“I say,
It’s the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I’m a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That’s me.”
~Phenomenal Woman,
Maya Angelou

How to Survive Your First Semester of College

From one girl to the next...

Survival Guide for the first semester at Saint Michael’s College
About the Stories Enclosed...

First Year females from the class of 2018 living on Ryan Hall’s first floor volunteered to share their first semester experiences with other first year females at Saint Mike’s. Sharing these stories and the advice they provide are for the empowerment and betterment of our female community at Saint Mike’s. It takes incredibly brilliant and brave young women* to discuss topics that might make one uncomfortable. Please treat each story in this booklet with the respect it deserves.

I hope you enjoy reading and learning from these honest stories!

-Ryan Hall’s “North Side”

*The names of these females will be withheld for the sake of their privacy*

Surviving the Weekend

“Going out on the weekends and being apart of the party scene can be a very exciting part of college. It can be a great way to meet lots of new people and have a lot of fun. However, it’s really important to take precautions and stay safe. I’d say the most important thing you can do is always stay with friends; don’t stray off by yourself. Have a buddy system in place and keep track of each other so no one ends up alone. When it comes to drinking, it’s really important to never take drinks from people and never to leave your drink unattended. Doing so will ensure that no one can give you any drinks that have any type drugs in them. It’s also really important to know your own limits and not to push them. No one ever has fun if they drink to the point of being sick or if they get themselves into trouble due to their lack of self control when too intoxicated. Remember that if you, or any of your friends are in serious danger to go to an RA on duty or to public safety. If someone makes you feel uncomfortable or violated you should always tell someone who can help. If you take some simple precautions, you’re sure to have fun and safe weekends here at St. Mike’s.”

-J

How to Handle Sleep in College

“Time management is critical. Budget your time so you can stay healthy and get the proper amount of sleep. Minimize stress by turning off electronics and focus on resting. Try reading a book or drinking a cup of tea. You will have more “free time” in college than in high school. Try to find a time in your day for meditation or a 30 minute nap to de-stress. It’s important to develop a healthy sleep cycle to maximize academic performance.”

-K
**Laundry 101: ADVICE**

“Leave the doors open to air out washers. Don’t overload washers! If you fill the washers too much the water will not rinse through your clothes and they will be soaked. Time your clothes! Set a timer for before it is actually done because otherwise people will move your clothes for you. It is okay to leave your laundry bag and basket in the room while your laundry is being washed, but the laundry room is not your closet so do not leave your clothes down there with it.” ~T

**Study Tips**

“Set aside time for homework. Try not to get behind on your classes. Ask for help if you need it— in the long run, it will be worth it. Also, professors like to see that you care. We also have tutors available that are super helpful. Try to do your work alone— you will most likely be much more productive. Try also to leave electronics at home! They are very distracting.” ~M

**Safety**

“When you go out, have a buddy, especially when you are walking home. Always keep your door locked. Download the livesafe app. On weekends, don’t take a drink from someone you don’t know or trust. There are blue emergency poles that you can always press the button for help if you feel unsafe.” ~J

**How to tell your Roommate that’s NOT okay:**

“Being a student who has dealt with issues involving their roommate, I can tell you firsthand how to work through it. My roommate and I, from the beginning, were very different. She did not keep her side clean, she borrowed my stuff without asking and was inconsiderate while I was sleeping. In the beginning, I tried asking her nicely, but that did not work. When I finally set a meeting with my RA, she realized I was serious and was annoyed with her actions. We sat down with our RA and RD and we talked about the things she did that bothered me and since then, she has been working towards improving them.” ~C

**Are people going to judge me because of what I look like and what I wear?**

“Your physical appearance does not define you. How you perceive your body and how it affects you is up to you. Value yourself based on who you are, not what you look like and others will do the same. Most people in college are trying to find friends who are like them, not that look like them. Be yourself and be confident in your personality.” ~A
How do you find time for yourself in College?

“It is really hard to initially find time for yourself in college. What I always do is leave a little early for class so I have time to get a coffee and sit by myself for a couple minutes. It’s nice to get out of your room and just think quietly for a couple minutes.” ~E

What are some ways to relieve stress?

“Stress is inevitable in college. The best way to relieve some stress is to block everything out and set aside a time to listen to music and relax. This year I have learned from one of my professors that meditation is a really effective way to relieve stress. I think it helps to just remove yourself from the situation and reflect on it. Music is something that always helps relieve my stress.” ~E

How bad are the communal showers? Are they gross?

“The showers and bathroom in general aren’t that bad, it’s what you make it. Just follow proper bathroom etiquette and clean up after yourself! Clean your hair up of the ground, counter, and shower walls. Clean up shampoo and toothpaste that falls. Wipe the seat and flush. Basically if you keep what you do clean and so does everyone else, it can’t get that dirty!” ~J

How can I effectively manage my time in college?

“College is a very busy and stressful time especially for first year students, but there are many things that you can do to manage your time more effectively. First, I would definitely keep an agenda so you can keep track of all the things that you need to do. That way you can plan out specific times to complete your work. Secondly, keeping at To Do list has been very helpful for me personally. Creating a list for specific days, and for the entire week can be beneficial when managing your time because it gives you a better idea of what you need to complete, and how much time each task will take. Lastly, it is important that you always prioritize. Figure out what things you need to do in order to be successful in college, for example I always write my papers 3-4 days before they are due so I can go back and edit them the day before they are due. That is a small example but it has helped my writing improve. In order to manage your time effectively you need to be able to figure out what you should, and shouldn’t be spending a lot of time on.” ~A
How do I deal with homesickness?

“Homesickness is something that I’ve been struggling with. If you can’t go home often it can be very hard. What I do is talk to my parents and brother on a daily basis. I also make sure to keep in touch with my friends from home that I don’t get to see as often. Video chatting is also a good way of keeping touch since you can also see the person you are talking to.” ~H

Worried Weekender & Social Media...

Dear Worried Weekender,

“Don’t worry! Before you come to college you should first make all of your social media accounts private, and delete things (or untag) photos and posts that you wouldn’t want your future boss seeing. While you’re in college it is okay to go out on the weekends, but be careful when you post, because everyone is right! What you post can easily become public— even when you are private. Only share things that would make a business want to hire you; and this most likely means keeping your weekend photos off of the Internet. Clean up your accounts, go private, make good decisions, and post things that put you in a positive light!”

~L

How do I handle FOMO (the fear of missing out) with so much on my plate freshmen year?

“Being eager to make friends and new memories is one of the pressures of freshmen year that originates even before your arrival at school. For me, I seemed to always be in five different places at once. As the school year goes on and you accumulate friends and acquaintances, the invitations increase. It is important to keep academic priorities in mind. If you have a big Friday exam or have a big paper due, but get invited out, it may not be in your best interest to go, but make a promise to yourself that if you get a certain grade on your exam or paper, you’ll reward yourself with something. Maybe Einstein’s, a new shirt, or an outing to Burlington the next day. If you work with this system, then instead of regretting and worrying about missing out, you’ll have something to look forward to and won’t be as concerned about what you could’ve potentially done. As far as friends go, if you have to turn down plans on one night, automatically ask your friends for other plans the following day, this way you still get to hang out and strengthen your friendship, but also don’t compromise your grades. Finally, it’s important to keep in mind that sometimes being alone can be good to clear your head and remember priorities anyways, it may help you to rest or feel better and less stressed. You have four years to make the memories that everyone recalls for their entire lives, don’t rush things.” ~H
Is there pressure to drink in college? Will I be judged if I choose not to drink?

“At Saint Michael’s College, choosing not to drink is 100% acceptable. In our community, I have personally experienced that there is little to no pressure to drink. If you are not interested in drinking, no one will try to convince you to be interested in drinking. It’s as simple as that. You shouldn’t be worried about peer pressure or judgment from other students to drink; everyone is supportive and respectful regardless of your decisions. There are so many opportunities for students on the weekends, such as “You Count” events, floor socials in residential buildings, movie nights, opportunities to explore Burlington/Winooski, etc. All of these activities are great chances to meet new people and widen your horizons. If you choose not to drink and go to parties on the weekends, I guarantee you will have as much fun as the students who do, if not more. Whether it’s a perspective student, or a college graduate reflecting on their four years, the act of drinking tends to litter an individual’s expectations or memories of college. But the truth that no one tells you about college is that choosing not to drink is just as common, and just as acceptable as choosing to drink.” —S

Should we try for a long distance relationship?

“Yes! There are lots of couples who have very successful long distance relationships in college. Many people feel they become stronger because of it. The key to any relationship is communication and that becomes very important when you’re apart for extended periods of time. Communication doesn’t mean you have to be in contact every second of every day though. If you both have some time, a quick phone call is nice to catch up every few days. “Goodnight” and “good morning” texts are quick and sweet and they let your partner know that you are thinking of them. Face-timing is super fun and you can do it pretty much anywhere. Another thing that lots of couples do is Skype dates. Find an empty classroom or kick your roommate out of your dorm room and call your bae. It’s super fun to see their face and you can talk, watch videos, listen to music, and just enjoy each other’s company. Also, make sure you get their mailing address. Handwritten notes and small gifts are simple, inexpensive, and they can make anyone’s day. Also, college kids love any food that isn’t dining hall food so maybe send them a bag of their favorite candy on their birthday or Halloween. Keeping in touch is an important part of communication but what’s more important is communicating what you’re feeling. If it’s too much for you or you are unhappy in any way, tell them. There’s no sense in being miserable but make sure you give it a real chance. It’s nice to know you have someone to go home to and when you finally get to see them after a long time apart it makes it all worth it.” —C