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5 TIPS FOR FRESHMEN

-from someone who just completed freshman year

Congratulations on being accepted to Pitt-Bradford. This is the start of a new adventure in which you will grow beyond belief. At the end of your journey here you will walk away with not only a Pitt degree, but with knowledge that will span beyond textbooks, friends that you never thought you would have and memories that will last a lifetime. I wish you the best, and to help you out, I made a list of the top 5 things I wish I knew as a freshman at UPB. I hope these tips help!

1 Utilize campus resources

And no, I'm not just talking about the standard academic resources. True, we have awesome tutoring centers that are super easy to book appointments for. Also, we could possibly have the world's nicest and most helpful librarians ever (I kid you not, once I e-mailed Marietta Frank for help to find a source and not only did she find the original, she sent me the bibliography too). But aside from that stuff, find and utilize the little gifts that UPB offers, such as:

- You can print from your room to the library, Fisher, or Swarts.
- There's a sauna for anyone to use if you just go into the guys or girls locker room instead of changing in the bathrooms.
- Putting money on your student ID to use in the laundry room saves you 15 cents each time, and although that doesn't sound like a lot, it's equivalent to every 10th wash free!
- Get a POST sticker from the SAC office on the second floor of the Commons to get discounts around town at stores, restaurants, etc.

2 Explore the surrounding areas

When you have free time, explore the area. Bradford has stuff to do, you just have to find it!

- You can go to trivia night on Tuesdays at Rookie's Sports Bar, even if you're under 21, for food and a fun night with friends.
- Try out food at restaurants like Chu-Lee Gardens Chinese Restaurant, or Kabobs at the Option House for an Indian/ Mediterranean taste.
- Go shopping on Main Street or at Label Shopper, a nice discount store that sells brands like American Eagle, but for about half the price!
- Utilize nature! My boyfriend and I have made the creek next to campus a lazy river with inner tubes. I've also been hiking many times at Kinzua. You can bike basically anywhere! Make sure you take advantage of being in such a scenic place right next to the Allegheny National Forest.

If for some reason you still feel the need to leave Bradford, there are plenty of opportunities to travel. For example, this past spring I was in a new city almost every weekend: NYC with the Communication & Arts Department (annual trip), Pittsburgh, PA with the Model UN Club, Buffalo, NY for a shopping trip planned by Residence Life & Housing and Winston-Salem, NC for spring break with Habitat for Humanity.

3 Go to club night

This kind of goes along with utilizing resources, but for real, GO TO CLUB NIGHT! Even if you think you'll be too busy with school work, or that you won't like any of the clubs offered, still go. Seriously! This is how club night goes down. You show up about 10 minutes late because you don't want to look too eager (at least that's what I tried), then you walk into the Commons and it's filled with super hype students and you don't know why. There are tons of people telling you to sign up for their club and you might feel a bit overwhelmed and confused. What you need to know is this, just because you sign up for a club does not mean you're automatically a part of it. Signing up just means that you're interested and that the club can send you e-mails inviting you to their meetings. From there, you can attend the first club meeting of each club that you signed up for and then make the decision on whether you want to stick around or not. Don't feel pressured. Just take your time and go with the flow.

4 Roll with the punches

Things don't always go the way you planned, but that's OK. Originally, I was prepared to go to 8 other universities before deciding to attend UPB. I wanted to live on a big campus, in an urban area with all the college clichés. UPB was the exact opposite of what I wanted. By the end of the first two weeks of classes, I had convinced myself that I was transferring. Yet, after completing my first year, I realized how much I loved my experience. I'm paying a heck of a lot less than a majority of the people I know, and still receiving a quality education. I landed a work-study job with less competition than a school with tens of thousands of students. I easily got involved in clubs and sports. My professors remembered my name within the second week of classes and since we have a smaller campus, I got to have multiple classes with the same professors. Professors make awesome references for jobs too, so build those relationships. Also, the apartment-style living really helped me make friends. Sure, I didn't get the original housing I requested, but remember that whole "roll with the punches" thing? I'm so glad I got assigned to a townhouse or else I would have missed out on meeting the upperclassmen who lived in our downstairs room and my awesome neighbors. At Pitt-Bradford I got to become good friends with not only people from out of state, but also from outside of the country. UPB really did become a home away from home and it can for you too, if you give it a chance.

5 Ask yourself, "Have I really tried?"

If you find yourself not enjoying college, ask yourself, "Have I really tried?" This is my final word of advice, but possibly the most important. I've heard far too many college students complain about disliking school because there is nothing to do, yet when I take a step back and examine the situation, I come to the same conclusion every time...THEY AREN'T DOING ANYTHING! Even before the school year started I worked on securing a work study job, which the university does an awesome job about e-mailing us about, and I committed to playing tennis. Once I got to campus I took action by finding things to fill my time. I joined clubs, went to the gym, hung out with new people, utilized the game room, and of course, completed my school work for the week. If you're honestly working on being a well-rounded student, you have to branch out and leave your dorm room. Initiate a conversation with another student, take part in a club or two, join a study group—I promise you, you will enjoy college and stay busy. Life doesn't give you many handouts, but I know that there are plenty of opportunities that present themselves at UPB, you just have to be willing and ambitious enough to take them. Here is some food for thought, if you're not willing to take the initiative in college to do things, you probably won't be the type of employee someone would want to hire down the road. So, use college as an opportunity to not only grow as a student, but to obtain and improve skills needed for the professional world.