

Campus life in France differs from that at American schools

Family ties reinforced by weekly visits home

By Katherine Merten
Of the Emerald

Imagine a college campus without a student union, with no frat houses, no bookstore. A campus that consists of one dorm, two dining halls and a conglomeration of covered corridors that connect classrooms.

During the week, students crowd the halls, smoke between classes and talk during boring lectures. Come Thursday night, however, the noise stops, classrooms empty, doors shut. Campus remains unofficially closed until Monday morning classes.

This description of a French university is different than the popular American college setting. The French, however, may be equally

quiet, with individual doors closed and no phone calls after 9 p.m.

Such a temporary campus population makes the American phenomenon of "school spirit" impossible. With a diminished student body on the weekends, the French campus is left with few people who can work on a school newspaper, form a biking club or join cheerleading.

Certain athletic facilities are located on campus. One fellow American described the weight room at the University of Poitiers as a "12th century arrangement of ropes and pulleys."

To an American, such accommodations for a nine-month period differ markedly from the legendary "dorm life" of midnight pizza parties and social shindigs.

If dorms don't provide the college social life, a normal impulse might be to turn to the fraternity and sorority houses. Wrong. French students think the "Greek system" is some part of the classics department. The Greek system at the heart of much weekend activity on East 11th Street in Eugene has no significance whatsoever in the country of the Champs Elysees.

However, French students do party — a behavior that undoubtedly exists cross-culturally. Rather than heading to the Phi Deltas, though, they venture downtown to bars, discos and movie theaters. In Poitiers, campus is a 45-minute walk from "centre ville," and bus service ends at 9 p.m. Without a car — or a good pair of shoes and a lot of energy — living on campus can be a very solitary experience. Another good reason, no doubt, for many French students to make their customary journeys home on weekends.

One might wonder if the United States first developed the concept of a campus social environment, or if American students first went away to school and thus created a need for their own social entity.

France, a country which places great importance on family unity and encourages its youth to attend universities geographically close to home, unquestionably has an interest in preserving closeness between parents and children.

The American concept of a university where students attend class, eat, study and live in a close peer-oriented environment may simply be a substitution for the traditional values which draw French students home each weekend.

Reporter's Notebook

surprised to find a campus with Friday night kegers and frisbee games on the grass.

For the French, the big step of leaving home after high school doesn't exist. Americans see going off to college as an 18-year-old as a continuation of higher education; but it is also a symbolic break between adolescence and adulthood, naivete and maturity, dependence and independence. In France, however, college means courses, and that's about it.

Entering college as an American teenager often involves leaving home for the first time, developing new interests and creating a social network away from the family. French students, on the other hand, manage to attend the university while remaining attached to their families.

Because most French students enroll in the closest university in their geographic region, they are physically closer to their families and hometowns than most American students.

For lodging during the week, students live in dorms or apartments near school, but by Friday night they usually have taken a train back home or have been picked up by their parents. Whether due to a need of money, food or clean clothes or due to strong traditional values of family unity, France's students rarely stay on campus for the weekend.

Even during the week the dorms remain

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Subcommittee member Tony Van Vliet, R-Corvallis, was a member of the legislative committee that reviewed the State System's plans for the computer network last spring.

"There is no question that higher ed. needs an improved computer network," Van Vliet

said. Legislators are now trying to determine what up-front costs the computer network will require in the next two years, and then decide whether to cut the computer network's funding, said Van Vliet.

Thursday, Lemman would not reveal the figures he was

planning to present to the subcommittee today.

But he said if the subcommittee decides to postpone the computer network, students "will keep going over to Mac Court to register for a couple more years."

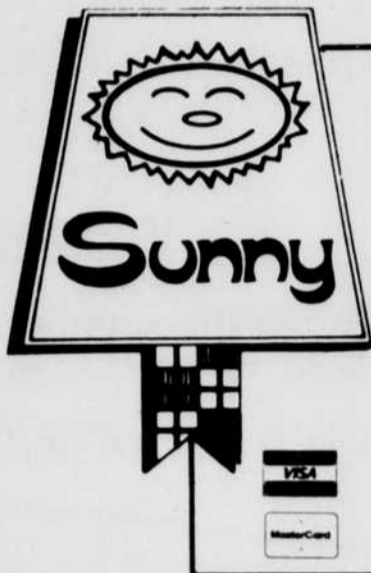
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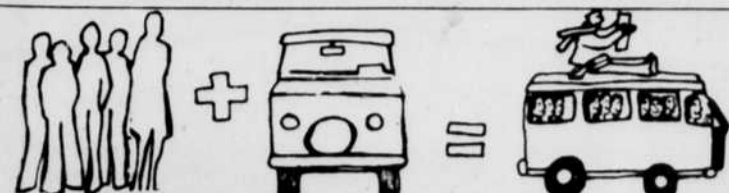
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