

"Freshman 15" another myth

When students first enter this vast, alien and competitive land we call college, they worry about classes, finding their way around campus and the city, meeting people they can relate to and, if they are concerned about their weight and body image, gaining the "Freshman 15".

One of the ancient myths about college life is that you have no choice but to gain 15 pounds during your freshman year. And with all of the attention given to bodies — their shape, size and health — by the media these days, it is hard to ignore such rumors.

In a 1991 survey of college women — 74 percent of who were normal weight — 87 percent said they were unhappy with their weight, 45 percent were on diets and 29 percent reported that since entering college, they had tried to lose weight by fasting or going on crash diets. Does this sound healthy to you?

The last thing these women need to hear is that they will inevitably gain weight during their first year at college. So when young minds should be investing in their intellectual futures, many end up spending too much time worrying about how much they weigh.

It has been shown through studies that eating disorders are prevalent on college campuses.

The majority of population studies examining bulimia, self-induced vomiting after binge eating, are conducted at institutions of higher education.

One such survey showed that 19 percent of all college women and 5 percent of college men fulfill the criteria for bulimia.

If students read articles like "Avoiding the Freshman 15: some tips and tricks" (ODE Sept. 19), they will gain valuable information about nutrition, but may feel like they have to com-



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mit significant energy trying to prevent themselves from gaining weight. All you have to do, if you're already in good health, is continue to eat like you always have.

The buffet style dining in the dorms could be a cause of erratic eating behaviors.

An unlimited amount of salad, mashed potatoes, green and yellow jello, bagels, chicken nuggets, Pepsi, brownies and roast beef can be overwhelming. The system works in such a way that you pay one price to eat as much as you can.

Therefore, the less you take, the more money you lose.

My solution is a meal plan allowing each student an allotted amount of money each term to spend on items which are individually priced and are available at places other than the dorms, like the Fishbowl.

This way students won't have to feel like they must take in as much food as they can when the cafeteria is open in order to avoid getting hungry later.

Eating disorders and the importance placed on being "fat free" plague the entire nation. Television and magazines bring us images of supermodel waifs like Kate Moss and women in bikinis advertising Bud Light.

One might get the impression that these are some of societies most valued citizens.

Although causes of eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia have roots much deeper than changing your eating habits during college because of

myths, dormitory cafeterias and the media, these things don't help.

Eating disorders can be attributed more to psychological problems.

Low self-esteem and the need to feel that you can control something in a world of chaos, whether that world be at school, in your social circles or in a family situation, are at the heart of eating disorders.

When you walk around campus for the first time, should you assume that a tree will fall on you; when you go to your first college-level class should you assume that your professor will sexually harass you? No. Then why should it be assumed that you will gain weight your freshman year?

Maybe you miss home, or people in other places. Maybe you are worried about succeeding academically or just making it to your 8 a.m. class on a Thursday morning. Whatever is on your mind, college can be very stressful. And because the idea of being thin and fit is emphasized everywhere you go, eating is a very popular coping outlet.

When you can't confront problems you have socially and academically, preoccupy your mind with the thought of food and controlling your eating, even though your current diet suits you fine. Bad idea.

Instead, write in a journal, watch a movie, go to the Saturday Market or take a bike ride by the river.


Please, don't let food consume you. There is no such thing as the "Freshman 15." And there is no such thing as a perfect body. Now go, eat, drink, (study) and be merry!

Tasha Eichenseher is a reporter for the Emerald.

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- Sailing Lesson** Jennifer Petersen
- Mountain Bike Guidebook** Gina Matthews, Anders Hagen Hansen
- Classified Ad Certificate** Angie Camilleri, Kate Symes
- U of O Refillable Mug** Suzanne Stainbrook, Rachael McGhee, Julie Hendrickson, Alex Stricker, Mary Tegel, Kristen Dilibero, Pamela Lambert, Geof Garner, Vanessa Tomason, Carlos Laso
- Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream** Kaoru Vesugi, Andrea Hubbard, Steve Radtke, Hiroko Nakajima, Angela Stout, Howard Crawford, Robin Boch, Maureen Hennessy, Tashi Tsering, Glenn Knart

Winners will have until Friday, October 21st to claim their prizes in the SARO office, EMU Suite 2, 346-4000. Thanks to all who participated!

Shakespeare in Ashland

A trip is being planned for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, October 28, 29, and 30. Call Frank Geltner at 346-0007 for details! The Shakespeare Festival is an Oregon treasure!

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