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REVIEW

Book advises on college ups, downs

By Rene DeCair
Emerald Associate Editor

Another book has been written about the subject of life after high school — or life before grad school, pick your preference.

There are many out there and a lot of them are pretty silly, boring or unrealistic.

But a new book, *College Life*, by Ellen Rosenberg offers some honest, real-life advice to new students about how to deal with the first year of school.

The book's cover describes it as a "down-to-earth guide to dealing with being away from home, long-distance relationships, roommates, academic expectations, alcohol and other drugs, and dating and sex."

There's also advice on how to keep in touch with old friends, the greek system, date rape, racial issues and how to get involved on campus.

Rosenberg is a college instructor who has conducted "Life 101" seminars on college campuses throughout the country since 1972. She says that she wants to help students make the most out of their college experience. The last chapter is titled, "Living It."

Rosenberg writes that "your ability to live it is rooted in being able to feel terrific about you — and not needing to count on anyone else's love for you or on what anyone else thinks of you in order to believe in yourself and understand how important you are."

That's good advice. And there is plenty more of it. That's the good part of the book.

The bad part is this book is unlikely to be helpful to anyone who has spent more than a few months in school.

By then, most students — hopefully — will have worked their way through some of

these problems on their own. If they haven't, then their problems are probably deep-rooted enough to make this advice too simplistic.

So, assuming the book is for brand-new, shiny freshman faces, it's a decent, insightful book.

Rosenberg has written the book using a question-and-answer format. Students provide the questions and she answers them. And much of the book has lengthy quotes and interviews with students relating their experiences.

The interviews provide a realistic look at some of the problems new students encounter, but at times the book goes a bit far and the reader can feel like a voyeur. (This is entertaining, I suppose, but offers little helpful information because some of the questions are so ridiculous.)

Here's an example of a dumb question. "I've only been here for two days and I've cheated on my girlfriend of three years, two times. I've never done this before. Is that normal for college students?"

This sounds like a person who could better use a book on relationships and needs to figure out who he is and what he really wants. Rosenberg, who knows nothing about him, is not going to be able to help him.

Another stupid question is: "Is it tacky to leave a stick of deodorant on the bed of a smelly roommate?" This person probably knows the answer to this already.

But there are also some good questions that reflect the times we're living in from students who maybe haven't had to confront these issues before.

A couple of the good questions are: "Is it alright to ask a possible sexual partner to get a blood test for AIDS?" or "I have a lot of pressure in college. There is too much work. I don't think I will be able to handle it."

Another student asks, "My roommate is a foreigner and he does not talk much. I am going crazy and talking to the walls. I believe one of them responded. What should I do about my roommate?"

Rosenberg gives good advice in most of the areas.

Much of the book's richness comes from students relating their experiences. They speak openly about drugs — "Marijuana can be a powerful experience" — to racism.

"Even in the dining commons, the black people sit on one side of the cafeteria, basically all together and the white people sit in the rest of the cafeteria," one student said.

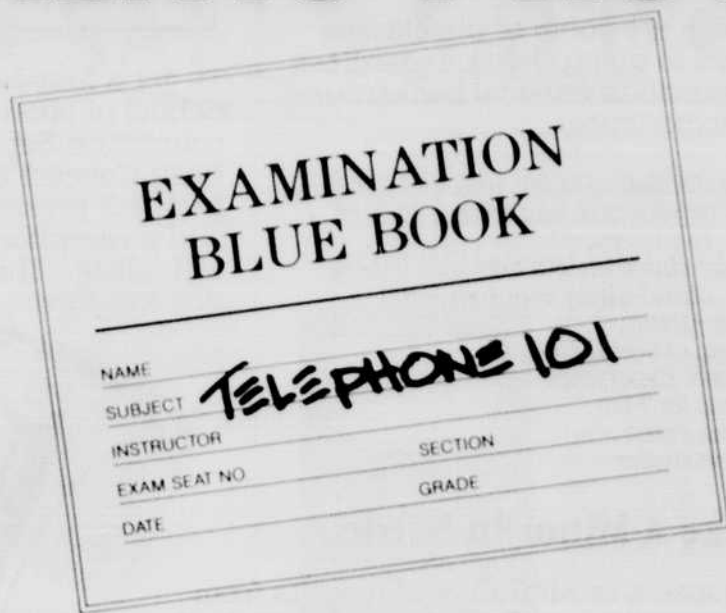
"There isn't much racism on campus that I've seen," she said. "But still you see the separation so much."

It's a book of worth that presents a very accurate picture of all the pros and cons of the first year of school.

It's a lot of straightforward advice from students who've been through the painful, sometimes embarrassing and thrilling experiences that new students have yet to discover.

It's something that you won't find in the glossy pamphlets produced by university departments. In short, if you want the truth about what goes on at school, read this book.

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