First Year: Fears and Advice

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During Friday’s super seminar, Dr. Berkich asked the freshmen to follow him in another classroom to write down their fears and share with their class. Simultaneously, the sophomores and juniors were asked to write down their advice for the freshmen. Once each student wrote their own advice they formed groups and pick the best advice, revise the writing, and then email them to Dr. Berkich. These are the results.

My Greatest Fear

My greatest fear about going to TAMUCC is the slowly burning suspicion that I didn’t do enough research into all my options before making a decision. To be perfectly honest, I only choose an English major because I wanted my parents to stop asking me about college, and I only choose TAMUCC because I didn’t feel like taking down all my posters. Now that I’m here, however, I worry that the other colleges I received offers from would have been a better fit not only for my major, but to get me on the right path in life in general. Granted, there will always be opportunities to transfer to another college, but then my greatest fear would be if transferring from TAMUCC was a good idea, so I guess the whole situation’s a damned if you do, damned if you don’t either way you look at.

The anxiety of starting Freshman year is something that all college students have to face and overcome. Each individual has their own difficulties and fears that holds them back. For me, it is the idea that I could disappoint the people that believe in me. Support from my family and friends has been a blessing and a curse. I’m afraid their expectations are more than I can live up to but at the same time, I am so thankful that I have a support system that cares about me so deeply. I know that some people reading this will find it ridiculous that I am scared of something so positive. However, the endless encouragement and support from the people I love has turned into a negative cloud hanging over my head. A cloud that casts a bigger shadow than I do.

I have always worked hard to accomplish my goals, and usually my efforts have paid off in the end. Fortunately, I always had the comfort of knowing if I failed my biggest supporters were there to lift me up and truly there were no vital consequences. The pressure and risk of failure is much greater than ever before. I am a first generation college student with large goals and a lot on the line. I feel as if I am a statistic expected to fail because of my background. I know that the worst consequence of my failure is not the loss of my goal but disappointing those who supported me through all my hard work. It is this fear that motivates me to try harder to succeed. Considering I have made it this far, maybe I’m not just a statistic. All I can do is try my best.
When coming to TAMUCC I was terribly afraid of two major things. Many people are very social and outgoing, but being an introvert I have a fear of being social and having to take public transportation. Trying to be social is hard for antisocial people like me, especially when you’re trying not to be awkward. I have anxiety when it comes to meeting people. So it will be hard to get along with my professors and my new roommates. Living with two people I don’t know absolutely terrifies me. On the other hand public transportation is just a surreal concept for me because I come from a place that doesn’t have it. I would hate to get on the wrong bus and get lost in Corpus, plus I don’t know where anything is here. I’m to scared to ask for direction from the bus driver because of my introverted personality.

I am naturally a very shy person that has always feared speaking in front of big crowds, and I knew that at some point I would have to give a presentation. During the presentation I fear that I will mess up and be judged, or that I will talk to fast and no one will understand me. I fear that I will panic with all of the eyes on me because I have never liked being the center of attention. This causes me to become very nervous because I feel like they know when I mess up. However I know that with more practice I can become more comfortable when giving presentations.

Coming in as a freshman is overwhelming, but at the same time it’s so exciting to be able to start a whole new adventure. One of my biggest fears was not fitting in or finding the right friends. During the first week of school I was scared of the work load and if I would be able to balance out a schedule. However after I heard my professors talk about the assignments we had, I realized if I worked as hard as I did in High school or even harder I would be successful. I also traveled 8 and a half hours away from home, so I was nervous to be away from my family. My family has been there with me for pretty much everything, but I chose to do this for myself and by myself. So far it has paid off and I love my new home.

One of my biggest fears going into college is not being able to succeed in the path i’m taking toward becoming a nurse and not feeling happy in college. I’m nervous that I won’t be able to get into nursing school and that i’ll be a disappointment to myself, as harsh as that sounds. Becoming a NICU nurse has become one of my biggest dreams and the thought of failing to reach my goal scares me. Right now all my classes feel intimidating, and college feels lonely because i don’t have all the friends I had made by senior year through marching band and dance. I’m scared that i won’t ever feel comfortable without the group of friends I had, friends that made me feel so happy and comfortable with myself despite the difficulties i faced in high school. Secretly I’m scared that college will become a really lonely place.

Whether it is the flash of the camera or simply striking up a conversation, the fear is always
present. Working for a year and a half, the abomination of this fear is realized. The fact that people can’t respect boundaries sickens me. Working thirty hours a week puts me at such a disadvantage, since it exposes me to public indecency more that I would like to admit. My biggest fear in college stems from the agonizing, and frankly barbaric ways people can treat one another, particularly strangers. With my new escape into the college lifestyle, I hope to stay away from the word attractive. I am hoping the constant eye-batting, hair-twirling and picture taking phase of my life is over. I don’t want to relive the inundation of the flirts again.

Upperclassmen Advice

As a freshman you should know that just attending your classes won’t cut it at a university. Sit in the front, ask questions, and participate in projects because you’d want your professors to know who you are. Develop connections with your professors. It’s a good feeling whenever a professor knows you by name. Be organized between school work, study time, and social events. Search for new things whether it’s new people, programs, or hobbies to decompress. You have to be the one who gets out of your way to ask for help if you need it in order to succeed.

The most pertinent advice I received as a freshman at TAMUCC was, “don’t be afraid to walk into the wrong classroom”. These words stuck with me so deeply because, you can apply this to just about anything in life. No one should be afraid to do things, be wrong, and make mistakes. I have learned that when you take the risk and do something you think you might not enjoy or, answer a question even if it is wrong, that the payoff is far greater than you expect. College is all about taking risks, gaining new experiences, and thus, growing from it all. Many things are going to change in your life in the subsequent years but, do not let that change scare you from being something uniquely great. Sometimes you just have to grab life by the balls and forget anything or anyone that tries to hold you back.

Repeatedly, professional mentors have offered this identical advice to me which is curtly: “don’t forget to have fun”. If you’re like me, your likely response is “no thanks, fun is for the weak”. That's what I thought until sophomore year when I started resenting my own dreams, losing my grades, and, overall, I realized I was miserable. (Here’s some subsidiary advice: if you’re miserable you’re doing something wrong.) Heed this: your goal here is to determine what you truly love; if you study what you love and unify it with your ambition, achievement and opportunities will readily follow. So have “fun”: be human and social, join classes and clubs for pleasure, and allow yourself to discover yourself. Doing just that is a supremely more valuable experience than getting A+'s by keeping your head in a book, meanwhile missing what's going on before you. Also, professors always make for worthwhile conversation.

An important thing to remember is to visit with professors and academic advisors. Professors will be helpful with your classes and connecting with them might be beneficial in the future. They could be the ones who write recommendation letters for you. Advisors are really helpful to make
you take the classes you really need. It’s easier when someone tells you where you need to be according to your major and how far you are in your degree plan. It can save you serious problems in the long run. Also going to on campus event is a great way to distress when necessary and find out about awesome organizations and opportunities the school has to offer. It’s also a great way to meet new people, build friendships, and try things you probably wouldn’t have tried otherwise.

As someone who has completed my first year as a college student, I can say one of the most important things freshman can do is be open to new experiences. The first few weeks will have a multitude of clubs and organizations to join and it is important to put in the effort to see what they have to offer. You will have an opportunity to make new friends and build your resume. However, do not stress about forcing friendships, everyone is struggling with being new and alone. You will find amazing friendships most likely unexpectedly. Lastly, often we might come in to college with the mentality of being prepared and being one of the smartest ones. This mentality will be proven wrong as you discover everyone has different strengths and talents. The most important thing to remember is always continue to work hard in everything you do.

The best advice I believe I can give to a freshman, and the advice I wish I had received myself, would be to manage your time more wisely. Nothing is more beneficial to living on your own and handling the responsibilities of a college student than knowing how to best manage all that you have to do in a time-efficient manner. Keep to-do lists, make a schedule, or keep a calendar. Whatever can keep you on top of things and keep your stress levels down is the key to a successful freshman year.

I’m going on my second year of college and although I haven’t figured it all out, I have figured out some things. I’ll give you one simple but widely applicable piece of advice. Find balance. Sometimes we become consumed, obsessed or excessively worried over school and we end up neglecting other important aspects of life. My first semester in college I was prepared to make the best grades possible. I had a competitive attitude with a mentality of “I’m not here to make friends, I’m here to win.” And that’s exactly what happened! In conclusion, in whatever you do find a balance in order to get the most possible out of your college experience.

There are many things you may worry about going in: who you want as a friend, your major, finding the “one”. Do not worry about those things;they are vital to the college experience but friends, majors, and love should be the exciting and inspiring pieces of college. Worry about your classes and working hard for a 4.0. Allow the vital pieces to fit into your life organically and lift you up when the stress of school is too much. Be excited for your major, find friends to make you laugh and ones you actually like, and find a great love that will make you grow. Let the good vibes flow.

When entering college there are several things to keep in mind: college is not high school, you
must learn to prioritize, and life doesn't always go as planned. In college there is no atmosphere of judgment and labels. Don't let high school fears weigh you down. With this new independence, you must prioritize. Keep in mind you are here to get an education. Yes, having a social life is important, but it's just as important to keep up with your work. You are paying too much to not take your education seriously. This being said, don't worry if things don't work out the way you planned. You are becoming your own person: stay positive, have fun, keep learning, and make your own story!

Take advantage of the resources the campus provides and additional resources that your professors may provide. Some professors may be a little elusive, so it is important to know their office hours. If you are having trouble understanding the material, attend a SI section, or even ask your fellow classmates for help. Campus learning resources are here for a reason. They are not necessarily intended for people who are already struggling, but are helpful for those who are just maintaining their grasp of a class. Stay focused on learning the material. It is not enough to just attend class. Professors will appreciate your motivation to stay engaged and be an active learner. We suggest being well rested, and not rushed when you enter a class. Eating a good breakfast will help you stay attentive in class. Good luck!

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