

## THE COLLEGE TRANSITION

Christina Mitchell

Elementary Education  
Bloomington High School South, Bloomington, Indiana

---

Why is going off to college such a difficult adjustment for many students to make? As with many students entering college, I found myself speculating what the shift of living with my parents to being on my own would be like. At this point in our lives there are so many changes that happen all at once which makes this settlement an uneasy one for so many college students including myself.

I remember when I was getting ready to come to Valparaiso University. So many thoughts about what things were going to be like were going through my mind. I wondered if I would ever see some of my friends from home again, if I would have as good friends in college as I did in high school, if the classes would be much more demanding, and if I would get along with my roommate. What was it going to be like when I came home? Was my bedroom going to look the same or were my parents going to take it over? There were so many unanswered questions going through my mind that no one would be able to answer except me over time.

When my family was helping me unload all my things into the dorm, I was so nervous. There were so many people here and I did not know any of them; however, I knew I would live with them for a year. As I was looking around, I began wondering which of these people would be my friends, who I would get along with, and who would be in my classes. I wondered how long it would take to remember everyone's names and how long it would take us to get to know each other.

One of the hardest transitions to college was living with someone I did not know. It is as though someone stuck us together and said "Here, try and get along and be friends." This was probably one of the most stressful things that I thought about before I came to college, and also the first few weeks I was here. I have learned that I really need to be patient, understanding, respectful, and when problems arise we should work them out immediately. I knew there would be good times and bad times but I was going to have to try and get through them no matter what. I had no idea what the year would entail living with someone I did not even know, and that scared me.

When my parents left I felt so empty. I remember standing there watching them leave and that was the first time I had ever really felt alone.

When I got back to my room I started to put my things in order and hoped making friends and talking to people would just come naturally.

For the most part making friends on my wing was effortless. I knew after just a few weeks who were going to be my really good friends and who would just be acquaintances. I knew everyone around me was basically in the same kind of situation I was in so that was a common bond for everyone. We would sit and talk about things we used to do, our old friends, and our hometowns. This helped make my transition to college a little easier.

Not only was I worried about social aspects of college but also the academic aspects. I was concerned about my classes and how I would do in them. I was petrified that these classes would be so different from high school that all I would have time for would be homework and studying. I was scared about my grades. I heard stories from other college students that said if they did really bad on one test or assignment they ended up doing terrible in the class. I had done well in high school and I did not want my grades to deteriorate now just because I went to college.

There were still so many things I did not know about college life. I began questioning if I would like it and how I would be able to manage everything. How was I going to manage my classes, assignments, social life, and sleep? I had to try and find a new way of doing things from the way I had done things for years. No longer would I be able to come home from school and work in my room for about an hour, and get all of my work done and then have the rest of the night to do whatever I wanted to do. I had to try and find new places to study, other than my room, and force myself to study longer than one or two hours. I think the most difficult things for me to manage have been studying and sleeping. I never really had a problem trying to find time to socialize.

Living in the dorm was a lot different than living at my house. The rooms are much smaller and there are many more noises that I had to get used to. I had to be able to try and sleep through very loud people in the halls coming back at all hours of the night, hearing other people's phone ring through the wall, and my roommate getting ready in the morning when I could still be sleeping. Among these things there was also getting used to the fire alarm going off around one or two a.m. and having to go outside no matter what the weather was like. I think about all these things and it really makes me miss my own house and my own room where things seem to be a lot more peaceful now than I remember them before I went to college.

No more home cooking! This was another hard transition for me. My mom had always made really good home cooked meals a few times a week and if there was something else we wanted to eat it was always easy enough to get in the car, go to the grocery store and buy it. Here, at school, I do not have the luxury of telling mom what to cook for dinner and what time I want to eat. Instead, I have to make my schedule fit around the times dinner is served.

Even though I miss my room and home cooked meals I never realized how much my parents meant to me and how they have always been right by me if I ever needed anything. As with many people, this was the first time I had been away from home for such a long period of time. Just knowing that my parents would not be able to come here whenever I wanted them to take me home, was and still is, something I did not like to think about. Even though I know I can call them anytime I want, just knowing they are not here makes me worry and wonder if they really still are around for me whenever I need them.

The first time I had to go to the Health Center is when I knew I was truly away from my parents. I was sitting in the health center and the doctor told me they had to take blood from me. I got extremely nervous. I had never had to do that by myself before. My mom had always gone to the doctor with me and held my hand when I have had blood taken. I could not believe I was going to have to go through this by myself. This made me think of everything my mom had done for me when I had been sick and I realized that she had been there and done a lot for me.

Even though I miss my parents I feel like I have grown and appreciated them a lot more being away. I have had to do more things on my own which my parents normally would have done for me. This was another sizable step in my life. I have grown to enjoy the independence and now find it hard to go home and live with them again. When I am at school, I do not have to worry about calling my parents to tell them where I am and when I would be back. This makes me try to make better decisions and judgments with my own life, and I like that.

These are a few examples of the things I found difficult to adjust to when I first came to college. It took me a few weeks to get into a routine but once I made those few close friends and got my studying habits under control I found the transition to be a lot easier. Even though the decision to go to college and the adjustment to college life can be sometimes strenuous, I believe all of it has already and will continue to make me a stronger more independent person.