Out of Class Activities

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Campus Activity 1: Ultimate Frisbee

I knew coming into UT Dallas that I wanted to commit to trying something new. I settled on Ultimate Frisbee as my new campus sports activity. I had played pickup with friends in high school before, but I really wanted to improve myself and find a community within the sport. Luckily that meant I had the basic skills of throwing and catching down when I joined in August, which was a huge help.

Ultimate Frisbee is a club sport here at UTD, which means we don’t have official status as student athletes. Nevertheless, we practice 3 times a week for a few hours and participate in tournaments every few weekends that last 3 days. The official season is during the spring, but we practice all year round. Each practice consists of a light jog and stretches for warm-up, drills to focus on a specific skill like cutting or man defense, and then light scrimmages to round out the session together. Although a lot of the frisbee team members are upperclassmen, I really feel like I’ve started to bond and become friends through our shared experiences. For example, a lot of our practices have been rained out so instead we do “parking lot workouts” where we do cardio on the inclines in the parking deck.

Being a part of the UTD Monstars this first semester has been integral to my experience as a freshman. Most of my friends are people who live on my floor in Residence Hall South, so the community that the frisbee team fosters has really helped expand my comfort zone when it comes to making friends. I’ve also gained a huge sense of pride for the improvements I see in myself as a member of the team. I know that my strategic knowledge and my pure throwing skills have improved immensely since the start of the semester.

Unfortunately, I tore my ACL just a few weeks ago at Ultimate Frisbee practice. It’s been really rough getting myself around and keeping my skills up since then. I think that this experience could be improved for others by creating more ways for injured athletes to work on their throwing and staying in contact with the team.

Campus Activity 2: Founder’s Day

The University of Texas at Dallas has a very interesting history. It was founded in the mid 1900’s as a way to bring bright minds to Texas to work for Texas Instruments. At that time, Texas Instruments was booming and business was good. UTD was made up of only graduate students. Then, some years later, Texas Instruments donated UTD to the state of Texas. From there, and undergraduate program was added, and the first freshman class joined in the 1990’s. The rest, they say, is history.

So, as you can see, UTD is a very young school. It’s very important to remember our founders and what they did to create this institution. UTD encourages us to think about this on Founder’s Day, an annual celebration of McDermott, Jonsson, and Green. This year, it was held in late October at the Chess Plaza. I attended the event and got a free t-shirt, participated in the large group photo, and experienced the games and free food. Not to mention I also learned a lot more about how this university came to be.

This event contributed to my freshman experience in a number of ways. As I’ve stated before, I think learning about the history of the university is very important. UTD is rapidly growing due to the investment that our founders put in. Now I can tell my friends and family back home that the inventor of the integrated circuit (a crucial piece of tech that helps drive all of our electronics) was invented by the founder of my university! Aside from that, I also enjoyed socializing and meeting new people, especially while we all had to wait in line to get t-shirts.

In order to improve this event, I would suggest that we attempt to bring more light to other major contributors to the founding of UT Dallas. I’ve learned a lot about the philanthropic efforts of Margaret McDermott, particularly in the beautification of UTD and Dallas as a whole. There are many other people who have contributed to the cause of this university that should also be mentioned.

Service Project: Viva Volunteer!

I believe that service is an integral part of a balanced lifestyle. It’s very gratifying to give back to your community, and I have done that through various organizations for most of my life. A lot of schools and scholarships require this for graduation, but I think it finds a way into my regular schedule regardless.

This past month, I participated in the Viva Volunteer service day through the Office of Student Volunteerism at UT Dallas. I believe it is a national day of service, as my sister in North Carolina also served her community that day. My group and I went out to the Plano YCMA to help out. They wanted us to deep clean their conference room and kid play area. It was super fun, especially since I love to organize and clean things. The gratifying feeling of a job well done is definitely a plus as well! I really liked talking to the employees to better understand the problems they face as well, and it’s good to know that there’s always an opportunity for me to help out there again.

This volunteering experience was important to my freshman experience because it allowed me to meet new people and just take a break from the monotonous daily schedule of study, study, study. Spending a whole day doing something menial for someone else is a great way to provide that fresh clean slate that I needed halfway through the semester. Not to mention it’s also really fun to bond while elbows deep into a dirty conference room cabinet.

In order to improve this experience for others in the future, my biggest recommendation is to just try to get more people involved. There are almost 30,000 students at UTD, yet only a few hundred show up for Viva Volunteer. Volunteering is a great way to get out into the community and the Office of Student Volunteerism should really try to promote the event more so students participate. Along those lines, it’s also important for people who participate to spread the word about the event.