

## **The Freshman Disorder: A Life of Parties?**

**By Anna Roberts**

As the alarm clock blares, a freshman stumbles across his dorm room and slams the snooze button. Memories from the party the night before cloud his brain, and he fights fatigue as he hurriedly throws on clothes for his nine o'clock class, knowing that the professor will take attendance in a matter of minutes. A college student's life, especially a freshman's, is torn between the party scene and the grades that determine his future, and many times, students are not prepared for the academic demands and personal responsibility that school requires. Many college students enter their freshman year with a warped view of reality, that they are at school to enjoy life and have a good time. Instead of being prepared to spend hours at the library, students calculate how few hours they must devote to school to avoid academic probation. When students leave for college, they hear the party scene calling their names from the minute they step out the door. The lists of clubs, sororities, fraternities, and organizations are miles long, just waiting to fill a student's schedule with activities and parties. The freshman's expectation is simple: college is designed for students to leave home, to escape the limits of their parents, and to experience life to the fullest, in other words, party.

American culture clearly supports the party reputation of college life. The media feeds the feeling that college life is an extended party that never ends. Radio commercials advertise clubs and special college nights. Movies, such as *National Lampoon's Van Wilder*, flood theatres portraying students at college not studying, but involved in activities, parties, and social life. Even college athletics have been swept into the party craze, with tailgate and "after-parties" promoted all over campuses. Some parents contribute to the myth that college is time for partying, reminiscing to their children with pride about their wild party days. Not only does our society speak about college life as being an opportunity for adventure and excitement, but the cities which host colleges reflect this notion as well. Many small cities model themselves on the lifestyle of large universities, such as College Station and Nachadoches, Texas. Apartment complexes lure students, advertising their exciting party lifestyle. Clubs and bars line the campus perimeter. Student discounts and sales entice the students to participate in the party-centered atmosphere. But, when a teenager packs up and heads off to begin the collegiate chapter of his life, he encounters a rude awakening.

For a freshman, one of the most nerve racking times of the year is the day when midterm grades are posted. This day determines the amount of work he must put into his studies, and the number of parties he might have to miss in order to achieve satisfactory grades. And, as many students attest, the effect of too much partying is a low grade point average and, in some cases, the label of academic probation on their files. This was the experience of my friend Ben, a freshman at Texas A&M University. All of a sudden his need for being seen with the night life faded, and dusty textbooks were cracked open. Most students blame others for their dilemma, questioning, “

Why didn't someone tell me how and when to study?” Recollections of the warnings from parents that were carelessly ignored suddenly echo through brains, as information is crammed into every free memory space. Study carrels are suddenly full late into the night, a drastic difference from the barren chairs of the first six weeks. As this semester ends, I am grateful not to have fallen into the party-trap as deeply as some

of my friends. Despite the trials of a few all-nighters, I now have a better grasp on the ideas of responsibility, organization, time management, and effective study skills. I have learned to be a better student and friend, giving helpful advice to others who suffer from the disease “party-itis.” Being able to balance the party scene and the book work is vital to academic success, and new freshmen need to be alerted to this importance. While experiencing party life and freedom from parental dictates is an expected part of the college years, supported in many ways by society, the diligence to have proper time management rewards students with a less stressful and more enjoyable semester, and more importantly, a successful college experience.