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# UO seniors offer wisdom in parting

■ As graduation approaches, University seniors reflect on highlights and low points of their college experience

By Mikhael Romain  
for the Emerald

Graduation is just around the corner, and seniors completing their fourth, fifth or even sixth year of college have looks of bliss and contentment. With the "real world" just around the corner, many seniors are reflecting on their college experiences, good and bad.

A number of seniors said their most valuable college experiences were the ones they had off-campus. Whether it was studying, working abroad or backpacking through Europe, students consistently said getting off the grounds was an integral part of their college experience.

"Studying abroad was the best thing I ever did," business major Tina Austinson said. "It should be mandatory. It was such a valuable experience."

Julie Ekberg, a political science major who spent a year studying in Sweden, said anyone taking a language and interested in social work should go abroad.

"It is always helpful to have a second language. Going abroad is the only way to really solidify a language and learn cross-culture skills," Ekberg said.

Not everyone's off-campus activities involved leaving Eugene, though. Ryan Dobrowski, who is getting his bachelor's degree in fine arts, said his most positive experience in college was starting a band with a few friends.

"It has been a huge positive re-

flection throughout school," he said. "The band has been a consistently great experience, and it has created a good foot to leave on."

Naturally, though, experiences on campus still play a big role in students' lives, and sometimes a haphazard one. A number of seniors said choosing their courses over the past four years was a process of trial and error, rather than a calculated plan.

"I would have liked to double major but I didn't know what I wanted to do as a freshman, so I couldn't have prepared my schedule," Austinson said.

Spanish major Geoff Hoffa said he would have taken more classes designed to teach job skills.

"I feel like I developed great philosophical skills, but I wish I had learned more practical application skills like business or science," Hoffa said.

Though some seniors regretted not studying for a test, or staying out too late on a weeknight, they said that even negative situations proved to be a learning experience.

"I don't have any regrets," said Christine Shevlin, a psychology major. "I wouldn't take back any struggles. It made me who I am. It was part of growing up."

The newfound freedoms and minimized restrictions students encounter when entering college life provide a myriad of experiences. Veterans of this lifestyle said to jump into as many things as possible: Join an intramural team, go abroad, volunteer and try new things.

"I enjoyed my college experiences," Hoffa said. "But I would have found a fake ID sooner. It opens up so many social opportunities."

Mikhael Romain is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

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## West

continued from page 5B

learning. I started my formal education in small elementary classes that prepared me for larger middle school classes, which in turn prepared me for even larger high school classes. Going from a high school classroom of 40 students to college lecture halls of 400 students was also nerve-racking.

I just have to remember that there are two major differences between college and the "real world."

1. You pay to learn in college. But in the "real world," you are paid to learn in the form of a job.

2. The world is a classroom with-

out walls and all the people in it are teachers.

College has taught me the survival skills I will need to conquer this brave new world. So even when I only have 10 cents to my name ('cause Uncle Sam took the rest), that is still enough to buy a package of Top Ramen. Credit cards actually do use real money. Beer is an integral part of the creative process. And the best schmoozing happens over a steaming cup of Starbucks' finest.

I think I'm ready. Bring it on!

E-mail reporter Jen West at jenwest@dailymerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

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