



My Buddy System

Like a tough exam, making friends at college takes work. But the rewards feel as good as getting an A. BY BLAKE TAYLOR

THROUGHOUT MY FIRST YEAR AT UC Berkeley, I saw many groups and cliques. At the beginning of each semester, organizations, from the Young Republicans to the Cooking Club to the Vietnamese Student Association, set up booths and bombard passing students with flyers at Sproul Plaza, the main entrance to the school. College is all about finding out who you are, what you want to become, and, just as important, what kinds of groups you identify with. But not all groups on campus have a name or a booth. It's these amorphous cliques that are difficult to understand and befriend.

Young ADDers are often shy and lack confidence in social situations. Over time,

you may start thinking that it's just easier to stay by yourself, but you have to face your fears. Meeting people is like doing classroom presentations—the more you do, the easier they become.

I'd overcome my general shyness by the time I reached college, but I still had to work to find a new group once I got to campus. I quickly learned that you cannot sit back in your dorm room poring over your lecture notes, and expect friends to come to you.

You might think, "I'll be friends with my roommates." That doesn't always work out. Just before my freshman year, I met my two new roommates on Facebook. They seemed friendly enough, telling me about their inter-

ests. They also mentioned that they'd been friends since elementary school. We looked forward to meeting.

On the first day of the semester, I dragged my luggage into our room and saw the two of them playing a video game together. They barely noticed that I had walked in, so I said, "Hey, I'm Blake." They turned around and waved, introduced themselves, and resumed their game. As the semester continued, they invited their high-school-friends-who-were-now-at-Berkeley over. It became clear that this was a clique that had transplanted itself from high school to college. What could I do about it? Nothing. So I searched for friends outside of my dorm room.

Do Some Social Work

Once you acknowledge that making new friends is going to take some work, you'll find countless opportunities to do so.

- Go to Welcome Week and learn about your school's sports organizations and campus student groups.
- Your major probably has a group associated with it. Join it. I found a French group, and we got together to do homework and practice our *bonjours* and *au revoirs*.
- Scan the college newspaper for upcoming events, and check out the flyers taped in the hallways about events that, perhaps, didn't make the school calendar.
- Go to barbecues and social events sponsored by your dorm. I became good friends with the four girls in the suite next to mine after raving over their delicious brownies at our residence hall picnic.

If one tactic doesn't work, try another. I remember being turned away from a fraternity party last year because my friend and I didn't know any members. That confused me—how were we supposed to know anybody? We were freshmen. But it didn't stop me. I wanted the support from older students and alumni, and the sense of community that comes with being part of a tight-knit group, so I decided to pledge a fraternity later that year.

College isn't just another four years of school—it's a major stage in your life. Ideally, you'll graduate with more knowledge and wisdom, and with many lifelong friendships. I know I certainly felt that way after freshman year. □

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