

Finding The Balance: The Key For Success in University

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Written by Nadia Bathish on August 23, 2017

It's hard to believe that we have less than a month left until September. The beginning of the month of August marks the acceptable time to get ready for back to school. For many this may simply involve picking up some pencils, notebooks, a new backpack, and possibly some fresh new kicks.

However, for those joining the 447,000 Ontarian undergrads, this checklist goes way beyond object necessities. Being a fifth year student, I pretty much got the drill locked down when preparing for the upcoming year. Look over my class schedule and plan accordingly, check in on my finances and budget for the upcoming year, and finally list out methods in which I plan to upkeep my personal wellness. At this point, I wouldn't say I'm an expert in fulfilling each step, but it is nice to be moving towards a general direction. This definitely was not the case in my first year.

For many, transitioning into university marks the beginning of complete independence and freedom in all senses. We are left to figure out how to allocate our time, finances, and holistic wellbeing after years and years of support from friends, family, and teachers. To even call the shift from high school to university a "transition" is a far stretch. All of a sudden survival solely becomes your burden with little wiggle room to make mistakes. For example, the size of first year classes are no surprise to these incoming students, yet many still have a difficult time adjusting to the lack of consistent guidance from professors. In addition to this, the new reality of less class time, which was thought to be a blessing, is quickly learned to be otherwise as it typically equates to more times on Netflix rather than independent studies.

Already struggling to keep up with this long list of newfound responsibilities, next we have the issues of financial pressures. Though we have seen an increase in funding to OSAP throughout the years, students are still looking to part-time work during their studies to sustain an adequate living. Creating and sticking to a set budget for the first time is included under this umbrella. For the majority of incoming students, this is the first time they will be living on an indispensable income, which means priorities have to be set and followed. Last, but most certainly not least, are the emotional challenges due to the changed landscape/surroundings. Adjustments to the support system you were accustomed to are in order as distance and alternate schedules play a large factor in homesickness and student wellbeing.

Balance is the key for success in university. We see that the most successful students are the ones that get involved beyond the classroom. In working at a students' union over the summer, I find Orientation Week to be a crucial aspect, as this is the first point of contact with many clubs, teams, and community programs. Students are additionally exposed to the many services available to them on campus that range from academics to wellness. And on top of all of this, we have loads of events and programming where you can meet new people and perhaps make lifelong friends. Though overwhelming at first, transitioning to university is an experience that one shouldn't shy away from. Saying that I am excited for this upcoming O-Week would be an understatement. Recognizing the benefits it provides, and keeping up this momentum throughout the year, we can hopefully accomplish the goal of a smoother transition and an overall better university experience for all.