

Innis College: The Life of a First-Year Student - Sciences

As a second-year Life Science student at the University of Toronto, I can clearly remember my first-year experiences. University life was tough at first, but towards the end, I learned to love Toronto and the university. Although my experiences were not always positive, I learned from my failures and pulled through. Here are some things that would have been useful for me to hear as a new student entering university:

Get involved! Although it may seem impossible to fit extra-curricular activities in your compact schedule of classes and studying, it is possible! If you can manage your time wisely, getting involved will be the most valuable and memorable experiences throughout your university career. There are countless ways of getting involved such as joining sport teams, student unions and activities offered by your college. For example, I made so many new friends from being a part of Innis' FLC and the Human Biology Students Union. Not only did I make new friends, but also found support and comfort from other students that were going through the same first-year university shock as I was.

Balance. It is important to not let either your social or academic life take dominance over the other. You should find a healthy balance that will allow you to perform the best you can in school, but also have fun outside of class. From experience, I can say that this was a very difficult task for me. I made the mistake of letting my studies take over my life. As a result, I did not perform as well as I would have liked during my first semester. However, as second semester began, I made changes and decided to open up to activities outside of school, but still made time for my studies. As a result, I performed much better in school and I was enjoying life much more than first semester!

Get to know the city! You're in downtown Toronto: Explore! There is so much to do in Toronto and if you are a student that lives in residence, take advantage! Some places in the city even offer discounts to university students! You can visit the ROM, watch operas/musicals, go shopping, skate at Nathan Phillips Square and so much more! If you like food, Toronto has all the food you can possible think of! There are tons of different cultural restaurants on Bloor Street (very close to the university), and all throughout downtown!

Take care of yourself. Hart House and AC is a great place to visit on a regular basis to keep you fit and healthy. Being in a new environment can negatively change your eating habits and it may result in Freshman 15! Don't let this happen! Try to fit exercising into your schedule and remember to eat healthy. During my first semester, I consumed a lot of bad food and was too lazy to exercise. During second semester however, I started to run every morning and ate a lot more fruits and vegetables. I realized that I had much more energy and could stay more focused during class!

My last advice is to make the best of your first year experience and don't stress too much! Remember that there are thousands of other students at the university going

through the same thing as you and you are not alone! If you have any questions or concerns, you always have your college's registrar's office with helpful people who can guide you and offer any sort of assistance you may need. Good luck with school and I know you'll enjoy your next four years in Toronto!

- Second-year Life Science student

First semester was not easy for me and probably not for any first-year student. I was immensely overwhelmed by the huge academic workload and by learning to cook my daily meals for myself in Innis Residence. Exams were relatively challenging too, and socially, I had little connection to friends.

However, I eventually rejuvenated after learning some strategies to overcome those problems. I got involved in Innis intramural sports, playing volleyball, soccer and Ultimate frisbee. I met a bunch of friends here and my "newness" is gone. The Innis College Student Society widened the circle of my social life through a number of events and workshops. The events bring together all Innis students and are arranged to make sure that students interact and get connected. It was at these events that I learned just how different University is from high school.

Daily trips to my Registrar's Office cleared all my academic and financial worries. I personally think that the Registrar's Office is the best resource out of the many resources for students at UofT.

I also registered with the Blueprint program where I get weekly emails for workshops held across campus. In these workshops I learned how to write a research paper, improve my study skills and leadership skills, and also improved a number of other personal skills through the exploration of life off-campus and learning about career information.

- First-year Life Science student, home country: Sudan