.

And the nice thing about being at school is that many different kinds of help are right at your fingertips. For instance:

- **Having a tough time tackling one of your papers or understanding a certain academic subject?** Check out the campus writing center, academic assistance center and/or tutors for guidance.
- **Need to talk with someone about trouble you're going through?** Free, confidential counselors are available to help you sort through issues and increase your emotional health. These folks *chose* to work with college students – they really understand what's happening in your world.
- **Unsure about an assignment or a topic covered in class?** Faculty members have office hours for you to use so, go visit them.
- **Have a health concern?** Don't just "stick it out" when there's a campus health center right at your disposal. It's better to get checked when something in your body goes wrong rather than waiting for it to get better. Better safe than sorry!
- **Just need to talk something out?** You're in luck! You can go to an ACA, someone in Campus Ministry, your Hall Director, an advisor... There are many people here who'd be *glad* to help you through the rough patches.

Common Counseling Concerns

~Stress ~Anxiety ~Self-Esteem ~Relationships ~Depression ~Alcohol
~Sexual Identity ~Body Image ~Eating Disorders ~Violence and trauma
~Suicidal thoughts

~Deanna Wilkins MUW's counselor
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*Be sure to watch the campus bulletin boards and keep your ears open regarding workshops and topics like: Test taking, resume writing, helping a friend in trouble, public speaking, reading for comprehension, overcoming anxiety, dealing with eating disorders, building self-esteem, and help with learning disabilities.

Being the Real You

There's peer pressure at college – of course. Some “friends” may expect you to go along with their decisions, even though they don't feel right to you. Others may push you to do things that you just don't want to do.

That's why it's so important to stay true to who you are. You know what's important to you right? Just because you're at school doesn't mean you have to give up on those beliefs. This is an environment where you can get in even better touch with your values. For instance:

- **Serve others.** College isn't all about you. Doing community service – giving your time – is a value that will last a lifetime.
- **Make time to worship.** If this practice means a lot to you, keep it up. There are campus and community places of worship readily available.
- **Treat others well.** Don't make others the butt of jokes to “fit in.” Instead, find friends who value treating people well.
- **Decide about drinking.** If you've made the decision to abstain or drink responsibly, by myth that everyone else is drinking heavily shouldn't saw you. It's just not true; most other students DON'T drink that much, if at all.
- **Say “no.”** Whether it's experimenting with drugs, being pressured to go farther than you'd like in a relationship or being pushed to put off studying in favor of partying, you *can* say no.

If something doesn't feel right, chances are that it isn't for you. So, trust your instincts and be the real you. It'll soon help you find your true place in this college world.

Questions to Ask Yourself When Making a Decision

- *Would I want my friends and family to know that I made this decision?
- *Will this decision do anyone harm? Will it do me harm?
- *How will this decision impact me in the long term? And others?
- *How would I feel if this decision was publicized?
- *Am I proud of this decision?