

College Life: Get Involved and Get Your Money's Worth and More

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In high school, basic public education is paid for by the government. School fees, such as workbook fees and student fees, are kept to a minimum. Any fee that is outside of basic school fees, such as organizational fees, is optionally paid by the student upon joining the organization. However, in college there are no optional fees. All fees are incorporated into tuition, which the student has to pay in order to attend school. College fees can be used in any number of ways in running the university. They can range from something as useful as a technology fee to something as insignificant as an opera fee. However, there are fees that go toward the enhancement of college life, such as campus activities and places of recreation. Because it is the student's money at work, each student should take the time to see what they pay for and take advantage of the uses of their tuition. College students should get involved on campus so that they can get something out of what they paid for. In essence, when students get involved, they get more than what their money has paid for.

In the preceding weeks to my first day as a freshman at Southeastern Louisiana University, I began looking online to view my classes and my financial status. On the financial page of my account, I saw the total amount of my tuition. It was more than I had estimated. As I looked down further on the page, I saw an active link named "Account Detail." Curious to see what page it would bring up, I clicked it. On the page was a breakdown of what I actually paid in my tuition. The first several lines contained the expected fees, such as room and board, parking, and books. As I scrolled down, I realized that the list was longer than I had thought and that the

fees became less familiar. The unfamiliar fees ranged from fifteen cents to eighty dollars. Among these fees I saw a technology fee, a spirit fee, a museum fee, and a cheerleading fee. I thought it was outrageous to have to pay all these fees and to not know where my money is going.

However, there were two fees that I had heard about from orientation: Campus Activity Board and Student Government fees. My orientation leaders urged everyone to join CAB and SGA because all students pay each organization's membership dues in their tuition. Because I am not the type to waste money, I took advantage of pre-paid membership fees and joined Campus Activity Board. Once I got involved, I started to see how my two dollars, along with the other fees, were at work. Campus Activity Board plans fun events for all students at Southeastern. At all events everything is at no cost to the students. There is always free food, free t-shirts and other free things that students usually have to pay for. When I volunteered to work with events for CAB, I had the greatest times. I met new friends, networked with faculty and staff and became motivated to do well in college. These benefits are definitely worth more than the initial two dollars of my tuition.

Because academics and campus activities are both funded through fees in students' tuition, students should engage themselves with their studies, as well as with their campus. Students should not only have a genuine interest in their studies, but also have a genuine interest in what is happening around campus. They should pay attention to flyers and signs around campus to know what events and activities are coming up. Students should also read the campus newspaper to see the things that have been going on. They should inquire what beneficial things are available to them at no cost. These are the simplest things students can do to see their money at work, but students who take a more active role in their campus are the ones who reap the full benefit of their money.

Students who do more than just passively engage in campus life hold the key to college success. Campus involvement is an important part of college success. Rather than take away from studies, participation in collegiate activities actually enhances students' academic lives. When college students enter into an organization, they are surrounded by other students with high ambitions and goals, thus creating a positive, cultivating environment and motivating the students to soar to higher academic success levels. Students also gain "personal resources such as interpersonal skills, self-confidence, and specialized knowledge that encourage the realization of goals and aspirations" (Montelongo 60). Once a student is involved in an organization, he or she meets new people and becomes an integral part of something. Making new relationships and feeling a part of something can make the monotonous routine of going to class every day meaningful. When a student's academic life has more meaning, the student is more apt to succeed in college.

Of course, there are some students who do not take any action to see where their money goes and make no effort to engage in campus life, but still fare as well as those who do. It is possible to succeed academically in college without ever being involved on campus. However, the quality of these students' college careers is not as high as that of active college students.

In all fairness, there are some students that do not have time to fully commit themselves to an organization, like non-traditional students with pressing responsibilities outside of college. Yet, there are also ways for these students to stay engaged with their campus. Because college campuses are so diverse, there is a plethora of things to do that take place at all times of the day to accommodate the schedules of all students. These busy students should make an effort to attend at least one event or activity a semester. At the very least, students with tight schedules

should pick up a campus newspaper every now and then to see what is happening around their campus.

College students should realize that the amount of fees paid in tuition is very small relative to the benefits they can receive if they take advantage of the opportunities presented to them. Moreover, the only way that students can find out what opportunities are there is to engage themselves with their college environment. Students can passively connect with their campus by just being aware of what is going on. However, students who are actively involved in campus activities are the ones who reap the most benefits from their college tuition. Not only do active students get the most for their money, but they also get the things that no amount of tuition could pay for. Highly involved students get the tools necessary for college success and beyond. Although it is possible for college students to be successful without getting involved, there is a lack of quality in their education. Who pays big money only to get a low quality item? Disengaged, inactive college students do.

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Ms. Ramsey's Comments: *I find this paper worthy of inclusion in The Pick because of its strong content. One of the criteria we, as instructors, use to evaluate essays is whether an essay is of compelling interest and makes a lasting impression on the reader. Often, we read more or less the same essays over and over, but Erin's essay is different. To say that there is much apathy among students today may sound too harsh, but it is at least obvious that students have so many other things going on in their lives that their education suffers; therefore, I believe that many of*

them would benefit from following Erin's advice to try to become more involved in campus activities. In short, I think that this is an essay that should reach more readers than only a small peer group and the instructor, and inclusion in The Pick will make it available to a much wider audience.