

The purpose of this article is to help you young divers recognize and better understand the transition that will take place when you graduate from high school and continue your education and competitive diving career by attending some college or university. Upon graduating from high school, most of you are very curious as to how college could be much different than what you have been doing. After all, you attend class, study, go to practice, and compete in meets... so what's the big deal? I believe you begin to recognize the difference soon after you receive your high school diploma and realize that you are no longer going back to the ole alma mater to see your good friends, share all of the school activities, and be with teachers who know you personally and recognize your abilities and accomplishments.

So, starting with this realization, I would like to discuss some of the changes that you can look forward to when you step on the campus for the first time. Naturally, you won't experience all of the changes mentioned here nor will you react to the changes the same way as others because you all come from different home and high school environments. These environmental differences may include: the experience you have had in the length and number of times away from home, the kind of social and domestic responsibilities you have accepted at home, the activity and academic accomplishments you have acquired in school, etc. One thing for sure, the changes you endure the first few weeks in college often frighten, confuse and frustrate you but this should be recognized as a normal reaction to change.

Family Dependence

One of the first changes you recognized the first week on campus is that you will no longer be with your family but be out there all by yourself. At first, some of you feel "free" from the confined and disciplined atmosphere found at home. Now you can make all of your own decisions with no one to tell you differently. Somehow, this feeling soon wears off and you start to acquire a little homesickness. You start to appreciate Mom and Dad a little more for they were right there to help you with problems even though, at the time, you felt they were too nosy or didn't fully understand you.

You also begin to realize that they were the ones who provided you with the car and gave you spending money so you didn't have to work while you were competing on the team. They were always there to encourage and support you when you were trying to accomplish greater things. They offered love, compassion, and guidance whenever you needed it and provided counseling and direction when you had problems with love affairs, sex, money, studies, etc... you also start to remember who shared your moments of success and offered you sympathy and understanding in your moments of despair. So, all in all, you begin to realize that your parents were your greatest fans and influenced you most during your early school years. This is when you begin to understand that you must accept the loss of those who gave you comfort and security and now stand on your own.

Loss of Friends

During the senior year in high school, many students feel that they are far superior to the underclassmen, teachers, and even their parents. They often feel that the lower grade kids are really stupid and the teachers don't know what is going on. And there is a tendency to think that if you are an athlete and have raised above mediocrity by placing high in the city, regional or state championships, then you are real special and a little above the rest of the crowd. A lot of this charisma begins to fade soon after graduation and then totally disappears the moment you get to college for you suddenly realize that you are a freshman again and no one is really too concerned about you or what you have accomplished. You normally move into a dormitory a total stranger and begin to meet new people by questioning them as to what you are supposed to do next. Making new friends at this time isn't very hard for you are all in the same state of confusion and loneliness. During the first few weeks in college, you usually write and telephone a lot to your high school sweetheart, friends and parents for you are still trying to adjust to your new style of living. The frequency of this kind of communication soon dies down as you become accustomed to college life.

College Roommate

Most university's require that you live in a dormitory for at least the first year. Normally, you can select a single room or you can share a room with another person. Most students decide on the latter for it is a little cheaper and a lot less lonely. The type of roommate you select usually has much to do with how well you will like your first year on campus. Having been a college coach for nearly forty years, I can honestly state that one of the prime problems you, as a freshman, may encounter is getting along with a roommate. Because this issue is so important, I would like to make some suggestions that may help you when selecting a roommate:

1. It is best not to select a potential teammate or an old high school classmate. If you select a teammate and have a quarrel, that problem is often brought into practice with you which causes more problems. If you select a high school classmate, you frequently find many different things about each other that were overlooked when going to school together. So what was a good friendship at home can end up being a very uncomfortable relationship in college. This is not to say that you can't get along with a teammate or former classmate for it often works... but not too often.
2. Try to room with a person who has similar lifestyles, social and study habits. For example, trying to room with a person who smokes, drinks, does drugs, or frequently has an all night guest makes it quite uncomfortable for a roommate who isn't into any of these.
3. Once settled into your room for a few days, plan a conference with the purpose of deciding on certain ground rules that can make sharing the room a little more harmonious. Some rules to consider may include:
 - a. The sharing of each others clothes and personal articles.
 - b. Playing the stereo or watching TV during studying hours, and how loud.
 - c. The control of friends coming into the room at night for "bull sessions" when one or both of you wish to study.
 - d. Having night or overnight guests in the room.
 - e. Sharing responsibilities in keeping the room clean. Bad feelings can develop if one is very clean and the other is a slob.
 - f. Rules for using the telephone. A roommate can stay on the phone for hours with little or no regard for anyone else.
 - g. Try to recognize, accept, and adjust to each others personal habits such as snoring, cussing, talking people down, cracking knuckles, eating and storing food in the room, etc.
4. Be honest with each other and don't be afraid to discuss differences when they occur. It is dangerous to hold back things bothering you then attack the roommate when in a state of anger.

Adjustment to the Campus

Perhaps the first couple of weeks on campus are the most confusing and frustrating for you aren't familiar with anything in relation to location of buildings, classes, academic resources, etc. Everyone has to ask everyone else where to buy books, pay fees, where freshman meetings are being held and so on. Usually a feeling of loneliness and anxiety creeps over you at this for you are not familiar with anything and you don't have any friends to help you. The feeling of being "big time" a couple of months ago is now long gone and you have to accept that you are nothing but a "greenie" freshman starting all over again.

Choosing a Sorority or Fraternity

Whether or not you have the time and the money to join a social greek society is strictly a personal decision. The social activities related to these societies takes a great deal of time and can greatly interfere with your studies and your athletic responsibilities. Some athletes survive such activities but it isn't easy for a freshman trying to adjust to college life.

Study Habits

One big change found in college is the great increase in reading, writing, and studying demanded from most of the courses offered. You soon find that you can't socialize much and still uphold your class requirements. A couple of evenings in the dorm will convince you that it is not the place to study or get things done unless you can accept all of the noise and commotion. You will find it best to study in one of the campus libraries or study areas which give you privacy and quiet time. I would suggest that you make your studies your top priority and fulfill all of your course requirements each evening before seeking recreational pleasures such as watching TV, attending athletic events, going to the movies, playing cards etc. Once you learn to allocate your time, you will find plenty of time to do other things besides study. If you are an athlete, it is very important to keep up with your studies so that you can remain eligible for the team. Avoiding your studies results in a few "all nighters" and these don't place you in the best of physical condition or allow for a good practice or competition.

Diving on the Team

As an incoming freshman you will find diving on a college varsity team much different than diving in high school. For one thing, you will find the coach more demanding of your time than what you are used to. Most often, you will be expected to work out twice a day and cover such activities as conditioning, line-ups, trampoline, port-o-pit, viewing video, lead-ups, along with a full list of dives. On top of this, you have to dive one three and ten meter platform, where in high school you had to dive only from the one meter springboard. Traveling to meets over greater distances than in high school also takes a lot of time away from school. It is not unusual for a diver to be off campus two or three days a week for eight or nine weeks during the conference and championship part of the season. Missing that much school makes it very difficult for the athletes and the chance of flunking out are very good unless you develop good studying habits early in your college career.

I'm sure that there are many other areas that I could have covered regarding college life, but these are just a few suggestions to help you realize that going to a university and competing on a team is no piece of cake. You must apply yourself and be consistent in your efforts or you will find yourself in academic and athletic trouble. All universities offer tutors and you have to be foolish not to use them at every available time whether you are a good student or not. It is so important that you get a good start in this new life for once you fall behind, it is extremely difficult to get back on track. So, good luck in your college life and I wish you continued success both in the classroom and with your athletic competitions.

By Hobie Billingsley