

Freshman shares her first impressions of life at the University

Editor's note: To help illustrate the changes that incoming freshmen face, we invited freshman Erin Foote Pursell to write about her first week at the University. Erin will share her experiences with the Emerald throughout her first year.

I am 18. I am a freshman. I am from Anchorage, Alaska, about 2,000 miles away. I didn't have a single friend when I rolled into Eugene on Monday night. But, technically, I am an adult and should not have a huge problem with this, right? I have had more moments of insecurity and loneliness in my life than I can count. So, why do I feel so out of sync?

This is a day-by-day account of my adjustment to life at the University. Maybe it will sound familiar, maybe it won't. At any rate, it's one more reminder that you are not alone in your struggle to make this place home.

Day 1: Monday, Sept. 21

I arrive in Eugene with my mom and sister on Monday night. It has been a bittersweet day. We went to the beach in Lincoln City and watched the sunset. In the back of all our minds, though, was the thought that we won't be spending any more nights cooking together or going grocery shopping. It is the little things that I am going to miss. We know that this is our last night together before everything changes.

Day 2: Tuesday, Sept. 22

I move into the dorms. It is an unfortunate thing that the dorms do not have elevators. The cur-

tains are funky, and there are a few mystery stains on the floor from previous occupants. The bed squeaks, and it smells a little rank, but surprise, surprise.

We spend the rest of the day searching for the perfect laptop. Navigating Eugene is not the easiest task. After finding the right computer, our next mission is to search for ethernet cards. This is not too difficult — it's the line stretching from Watson up the street to the EMU.

Tonight, we eat dinner at Track Town, where my mom asks random girls who look lonely to please join us. And, wherever you are out there — I am sorry. I know that being bombarded by questions from my mom was probably more traumatic than eating alone could ever be.

I spent this night alone in the dorms. It is cold and quiet until about 7 a.m., when the garbage trucks come. After that it is just cold.

Day 3: Wednesday, Sept. 23

Today, I learn that being a music major not only involves a long walk from Hamilton to the music building but also saying goodbye to my hopes of taking any other classes outside the department. Do I really want to give up astronomy and yoga to sing all year? Orientation in un-airconditioned Deady is a highlight today

as well.

This afternoon my mom and sister leave. I feel a little bit guilty about not being more upset, but the tears from behind my mom's sunglasses still choke me up. However, I think my sister is more upset that there won't be anyone else to share the blame.

After wading through the sea of cardboard back at the dorms, I introduce myself to my roommate who is on her way to her first rush event. Tonight is also my first encounter with the food.

My new friend from down the hall comes to dinner with me. We meet another lonely girl (I'm already turning into my mother) and after dinner, we go for a long walk. I would like to stay friends with the girl we met, but there is something about lonely situations that makes people come together even when they know they probably won't see each other again.

Tonight, we also check out the dance for new students at the EMU. We decide to stay for about five minutes. I apologize to the people who coordinate these events, but it is somewhere between Vanilla Ice and the strobe-light assault that I realize this is why I am glad I graduated from high school.

Day 4: Thursday, Sept. 24

Today, I register for some workshops at the EMU Craft Center. The line is out the door before they even open. I check out the Outdoor Program as well and sign up for a trip to the coast on Saturday.

I spend the rest of the day at the music school singing badly at

my auditions. I am placed in the most basic and rudimentary of all the classes. It is a sad thing. I also take the placement exam for math and am glad that I don't have to take math to get a BA.

Tonight, I meet the only other kids from Anchorage. And where did I meet them? In the EMU Ballroom. And what was I doing? Checking out the bad karaoke. These type of events are not my first choice for Thursday night entertainment, but the rendition of Bohemian Rhapsody was enough to spark curiosity. I was just grateful to meet some people who could talk with me about familiar things.

Day 5: Friday, Sept. 25

I wonder if all the food is as bad as Grab 'n Go. I also am procrastinating when it comes to registering for my classes. Maybe I'll change my mind about being a music major, maybe they will call and ask me to be in the upper-level classes where I know I belong ... maybe, maybe, maybe I should just get over it and register.

This evening I check out the ballroom dance. It is cheap, and they are teaching swing. I meet a nice guy. But listen up, girls — ask them how old they are before they walk you all the way back to your dorm and you tell them your life story. My new friend turns out to be 30. So, anyway ...

Day 6: Saturday, Sept. 26

Today, I go to the coast with the Outdoor Program. It is a solitary day. The people are nice, but I am beginning to miss my own friends. I would like to spend one

night with people who already know where I am from, whether I have brothers or sisters and what my major is. It is not so much that I miss my friends as it is the familiar.

Tonight, I call my mom and get pizza with my roommate and my very cool RA.

Day 7: Sunday, Sept. 28

My room is beginning to feel like home. The girls on my floor are fun, and someone loans me change for the laundry machines. How is it that we spend five grand to live in the dorms and still have to pay for laundry?

I play ultimate on the lawn near our dorm and think I'll die of heat stroke. Isn't it suppose to rain a lot here? Tonight is our hall meeting. Ninety kids in a little room with little windows. It is a frustrating thing, not so much because the room is a sauna, but because it takes two hours to review courtesy rules ... one more thing I thought I was leaving behind in high school.

So, here I am now. A week of classes has gone by, and I am still not homesick. I guess a little part of me feels like this is camp. But I know where to go for decent food and where to go for an ATM. I stay in touch through e-mail but am also making some friendships here that I think will last.

I find myself eating alone a lot still, but it is more by choice as opposed to not knowing anyone. I like it here, and it is getting better every day.

Researchers hope to be able to identify potentially chronic lawbreakers

The Associated Press

EUGENE — Researchers are working to identify characteristics of juvenile lawbreakers that would help officials reach potential criminals early on, directing them into programs that change the way they think and act.

Within a year, it could be put into use at Lane County's new Juvenile Justice Center, researcher Michael Finigan said.

"We're creeping down the road to that point," Finigan said. "Clearly, these tools are helping us to understand the risk factors."

As part of work funded by a federal grant, Finigan is developing a screening tool for the county's Youth Services Department that will help it identify which youthful offenders are likely to become chronic lawbreakers.

Local juvenile crime data show

20 percent of offenders commit 87 percent of juvenile crime.

"The idea is to identify who those 20 percent are," Finigan said.

Juveniles can then get help from schools, family counselors, drug treatment, mental health and other

community resources, Finigan said.

Finigan cautions that early identification efforts are only beginning to take shape. Assessment techniques are bound to evolve with time and experience, he said.

"As a researcher, I'd never say we have the silver bullet," he said.

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