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## First Impression From The Beginning Of College Life

After the first few weeks of college, my views have changed a little. When I first got here, I really wanted to learn as much as possible and make that my main focus, partially because I thought that that was really the only thing people should get out of college. Now that I have a few weeks of college under my belt, my thinking has shifted a bit. I've begun realize how important the social aspect of college really is, and how it can make a huge difference in my everyday activities. I also am really starting to appreciate the spiritual aspect of Malone. I love the floor Bible studies we have, and chapels are great. I like that in every class, the professor can almost always tie it back to God and how amazing He is. Education is still my main goal, but I'm starting to realize the importance of other goals as well.

For example, I've absolutely loved getting to know the girls on my floor. The first week of classes, none of us knew each other very well, and our hall was relatively quiet. We all stayed in our rooms and studied or watched TV, and didn't interact a whole lot. But eventually, we began taking little steps outside of our comfort zones and got to know one another. This has totally changed the atmosphere on our hall, and everything we do as a floor. We get meals together, watch TV, and have become very good at helping each other procrastinate! One of the girls living next door to me has some magnetic Scrabble tiles on her door, and we've been known to stand there for a good 20 minutes trying to come up with a really long word.

Making friends outside of my dorm has been a little harder, but can be just as rewarding. Starting up conversations with people I don't know has never been my strong suit, but I've been trying to work on that throughout my first few weeks here. Talking to people in my classes can make the time much more enjoyable, and can be especially helpful when I don't understand something in class.

Another thing I really underestimated was the impact the past few weeks have had on my faith. I came in knowing Malone is a Christian college, but I didn't completely think about how that would affect my everyday life. My RA is so supportive of all of the girls on my floor, and loves to hang out with and listen to us. We have a floor Bible study every week that really brings us closer to each other and God. I've learned so much from the girls in just the few weeks I've been here that I never expected to learn. I'm so grateful that I get to spend time with such amazing girls that help me grow in my relationship with God more than I ever expected.

Another thing here I've really enjoyed is the chapels. It's really nice to get away from all of the studying and busyness for a while and spend some time worshipping God. I also love how diverse the chapels are. I like the variety because it breaks up what can be the monotony of

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worship. Sometimes people can be complacent about their faith and get used to one way of doing things. I know I can do that sometimes, and I like being forced out of that bubble. Every time I go to chapel, I'm not really sure what I'm going to get.

One of my favorite chapels was the one from Compassion International. The guys had some amazing stories to tell, and the organization has changed so many lives. The dancing and music was a definite break from the usual format of chapel, and it was so much fun! My group got there a bit late and ended up sitting right up in front, so we got really into it! Following the service, our floor decided to sponsor a child together. Her name is Cristal, and she lives in Mexico. I know she's so beautiful to Jesus, and I can't wait for us to be able to show her how much He loves her.

After a few weeks here, what I think of as success has changed a little as well. At the beginning of college, I might've said that success would be getting all A's, finding a great job right away, and getting where I want to go in life right on time. Now, though, I think I wouldn't say that.

First of all, I know I'm not going to get all A's. Some of my classes are pretty tough, and I know I won't get perfect scores all the time. I would say that now my main goal is to get as good of grades as I can, but most importantly to feel like I learned everything I needed to. If I get stellar grades and haven't really learned what I needed to, then what was the point?

Secondly, I'm learning that God will do His own thing, and that His plans are probably way better than anything I could think up. I know a few things I want to do with my life, like work on an Indian reservation to help pay off my student loans, and maybe live in England at some point. More and more, I'm learning to let God work on the details and focus on what I can do right now to make sure I have the ability to be whatever He needs me to be.

The last thing I'm defining as success in college is coming out of it with meaningful relationships. A huge part of living for the Lord is being able to fellowship with other believers that can lift us up and encourage us in our everyday lives. I've grown so much in the past few weeks, and none of it would've happened without the amazing women of God that He has put in my life.

Even though it hasn't been a very long time, I know I'm not the same person I was when I first started at Malone. I only hope I can keep up the forward momentum.

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