

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to your new home in the Upper Valley. For many, but not all of you, it is the first time you have lived away from home for any extended time. The first few weeks may be filled with surprises. People do all sorts of things differently. Not everyone likes maple syrup on their pancakes.

The journey here, I know, has not been an easy one. You have slogged through SAT prep courses; you have juggled schoolwork and sports practices; you have attended drama rehearsals and headed club meetings, balanced a social life while maintaining your academic excellence. And now, here you are. High school is now behind you and college just ahead. You have much to be proud of, and much to look forward to.

Dartmouth is a place steeped in tradition. I'm sure you're already looking forward to Homecoming weekend, and I hope will all be keeping your hands out of the fire and all of your clothes on. Then of course there's Winter Carnival and Green Key, and that swim test you will be required to take in order to graduate.

One of the great things about coming to college is that you get to start over. College is a great equalizer. Nobody knows about your past and you are all in this together. Everybody here is used to getting A's, so it is probably a good idea to prepare for not always being the smartest kid in the class. Also, the friends you make here are likely to be with you for life, so choose wisely.

This is my twenty first year having freshman advisees at Dartmouth and I have a few thoughts that might be helpful.

First lesson: be independent. Don't call up your faculty adviser and ask him or her how to find their office. Not a good start. This is the big school and this is your first test. Work out where the office is yourself, and make sure you show up on time.

Second lesson: don't expect too much of yourself. The first term is quite stressful and you shouldn't overload with too many hard classes. Take a little while to settle in and, make friends.

Third lesson: don't look too far ahead. Refuse to answer the question 'what do you want to be when you grow up'? You are not supposed to know the answer to this question yet. The best answer, if you have to give one, is to say that you don't know and that is the great benefit of a liberal arts education. You get to decide later. Then ask them what *they* plan to be doing in five, ten or even twenty years. Silly question.

Fourth lesson: don't work all the time. Sort out a reasonable schedule that includes sleeping and time for socializing as well as work. You are on your own on this one now. For lots of freshman this is hard because somebody has always been there to help to do this. The void is daunting.

Fifth lesson: follow your inclinations. When choosing your major, be mindful that it would be sensible to choose something you like to work on. You don't have to decide

too soon as there will be many classes you have never taken before. It is good to branch out. Embrace Organic Chemistry. Take a chance on Advanced Econometrics. Fear not Advanced Seminar in the 19th Century British Novel. It is too soon to think about your career after Dartmouth but data published just this week shows how highly Dartmouth grads are paid. It probably makes sense in the midst of a deep recession to choose a career that has decent prospects.

Sixth lesson: don't confuse education with entertainment. Professors who tell the best jokes might not teach you much of value. What distinguishes a university from a high school is that large numbers of the faculty are doing cutting-edge research, and scholarship. There are opportunities at Dartmouth for you to learn where the frontiers are and participate with your professors in their specialty. Determine which members of the faculty are working in areas that might interest you, and take their classes. Some are advisers to policy makers and some even help make policy. Listen to their stories.

Seventh lesson: admit your ignorance. You don't know much. Your professors don't know much either but they have probably been working in this area for years and likely know more than you do. We haven't found a cure for most cancers, we still don't know how to solve unemployment and we were unable to prevent the greatest financial crisis in a century. However, in the land of the blind the one-eyed man is king. But you can ask sensible questions so pipe up and show how smart you are. The problem at the frontier is that there may only be wrong answers.

Eighth lesson: this isn't easy. About halfway through freshman year, college may start to feel less like summer camp and more like, well, college. The sunshine may be replaced by snow drifts halfway up your dorm window, finals will loom before you, sharing a room will stop feeling like the best and longest sleepover you've ever had, and you might even start to miss your mom. At the University of St. Andrews in Scotland where my daughter was an undergrad they even have a name for it, they call it a 'wobbly'! Fear not, though, this too will pass. In four years time when you're sitting on the green waiting to graduate together as the class of 2013, you'll look back and recall these wobbles with a variety of fondness that only memories of your freshman year can elicit.

Let me return for a moment to the swim test I mentioned earlier. Many find it a strange requirement for graduation. But I think, in a sense, it sums up what Dartmouth is all about. If you haven't had the opportunity to learn, we will give it to you. If you have been lucky enough to have the opportunity, you will help your classmates learn how to make it to the other side. We will make sure you keep your head above water. 13's, you will carry the skills you learn here at Dartmouth with you throughout your lives, and in doing so you will never really leave this place. But for now, your time here has only just begun, and you must go and begin it.

On March 10, 1818 in his peroration before the Supreme Court of the United States in what has come to be called the Dartmouth College case Daniel Webster famously said about Dartmouth "it is, Sir, as I have said, a small college. And yet there are those who

love it!" I know you will come to love this place too. So, congratulations you have now joined the Dartmouth family. Go Big Green!

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