EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED AT COLLEGE

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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ABSTRACT

As a freshman, I had a difficult time adjusting to life on my own. It was in those first months I began to think about what I could do for my thesis. I wanted to create some kind of "Welcome to Ball State" paper that might help others get over those "freshmen jitters." The following manuscript is a hodgepodge of information that I have found useful here. In writing my thesis, I have been able to reminisce about the good and the bad times, and I truly believe that everything I need to know I learned at college.

I am providing a copy of my thesis to the Office of Admissions. Hopefully, they will be able to use some of the information in presentations to future Ball State students.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Rai Peterson for her guidance as my advisor. Thanks to the Ball State community for making my four years here the best of my life -- so far. And a very big thank you to everyone who has lived on fourth floor Botsford Hall in the last four years. Thank you all for the memories!
INTRODUCTION

I began my career at Ball State University the summer before my senior year of high school. I took a class through the Summer Honors Program. It was a residential, two week program for Ball State credit. I had never been away from home, continuously, for that long and it was difficult; I got home-sick half-way through. It was a great experience, though. I have never had to share my room, so having a roommate was a new experience; luckily we got along great. The class I took only had eight people in it, so it wasn't a true representation of a typical college class size, but trying to get through sixteen weeks worth of material in two weeks taught me how to budget time!

I wasn't much of a socializer in high school; I got a crash course in two weeks. A dance had been planned for us as well as a picnic at one of the professor's houses. In addition, there was a group of us who did things together: going to a movie, shopping, playing cards; a couple of my friends even taught me how to play the piano. (Just one song!) I think the one thing I carried away with me from those two weeks was a new sense of self-confidence. After being around the same people for 12 years, sometimes you wonder if you'll remember how to meet new people when you move away. That summer I learned that, yes, I did still remember how to make friends!

I made it through my senior year of high school and before I knew it, it was time to move to Ball State. About two weeks before the big day, I started to have second thoughts about it and had
told my mom I wanted to drop out and become a nanny. Thankfully, Mom wouldn't allow that, and off I went to college. To say I was home-sick might just be the understatement of the decade. Within about three hours I was ready to pack up and go home, and classes didn't start for three more days! My first class gave me hope. The professor told us that she had just moved to Muncie from a small town in Maine; I figured, if she could survive in Muncie, so could I.

Despite all of my misgivings, I did make it through my senior year at Ball State, alive and with my sanity intact. Even through my junior year here, there were times when I wanted to call it quits and go home, but I stuck it out and now I am getting ready to graduate and go on to law school. Anything can happen!
TIME MANAGEMENT

Adjusting to life at college, away from parents, took some time. With no one around to tell me what to do (or not to do) and with most classes on MWF or TR, it is tempting to put off doing homework, to watch television, to go to the movies, or to just chat with neighbors. I learned real quickly that it is possible to balance homework and a social life. If you break down a week, there are 168 hours total. A typical class load is about 15-17 hours, let’s say 16, and about 2 hours of study a week per hour in class; that’s 48 hours. Everyone has got to sleep sometime. (Yes—college students do actually sleep!) At 8 hours a night, that adds up to 56 hours. Also, all of us have to eat, do laundry, write letters to all our family and friends, shower, etc. If you figure 5 hours a day, that’s 35 hours for the week. If you plan to work on campus, that will take up about 8 hours a week. All together, these things take up only 147 hours a week. That leaves 21 hours a week to go to a movie or a party, attend a concert or sporting event, or get involved with one of Ball State’s 300 Student organizations.¹

True, it is easy to get caught up in the socializing and sleeping aspects of college and neglect the studying part. But a big part of college life is learning how to take responsibility and budget time wisely so you’re not rushing to get stuff done at the last minute. It isn’t all that difficult a task, and if I can learn to budget my time, believe me - ANYONE can!
DATA COURTESY OF
A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF A BSU STUDENT

CLASSES & STUDYING (28.5%)
NECESSITIES OF LIFE (20.8%)
SLEEPING (33.3%)
ON CAMPUS JOB (4.8%)
OTHER (12.5%)
HONORS COURSES

Some of the honors classes I took were some of my favorite ones. The classes stretch your mind and make you look at things from a different perspective. I had taken a current issues class in high school so I knew something about the state of the world, but the honors sequence has developed my views.

The global studies class was my favorite. The class I took from the geography department focused on the economies and politics of the developed and developing worlds. It was somewhat like economic geography. It was a helpful class in that, as a political science major, I have seen the material again in other classes. Two classes in particular where this material resurfaced were International Relations and Comparative Political Systems. These classes have enabled me to better understand what is happening in the world today.

The colloquia gave me a chance to take a break from political science classes. In one, we examined the relationship between politics and education, and the myriad problems facing school systems today. The grade was based on essays, of which I am not fond, but it challenged me to really look at the subject and examine my views.

The other colloquium I took was called "Poetry Goes to School." We divided ourselves into groups of two and took poetry into area elementary schools. Another student, Loretta, and I had a fourth grade class at St. Lawrence that we adored. I always looked forward to going and always returned to campus with a smile.
on my face. The students were so eager each week to see what poem we had for them to discuss and write about.

Other colloquia offered have been: "Death and Dying," "The Holocaust in Literature," "Human Sexuality," and "An Overview of American Film Comedy from Charlie Chaplin to Woody Allen and Mel Brooks." Some colloquia are quite popular and are offered several times. Occasionally, a senior honors thesis is written and developed into a colloquium.
CHOOSEING COURSES

I entered college in the advantageous position of having already earned 10 credits. Also, the major I had chosen only required 33 credit hours for completion. This allowed me to have a double minor as well as explore the diverse opportunities offered by Ball State's six colleges. I was able to take classes in areas I had always been interested in. I never had dance or piano lessons as a child. However, I've always wanted to learn how to play the piano so I have taken two semesters of piano here. I'm no prima ballerina, but I did survive a ballet class last semester. A lot more hard work goes into ballet than I ever imagined, and I have a much greater respect for ballerinas as a result! I am always encouraging people to take such classes if they have an interest in them; not only is it probably less expensive to take lessons in college, the classes count for credit toward graduation.

I have also had the opportunity to take classes in other areas of interest to me including an introduction to theatre, acting, and interior design, in addition to the ballet and piano. I have always loved math, so I also worked in a minor in mathematics.

If I could add one class to the list of core classes required for graduation, it would be the job search class I took this semester. It's only one hour a week for half a semester and is worth one credit, but it's the best seven hours I've ever spent on anything. We learned how to prepare a resume and cover letter, network, prepare for an interview, and how to research a company so we know if it's the company we want to commit ourselves to. We
even put together a personal portfolio. One of the assignments was to make a list of at least 200 people we knew, and with whom we could network. I was surprised at how easy a task that was. This class requires no textbook and no tests; however, it isn't a "cake" class. A lot of time is spent out of class working on the assignments. The class is full of practical information that everyone graduating from college and looking for that dream job would find useful.
ACTIVITIES

Muncie is only about sixty miles away from my hometown, and some people assumed I would go home every weekend. However, in almost four years here, I’ve discovered that Muncie, Indiana and the Ball State community have a lot to offer. Besides programs offered in the residence halls, there are many other entertainment options on campus. Ball State offers nine men’s and nine women’s sports; most of the events are free to students. The university also offers an intramural sports program.

Ball State’s intramural program is highly recommended by most of the people I know who have gotten involved. There are activities offered both fall and spring semesters, men’s, women’s and co-rec events, and some activities count for points toward the intramural championship. The program includes such activities as 3 on 3 and 5 on 5 basketball, wrestling, softball, soccer, track and field, volleyball, bowling, and billiards. In addition, the Office of Recreation Programs offers aerobics as well as non-credit classes. Some of the non-credit classes that have been offered are: scuba diving, lifeguarding certification, CPR, and aquarobics. Other classes have included: Tae Kwon Do, tennis or golf lessons, and fly fishing lessons.²

There are three theatres on campus: Emens Auditorium, University Theatre, and Strother Theatre. Emens has hosted many renowned plays: Oklahoma!, Gypsy, Ziegfeld: A Night at the Follies, La Bohem, Once on This Island, Evita -- to name a few. Unfortunately Cats came through before I came to Ball State. These
productions are free for students. Emens is also the home of the Muncie Symphony Orchestra. My sophomore year, I had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; it was an experience that I'm not likely to forget. I also saw the Nutcracker Ballet for the very first time here at Emens. Other artists who have performed in Emens include: David Copperfield, Kenny Rogers, Confederate Railroad, George Carlin and Rudolf Nureyev.

University Theatre and Strother Theatre are both student run. Three years ago University Theatre presented the powerful play Ghetto, about the residents of a Jewish ghetto in Lithuania during World War II. Ball State students have also performed in 84 Charing Cross Road, The Count of Monte Cristo, A Street Car Named Desire, and my personal favorite, A Chorus Line. Strother Theatre has presented such works as: Endgame, Catch As Catch Can and The Loves of Cass McGuire. Students have directed The Boys Next Door and the Sondheim play Assassins. Original works by students are also produced in Strother.

After four years of going to plays and dance productions, I can honestly say that I believe Ball State has an extremely talented Theatre and Dance Department. I'm no expert by any means, but I have been quite impressed by the quality of most of the shows I have seen.

Besides recreation/sports and theatre, Ball State also offers other entertainment options. For those interested in nature, Christie Woods offers a place to get away from the stress of
classes. Guided tours are offered, or visitors can stroll through at their own pace. Christy Woods is home to a nationally known collection of orchids. There are also three tree trails around campus. The Green Trail traverses the quad at the south end of campus. The Blue Trail circles the Architecture, Business, and Library buildings. The Field Sport complex and the Health Center are circled by the Red Trail.

A traditional gathering spot for students is the Duck Pond. In warmer months, students can be found feeding the ducks, studying, or just soaking up some sun. It is one of the many places on campus to go to kick back and relax when classes get stressful. There are also the two park-like, quadrangle green spaces: the one in front of North Quad, and the new one between the library and the Architecture Building. These are places to get away from all the hustle and bustle and just relax in nature.

To observe nature's finest at night, take a trip to Ball State's Planetarium and Observatory. In the planetarium, one can observe a simulation of the night sky "at any place on Earth, at any time of the year." Special programs are sometimes offered dealing with such topics as "constellation patterns, planets, galaxies, and black holes." One can observe the night sky through an assortment of various sized telescopes at the observatory. Presentations at both of these locations are scheduled several times a year and are open to the public.
HALL RESIDENTS' OPINIONS

And now, a word from some residents of Botsford/Swinford Halls.

I asked the following questions:

Why did you decide to come to Ball State;

What is the one thing you like most about Ball State;

If you're in Honors College -- what do you like the most about it, and which class is your favorite of the honors classes;

If you could give someone advice about how to get along with a roommate, what would it be;

What do you like the most about living in the dorms;

What do you like least.

People come to Ball State for a variety of reasons. In some cases, a family member has attended and so the campus is already familiar. A big deciding factor seems to be whether Ball State has a strong program in the intended major, be it actuarial science, architecture, speech pathology and audiology, or deaf education. Several people mentioned the affordability, the size and location, and that they'd heard good things about the university. As one student put it, it's "not too far from home but far enough to be on my own." (Lori Whister)

There are many things to like about Ball State. There are plenty of activities and organizations to choose from. The campus is small, but not too small. The availability of on-campus employment is a plus according to some. There is always a friendly face to be found on campus, both students and professors. Beth
Sander says, "generally the people are friendly and helpful, which is nice when you're rather shy."

Many good things can be said about the Ball State Honors College. The smaller class size, special library privileges and the honors dorms are all well-liked. Also popular is the challenge of the classes; they stimulate brain cells. The professors teaching honors classes seem to go out of their way to help students. When asked which honors class is their favorite, students tend to chorus "199 with Dr. Tony Edmonds!" My personal favorite was Honors 189.

The thought of going away to college and having to share a room with a total stranger can sometimes strike fear into the hearts of incoming freshmen. Never fear! Here's how to get along with a roommate. Above all, be patient and be willing to compromise. Respect your roommate's space; give each other time every day to be alone in the room. Room with someone you know. Set basic ground rules at the beginning of the year; major problems can sometimes be avoided this way. Don't blow up at your roommate; cool down before confronting the problem. Ask how your roommate's day was. Be honest with your roommate; keep in mind roommates can't read minds. As one student put it "communication is the key to it all."

Living in a residence hall has its good and bad points. Small rooms, communal bathrooms, lack of privacy, and the occasional noisy neighbor rank at the top of most residents' lists of negatives. On the other hand, there are many positives to living
in the halls. They're convenient to everything on campus; you don't have to cook your own meals; and you only have one room to keep clean. There's always someone around if you want to chat or do something. Most halls offer all kinds of programs and hall council with which to get involved. Well liked by all is the comradery that develops between the residents. I agree wholeheartedly with Julie Carr when she says all aspects of living in a residence hall "greatly enhance [the] college experience."
10 (OR MORE) USES FOR A BALL STATE STUDENT ID

- Work out at the Ball State recreational facilities. (basketball, volleyball, racquetball, swimming, weight lifting...)
- Discounts at several local merchants.
- Occasionally, reduced rates on the MITS busses.
- Cash a check. (we LOVE money!)
- Pick up your paycheck if you work on campus.
- Free doctors visits at the Health Center. (medicine and Xrays extra)
- Eat!
- Free football games, volleyball and tennis matches...
- Free front row seats at basketball games!
- Gain access to your residence hall after hours.
- Use the computer labs on campus.
- Cardinal Cash debit card -- good at several locations on campus.
EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED AT COLLEGE

-When you’re walking to classes, smile at people; don’t scowl at your feet. You’ll be surprised how many smiles you’ll get in return.

-Leave your door open. You never know who might pop in for a visit; plus it is easier to hear opportunity knock if the door is already open!

-Say hello to your housekeeper. The residence hall housekeeping staff are some of the nicest people you’ll meet at college.

-Make at least one office visit a semester to each of your professors. If you make an appointment when you have a minor problem or to just check on your progress and get to know the professor, it makes it less intimidating to ask for help if you have big problems later.

-No matter what anyone tells you before you go to college, professors are not ogres. It is a rare professor indeed who is not willing to help a student who makes the effort to ask.

-Keep in touch with your parents. They appreciate getting mail from you, even if it is just a post card once a month letting them know you’re still alive.

-Getting mail is the highlight of the day. But to get mail, you must first write to people.

-If at all possible, don’t hold a job during your freshman year on campus. Concentrate on getting the hang of college classes, getting the grades, and meeting new friends.
-Give the residence halls a chance. Sure, they aren't as luxurious as home, and you have to do your own laundry; however, you meet so many people and make more friends by living in the halls.

-DON'T GO HOME EVERY WEEKEND! You'll miss out on so many opportunities to be social and get to know new people.

-If you do live in a residence hall, don't lock yourself in your room -- even if your room does have cable TV. Make it a point to go downstairs to watch Chicago Hope or whatever your favorite show is. I met so many people my freshman year just by going downstairs to watch my soaps and basketball games.

-To have friends, you must be a friend.

-Some of the best social outings are those that weren't planned in advance.

-If you're not a morning person (I'm definitely not!) take at least one 8 AM class, if for no other reason than to see what the world looks like that early in the morning.

-Take a fun class.

-Something I learned from my acting professor: You can do anything. Never say "I can't." 

-About once a month on a Friday, after your last class, decide that you aren't going to touch another textbook until Saturday morning.

-Get involved, whether it's in a club, sports, student government or something else.
If you have a chance, go overseas for a semester, or even just a summer program. You won't find anything quite like it in America.

Monsoon season in Muncie seems to last from September to May. Bring a sturdy umbrella, a raincoat, and a pair of waterproof shoes!
CONCLUSION

Ball State University might not be the school for everyone, but it was definitely the right choice for me. I'm a big Indiana University basketball fan and had my heart set on going to school there. However, I can honestly say that, looking back, I am quite pleased with my decision to attend Ball State. I have received a first rate education that I believe has prepared me for law school, and I have met some of the best friends anyone could ask for. There's plenty of room on campus -- both for academic purposes and for relaxing -- and yet it only takes about 15 minutes to walk from one end of campus to the other. The people are friendly; there's always a smile or hello as you walk to class. Also, the population of Ball State is just right for me -- not so large one could get lost, but not too small either.

As a freshman, I received letters frequently from my parents. In the letter that came after my first day of classes, my dad told me to hang in there because I was "one day closer to graduation." I ran across that letter a few weeks ago and realized that now I am just a few short days away from graduation. I've spent a lot of time lately looking back on my years here. During my freshman year, if someone had told me I would be reluctant to leave Ball State my senior year, I probably would have laughed at them. My goal then was not to see Ball State as home but to come to terms with the fact that I would be living here for four years and to try to make the most of it. Quite surprisingly, somewhere along the way I have come to see Ball State as home, or at least a home away
from home. I am looking forward to moving on to law school; however, I will miss the friends I'm leaving behind. Of course, they are all going on to exciting futures as well. I will always look back on the past four years with a smile, both the good times and the bad. Sure, there are some things I'd like to forget; but, if given the chance to live college over, I can honestly say I wouldn't change a thing!

"You don't merely go to a university; you join a university -- for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, so long as ye both shall live."

-from a commencement address by

President John R. Emens (1945-1968)
NOTES

1. Adapted from: A week in the life of a BSU student

2. Ball State Office of Recreation Programs. Recreation activities schedules.


5. Student Leaders in Admissions. Tour Guide Fact Sheet 1994-95


7. Ball State Department of Physics and Astronomy. Visit the Ball State Planetarium.

8. This section was compiled from a survey taken of several residents of Botsford/Swinford Halls.

9. Vanderwilt, Beth. Associate professor. Ball State Department of Theatre and Dance Performance