Transitioning to UWSP

We all know that UWSP is a special place. Still, the transition to college, even to a special place like UWSP, can be tough. For many of us:

•  This is the first time living on our own, away from our families and friends.
•  We are constantly meeting new people and wondering if they will become our new friends.
•  Life isn't as structured as it was in high school: how do we manage our free time?
•  There are tons of opportunities and groups; we have to figure out where we fit in.
•  We have to figure out how to navigate college classes, how get to know professors, and sometimes how to handle disappointing grades.

It can be easy to feel overwhelmed and to ask yourself, "Do I really belong here?" and "Am I smart enough to make it?". These kinds of experiences are normal in the transition to college. Everyone goes through them, and they get better with time as you adjust to college. I have asked some UWSP upperclassmen to share their early experiences with you. Please take a few minutes to read their responses below:

**Question 1: Please write about the experiences and challenges you experienced when you first came to UWSP. What has been difficult or challenging for you? You can think about your experiences meeting other students, making friends, taking classes, adjusting to dorm life, or anything else. Please write about some of the difficulties you experienced in the transition to college and, as well, how some of these difficulties and challenges have begun to improve with time as you have spent more time in college.**

Answers:

"Time management with how much of my time I spend on studying vs hanging out with friends and clubs."

"My biggest challenge was adjusting to the size of the college and the size of the city. The biggest city closest to where I live is half the size of Stevens Point. The college I came from is a quarter of the size."

"One of my biggest challenges was being able to find the courage to put myself out there in terms of meeting new people, talking to professors, etc. I came from a high school where I was widely liked amongst my entire class since I first moved to that district, so coming to a place where I had to actually try to meet new people and start over, that was a big challenge to me. It took a couple years before I truly found my stride and made lifelong connections/friendships"

"One of the biggest challenges I had when I first came to college was time management. I thought that I needed to spend every second doing homework or studying. I am not saying you should't do that, but also make sure you take time for your mental health and to hang out with friends or do things you like. As I got further into college it was easier to tell when I needed to study and when I had a little free time, just make sure you find a good balance and don't be too hard on yourself. Another thing you can do is study with your friends if they are in the same class. It not only lets you hang out with your friends and get school work done at the same time, but I have found that studying in groups is the best way to learn the most and retain the knowledge."

"I moved here from 6 hours away and knew no one. I went to mass at church every day when I first moved here. Spiritual health was key for me. Surround yourself with good people and let the light guide you to the finish."

"Finding good friends with good intentions. It’s fun to party and that when you transition with no parental supervision but having good friends can be hard to find"

"The most difficult aspect of transitioning to college was making friends and taking the jump from highschool to college. I was never an outgoing person to begin with, and I live off-campus so making friends was already difficult. As classes got smaller and more advanced, it was a little easier to connect with the people in those classes. The transition from a smaller school, where I didn't have many opportunities to a big college was very difficult. Many of the people in my major were already more advanced with me, and I've heard countless times in intro courses "you probably learned this in high school already", when in reality I didn't. Playing catch up was probably the hardest part, and having to learn concepts that were skimmed over because of previous expectations of already learning it was not useful to my learning. As classes progressed I learned how to deal with it, usually by using outside resources such as videos, office hours, or tutoring."

"Social anxiety makes it really hard to go to class, I never wanted to be looked at or noticed on my way to classes and eventually would skip certain classes. This heavily impacted my performance, I wish I knew that just forcing myself to go would make it easier each time. After taking a break and understanding that the hardest part is getting up and going, I’m ready to try again and feel better about myself."

"The hardest part of starting college is moving away from your friends and family. The best ways to meet new people on campus are by joining clubs you are interested in, and going to campus events. You'll find your people. Living in the dorms can be tough, but there are people there to help you adjust. If you have any problems with your roommate, or navigating campus, or using the housing portal, please ask your RA's, they are there to help you."

**Question 2: What resources on-campus and off-campus do you wish you had known about in your first year in Point? What Stevens Point businesses and services do you appreciate?**

Answers:

"Research opportunities!! I didn't know anything about it all until junior year. Same with on campus work that relates to my major."

"A business in Stevens Point I truly appreciate is Taps and Tackle. I met the owner of that place thanks to my social media presence and I really enjoy the store as well as the connections I've made through them."

"Matafied Cuts is a true barbershop experience with the best fades in Central Wisconsin."

"I wish I had known about more of the campus involvement stuff. Although I got here on the heals of covid and a lot of that was shut down."

"Polito's has great pizza in town."

"I wish I would have known about the tutoring center, I know it sounds odd but I didn't know that was a thing until late my sophomore year. By that time we were in lockdown, so unfortunately I didn't get to utilize it as much in my early classes."

"I wish I had known about the Dat Hair Tho salon earlier. Braids, locs, twists, they do it all. She even teaches braiding classes!"

"How the online library works, it’s a great resource I heavily recommend the course that teaches about resources for school."

"I wish I knew how nice the people were at Campus Cycle my first year. They will fill up your bike tires for free and offer advice about taking care of your bike!"

**Question 3: What words of advice would you like to share with our newest Pointers? What would you say to "first year you", if you had the chance?**

Answers:

"You will meet so many people in college- some will stick with you for all or almost all 4 years, and others will leave. It is okay if they leave! Let them, new friends will come along."

"Join clubs and be as active as possible. You'll learn as much from those clubs as you do in class."

"First year me and I are totally different people. First year me was heavy into video games and had a small social circle. Current me has a much larger social circle and is much more into the outdoors. I guess I would have told my first year self to being more extroverted since it never hurts to meet new people! Some of these people you meet in your classes you will end up spending a lot of your college career with!"

"Explore campus! There are tons of cool studying spots, places to eat, animals to see and good places for mental brakes. When you settle on a major you tend to only have classes in one or two buildings and don't really see the rest. That is what happened to me and I never knew about all the cool things in other buildings until a couple months before I was graduating. I would say just take a day and wander through the different floors of different buildings and see what you can find! The CBB has some really nice studying spots, and the CPS cafe has good food for a quick snack."

"Become involved and known on campus. Student organizations are great. I recommend Student Government too."

"Get into a good routine and make friends and also involved with extracurriculars"

"Attend your classes whenever possible, skipping just makes it harder on yourself, especially when in the intro classes where you learn a lot of information and non of the future material makes sense without the previous material. Also say don't be afraid to reach out, I wish I would have made the connections in my earlier years to professors and started research. Most of them are not there to see you fail, they want to see you succeed and it took me a long time to realize they were not my enemy, I was my own enemy. You will regret it if you don't make those connections, because there is so much more to outside of class where you can learn in research, and joining towards the end of your college career makes you feel less successful. Another big one is don't be afraid to reach out for mental help, I wish I would have. The jump from high school to college is big and can really take a toll on your mental health. If you find yourself starting to struggle with drugs or alcohol just to get by, seek help right away."

"Take your time, it sucks but put yourself before making friends. You’re the average of the 5 people you spend the most time with so spend it with people who want what’s best for you. Get your habits in line and don’t care about what others think. It’s your money and time not theirs."

**Now please take about 10 minutes to reflect on your time here so far and answer**[**these two questions**](https://forms.office.com/r/qMNE2EfLnX)**. This survey is anonymous, so you must also indicate that you submitted this survey here in Canvas for your grade. To do that, click the "start assignment" button on the top right. In the text box that appears below for this assignment, just enter "DONE" after you have completed the survey.**

