



# College years teach 'a lot' about life

By Jennifer Schmitt  
Community Editor

"So, what d'ya know," a friend of mine from high school always asks when I go home. (He, of course, never went to college and thinks it is a waste of money. Instead he has a job trapping small animals on the Oregon Coast.)

I usually stammer and try to think of something brilliant that will impress him and wipe the smug smile off of his face. And I almost always come up with the same vague answer — "A lot."

He rolls his eyes and walks off, leaving me wishing just once I could come up with something fairly intelligent.

In my defense, I think it is impossible to pinpoint just one thing I learned in college. Unlike high school, college involves learning both inside and outside the classroom. Lessons regarding the role of women in the suffrage movement were balanced with lessons on how to pay for rent, tuition and food on a few hundred dollars a month.

When I first came to the University as a freshman, I was scared. I admit it. I was leaving a town with 1,700 people to live at a University with 17,000 people.

But college meant freedom. It meant staying out too late and skipping classes the next morning. It meant doing what I wanted when I wanted. Classes were as

important as I made them. Unfortunately, 100-level classes were not high on my list of priorities.

Footnotes were a necessary part of my college curriculum. I could not believe it when one of my friends explained I could buy the notes for my classes and, even more shocking, it was OK with the professors.

The freedom stopped being as much fun when I started paying my bills. My parents made it very clear they did not have the money to pay for my education, so my bills were entirely my responsibility. I quickly learned about loans and debts — big debts.

Drinking was next on my list of things to learn. Growing up in a family where drinking was never an option, I had never had any alcohol before college. My friends thought this was great and decided to introduce me to the wonderful spinning world of drinking. In just one night I was introduced to vodka, rum, Southern Comfort, tequila, bourbon and beer. I was forced to set some limits after that.

When I took a reporting job at the *Emerald*, I soon learned that my editor had lied to me. It was

not a job. It was a life. I did not realize how much of my time the newspaper was monopolizing until I had a free night and I wanted to call a few friends to go out for beer. The only phone numbers I had were for other *Emerald* staffers, and if there was one group of people I did not need to spend more time with, it was them. Lucky for me my boyfriend was not only patient and understanding but also had friends we could go out with.

With graduation looming above, the stress is rising. I have watched other seniors struggle over resumes and receive of piles of rejection letters. The future is one big question mark. There are few guides or rules. I have two job offers, but both are in Los Angeles. Now I have to make the big decision — am I willing to exchange Oregon's months of rain for California's freeway shootings? Hmmm.

I guess it is time to move on and get started in the real world, where I have to pay for my own Internet access and get up at 8 a.m. instead of at noon.

So after four years at the University and \$10,000 in loans, what do I know? I know I can budget my meager paychecks, work long hours, write papers of almost any length and answer any Trivial Pursuit question.

Basically, I guess I'd have to say I know "a lot."

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Jennifer Schmitt

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