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First Year Transition

By Luke Bosse
Freshman, Computer Science

As I write this article while flying home to San Diego for spring break and think about my experiences over my first semester and a half at Boise State, I realize that what parents, teachers, and older friends told me about the college experience really is true: it flies by. My first day of classes, the Honors retreat, and even orientation feel as though they happened mere days ago. The truth is, however, that I’m already three-fourths of the way through my first year of college, and that it passed in what seemed like the blink of an eye is without a doubt due to the wealth of valuable, enriching, and fun experiences I’ve had so far at Boise State.

Thinking back over the past semester and a half, I owe all of these valuable experiences to my high degree of involvement in campus life. My involvement in Honors brought me small class sizes, excellent professors, interesting coursework, and even the chance to study this coming summer at Oxford University. My involvement elsewhere on campus, chiefly through my fraternity, Delta Upsilon, made me a part of a tight-knit group I am proud to call brothers. Boise State has introduced me to a diverse student body, and forged lifelong bonds with a group that feels correct hundreds of times over. Finding the right balance between work and play is the key to having an enjoyable and successful collegiate experience.

People often ask why I chose to come to Boise State. Why would a Californian forgo the established UC or CSU system and travel all the way to Idaho for college? The answer is quite simple: I felt at home at Boise State. From campus tour, to admissions events back home, to my conversations with department chairs on my visits, I could tell that Boise State is a university that cares about its students. My experiences over the past semester have proven that feeling correct hundreds of times over. Opportunities for motivated students to learn and grow are abundant here at Boise State, and I can’t wait to see what my future has in store.

Though it’s very typical, and something I heard hundreds of times when I was searching for a college home, my biggest piece of advice for incoming freshmen is to get involved in campus life. Opportunities to do so abound on college campuses, but they don’t come knocking on your dormitory door. You have to seek them out. Though my transition to college life went much more smoothly than I thought it would, the biggest challenge that I’ve faced in this transition is by far time management. I tell my friends and family that college is like a cruise—but with homework. Food and opportunities for recreation are plentiful, your bathroom is cleaned for you and you’re constantly surrounded by your fellow students. However, like a cruel jester your schedule is jam-packed, and at the end of the week, you’re exhausted. This leads to my second piece of advice for collegiate newbies: leave time to relax. Whether it’s riding your bike along the Boise River Greenbelt, going for a hike, watching a movie with friends, or even hitting the hot tub in the gym (yes, there is a hot tub in the gym), rest is essential to maintaining a healthy academic mind.

Pi for Elephants

By Avalon Leddy
Junior, Nursing

Learn about the Honors College’s efforts to help save an orphaned baby elephant.

During the spring semester, the Honors College has been working to raise money to adopt an elephant. After the presentation given by Brenda and Robert Atkinson in the fall, a group of Honors students felt compelled to help the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in Kenya. The Trust works to compliment wildlife conservation efforts through methods like anti-poaching projects, raising community awareness, providing veterinary care, and raising elephant and rhino orphans. The Honors College has chosen to assist through the Trust’s Orphan’s Project, which has hand-raised over 150 infant elephants and successfully reintegrated them into the wild herds of Tsavo. Through donations from students and faculty, as well as those who participated in the Honors Pi Day fundraiser, the Honors College group was able to raise enough money to adopt an elephant.

On March 16, the Honors College adopted Dupotto, a beautiful female elephant that is about a year old. She was found alone in the wild and was most likely one of numerous elephants orphaned due to ivory poaching. Though she initially struggled with adjusting to life in the nursery, she has bonded with one of the other orphans and is now a happy member of the Nairobi Nursery’s junior herd.

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We will continue to support Dupotto in her process to be released into the wild and hope to adopt additional elephants in the coming semesters.
Early this year, I went to a cocktail party and met a woman named Sophia. She told me about coming to New York City from Cuba forty years ago. Twenty-one and alone, she was willing to go through the hardships of coming to America and being homeless in one of the biggest cities in the world to be one step closer to freedom and one step further from oppression. Life dealt her a hand that was hard for me to relate to. But I listened and tried my best to empathize.

When Dr. Finstuen first asked me to write this piece, I thought I’d write on the need to adapt. The world is big and life after college is all new, so adaptability is key to being successful. But more thought to what Honors means and this experience with Sophia made me realize something — adaptability is necessary to navigate the unfamiliarity of life and to be "successful," but what truly seems to matter is empathy. Empathy is really the root of adaptability — given peoples’ stories, how do they need me to act in any given situation?

More importantly, though, empathy teaches us about life, the subject at the heart of the Honors College.

Since graduation, I worked in management consulting at Cicer Group in Salt Lake City, moved to New York City to turn a long-distance relationship into a real-time relationship, worked in urban agriculture designing and installing rooftop gardens around Brooklyn, and landed, for the moment, in commercial real estate as a business development analyst at CBRE. Along each of these adventures I came face-to-face with people whose stories were completely different than my own. Each person I met in an interview or at a dinner party or on an airplane had a completely different story, providing a new understanding of what it means to be human and a new perspective on how to navigate all this uncertainty in life. Each story was a lens through which I could see more of my own.

The Honors College taught me the value of these lessons people teach us. Success is important in life, but it will only fill so many needs. It keeps us off the streets and from going hungry, but it doesn’t necessarily answer our deepest questions. The Honors College showed me that an honest and genuine quest to understand life — to understand the human situation and all that accompanies it — fills a need that drastically eclipses what success can provide. And empathy helps us on that journey.

So as we navigate life, we must try to understand people’s stories — about their hardship and their happiness. We must take the facts they tell us and put ourselves in their shoes to gain a glimpse into the person behind those facts. Every person has a story. Every person wants their story to be understood. Every story tells us a little more about life.

Empathize with people and learn a little more about life — both others’ and your own.

I have never thought of myself as one who does well with luck. For this reason, I do not know how to play poker. I do not make bets, and I do not buy lottery tickets. However, this past summer I took one of the largest gambles of my life. Midway through my medical school application, I decided to push it aside and pursue a Fulbright, a prestigious and competitive fellowship program.

I went into the process of applying for a Fulbright fellowship with a little understanding of what it would entail and an overflowing passion for actualizing my dreams. With much support from countless amazing souls, including National Scholarship Coordinator Emily Jones and Dr. Finstuen, I applied for a grant to conduct public health research in India, concerning child maternal health. To me, Fulbright seemed like an impossible dream, but it also meant an opportunity to immerse myself in all that is nearest and dearest to my heart: people, healthcare, diversity, and understanding.

Fulbright is an international program whose mission is to enhance mutual cultural understanding through programs focused on international graduate study, advanced research, university teaching, and primary and secondary school teaching in over 140 countries. Quickly, I found that although very rewarding, the process requires much time and energy. There are several steps involved in the process of preparing for and applying for a Fulbright Fellowship. In the short few months, I went through writing approximately twelve drafts of each of my essays and meeting with Emily for an average of two and a half hours after each one to discuss revisions and edits.

Additionally, I had to attend two professional language evaluations, affiliation letters, a self-language evaluation, and complete an online application. There were numerous chances to give in and doubt the path I had chosen, such as finding out that I had exactly twenty days to obtain an affiliation letter from a nongovernmental organization in India and find a college graduate who can do a language evaluation in the middle of the fall semester. However, contrary to my typical planning nature, I had placed all of my hopes into Fulbright, and my faith in my passions pushed me through it all. And in less than twenty days, I ended up with not one but two affiliation letters and a Skype language evaluation with a professor from University of Washington speaking Urdu, a language I hadn’t spoken out loud in 13 years.

The process of applying has granted me skills, memories, and fostered bonds that will far outlast any period of time. I learned a great amount about who I am, who I want to be, and what I want to do with my path in life; while also understanding that if one has the passion to fuel their determination and ambitions, no lengthy application process is enough to bring them down; no dream is too big. With this in mind, I feel that I can apply to any medical school, any residency program, and reach for any star, because I have what it takes. Perhaps it is just winning a lottery ticket, but there is no reason as to why a student from Boise State could not be the one to win it.

Every issue of the Honors Review offers alumni the opportunity to discuss their post-graduation perspectives and accomplishments. If you are an Honors alumni member, we invite you to connect with us and let us know about your life after Honors.
My professors, classmates, and courses at the University of St Andrews were all “top-quality,” but it’s the dysfunctional moments I remember the most—like bursting out of my residence hall and sprinting up North Street in the rain to print an essay at the library minutes before the essay had to be in the English department drop-off box (a normal occurrence among my peers)—finally arriving at the English department, a quaint stone building in a meadow of flowers—my cheeks flushed, essay in hand, furiously scribbling my student ID number on a mandatory, blue fold-over sheet meant to preserve students’ anonymity before dropping the packet through an irretrievable slot. Or my comparative literature professor somehow knowing whose graded essay was whose (in spite of the strict anonymity policy) and calling out two students by name within our small discussion section to read their introductory paragraphs so she could demonstrate the first student’s success and the second’s failure. My fist balled under the table the whole time, daring her telepathically to suggest I read mine... Or even better, staying after class to chat with the professor of a different discipline to discuss his section and stopping in mid-sentence, realizing the words I had just uttered could double as an extremely graphic sexual euphemism. The professor was young, and male, and thankfully had the fortitude to break only the smallest of smiles... My friends were my pride and joy. I stayed for seconds in the dining hall almost every night, already having eaten my fill, to continue talking to them just a little longer. We drank pints and ate pie in local pubs with grizzled old Scottish men, we trekked through cutting wind and slicing rain to study at a nearby coffee shop before getting kicked out to make room for families who would buy more food than us and stay half as long. We jumped over stone walls in the old cemetery at night and crammed—six of us—onto a twin size bed to watch Fight Club on someone’s laptop in the dark and eat Ben & Jerry’s straight out of the carton. I like to tell people that from my semester flew through my mind as the three of us sat in the back seat, Emily and Jason sharing a pair of ear buds and listening to music, me staring out the dark window as the driver navigated endless traffic roundabouts on the way to the Edinburgh airport. Since then, I’ve dreamed about St Andrews over and over again—always the gorgeous, confusing, watercolor version of it from the Canary Islands, stocking up on biscuits at TESCO Market, and fitting liquid toiletries into zip-locks. Images and sensations of the “glory days” section of your life story. The last night of the semester, I ran around town with my friends Emily and Jason, printing out budget-flight reservations in the library for our short trip to the Islands, stocking up on biscuits at TESCO Market, and fitting liquid toiletries into zip-locks. Images and sensations of the “glory days” section of your life story.
The impression I had of St. Andrews, Scotland my first week of wandering was of walking through a watercolor painting. I took shelter in Starbucks once I got settled in, dropping a few pounds into the barista’s hand and sitting on a couch in the back. I let the realization that I was alone in a foreign country settle around my shoulders like a blanket of frost, then I texted two people. First, my brother, with the texting equivalent of a whimper. Second, a fellow exchange student named Quinn.

I first saw Quinn across the aisle in my flight from Newark to Edinburgh, and he had already agitated the patience of an flight attendant). During the flight, my cheeks flushed, essay in hand, furiously scribbling my student ID number on a mandatory, blue fold-over sheet meant to preserve students’ anonymity before dropping the packet through an irretrievable slot... Or my comparative literature professor somehow knowing whose graded essay was whose (in spite of the strict anonymity policy) and calling out two students by name within our small discussion section to read their introductory paragraphs so she could demonstrate the first student’s success and the second’s failure. My fist balled under the table the whole time, daring her telepathically to suggest I read mine... Or even better, staying after class to chat with the professor of a different discussion section and stopping in mid-sentence, realizing the words I had just uttered could double as an extremely graphic sexual euphemism. The professor was young, and male, and thankfully had the fortitude to break only the smallest of smiles...

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Alumni Spotlight: Adaptability through Empathy

By Jesse Rosenthal
Class of 2013, Economics

Earlier this year, I went to a cocktail party and met a woman named Sophia. She told me about coming to New York City from Cuba forty years ago. Twenty-one and alone, she was willing to go to the hardships of coming to America and being homeless in one of the biggest cities in the world to be one step closer to freedom and one step further from oppression. Life dealt her a hand that was hard for me to relate to. But I listened and tried my best to empathize.

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First Year Transition

By Luke Bosse
Freshman, Computer Science

How can freshmen find an easier transition from high school to university life?

As I write this article while flying home to San Diego for spring break and think about my experiences over my first semester and a half at Boise State, I realize that what parents, teachers, and older friends told me about the college experience really is true: it flies by. My first day of classes, the Honors retreat, and even orientation feel as though they happened mere days ago. The truth is, however, that I’m already three-fourths of the way through my first year of college, and that passed in what seemed like the blink of an eye is without a doubt due to the wealth of valuable, enriching, and fun experiences I’ve had so far at Boise State.

Thinking back over the past semester and a half, I owe all of these valuable experiences to my high degree of involvement in campus life. My involvement in Honors brought me small class sizes, excellent professors, interesting coursework, and even the chance to study this coming summer at Oxford University. My involvement elsewhere on campus, chiefly through my fraternity, Delta Upsilon, made me a part of a tight-knit and caring community within Boise State, brought me opportunities to hold leadership positions and serve others, and forged lifelong bonds with a group I am proud to call brothers. Boise State has also proven to be a place where I can pursue my passions, both old and new. The Jazz Department was kind enough to help assemble a small, five piece combo where I can continue to study guitar, something I’ve been doing since second grade. Additionally, through my experience in my Honors communications course, I’ve added a communications minor to my plan of study and currently hold a position as a teacher’s assistant.

Though it’s very typical, and something I heard hundreds of times when I was searching for a college home, my biggest piece of advice for incoming freshmen is to get involved in campus life. Opportunities to do so abound on college campuses, but they don’t come knocking on your dormitory door. You have to seek them out. Though my transition to college life went much more smoothly than I thought it would, the biggest challenge that I’ve faced in this transition is by far time management. I tell my friends and family that college is like a cruise – but with homework. Food and opportunities for recreation are plentiful, your bathroom is cleaned for you and you’re constantly surrounded by your fellow students. However, like a cruel cruel your schedule is jam-packed, and at the end of the week, you’re exhausted. This leads to my second piece of advice for collegiate newcomers: leave time to relax. Whether it’s riding your bike along the Boise River Greenbelt, going for a hike, watching a movie with friends, or even hitting the hot tub in the gym (yes, there is a hot tub in the gym), rest is essential to maintaining a healthy academic mind. Finding the right balance between work and play is the key to having an enjoyable and successful collegiate experience.

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The 13 members of this group continue to raise money for our elephant and the amazing organization that helps animals all over Africa. We plan on continuing our mission of spreading awareness of elephant poaching into the next academic year with a focus on advocacy.

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