

With the end of my first year at the University of Maryland approaching, I have taken time to reflect and address my earlier expectations. I always expected the transition from high school to college to be a double-edged sword. I knew classes would be more difficult, but they would also be more interesting. I would have more strict and less attentive teachers, but I could choose them. I wouldn't see many of my high school friends, but I would make many new ones. While I didn't really get to experience the full college experience in my first year, I did find that most of my earlier concerns were not nearly as bad as expected and the added bonus of the opportunities far outweighed the obstacles.

One of the biggest fears I had coming into my freshman year of college was that I wouldn't be able to manage the difficulty and quantity of the work. After completing my first semester, I thought "wow that wasn't so bad, second one must always be worse." Instead, I found the workload to be very manageable. Throughout both semesters, I did have several weeks where I would have to spend lots of time studying or completing classwork, but for the most part, if I applied the proper effort to my studies, I had plenty of free time and received good grades. Additionally, I had so many different options for classes that I was able to find an interesting class for almost every requirement. By using the schedule of classes tool on testudo, I was able to find a class about medieval Spanish history that fulfilled three requirements at once and was very interesting to me. By the end of this semester, I have realized that the immense amount of options I have for classes has helped me quell my fear of being overworked and challenged too much.

While my fear of the difficulty of classes was paramount, I knew that the difficulty would depend heavily on how the professors would teach and grade in the class. I was afraid to transition from high school where teachers would come to students and offer help to college,

where I feared professors would have classes with hundreds of students and no time to help out. However, I found that most of my professors were extremely amiable and were more than happy to help if you attended office hours. Teacher assistants were also available for help and most had a great grasp of their subjects they helped teach. I also realized that I could pick all of my professors and a few minutes of reading about class reviews could help me get a professor who not only knew the subject well but, was also great at teaching. While I did attend classes online, I did have three professors for both semesters, and I began to develop a stronger relationship with them. I found that by participating more in class and attending office hours whenever I had any difficulties in those classes, I was able to improve this relationship which helped make the classes more interesting and made it easier to learn.

The biggest non education related fear I had, was losing all the friends that I had from high school. I knew a few of them would be going to UMD as well, but a large majority of them went to different colleges. Personally, I found it difficult to make many new friends through online classes, but I was fortunate enough to take classes with group projects in them. In one of my classes, I was paired with 5 other students for a final project, and I became good friends with all the group members. Also, even though I was at home, I knew that most of the other students were in a similar situation. Just knowing that so many others are going through a similar situation helped me get through the adjustment period and really helped me overcome some of the challenges of losing old friends.

Overall, I did have many concerns coming into my first year of college, but I was able to focus on the positives and make the most of my situation. If I had to give some advice to incoming freshmen, I would tell them to pay attention in the beginning of the semester even if all of their classes seem easy. The first round of exams creeps up faster than most people realize,

and I was caught off guard early in the first semester. However, I quickly learned to be more on top of things and by putting my effort into classes and studying I was able to deal with my initial blunder. By focusing on the positives, transitioning to college becomes much less scary and can even be a fun challenge.