

Living in a residential community has shown me both sides of the spectrum; I have been through the struggles of a rocky roommate relationship and disconnected freshman floor, but I have also been welcomed into a new community and experienced the strong and diverse relationships built within. Last week, as I walked back to the 40, taking the same route every comp sci major has walked many times, I couldn't help but think of how no one has ever walked it in the quite the same way. My guiding life philosophy has always been to embrace what makes you different - to carve your own path - and residential communities ensure that we can all make our mark and make our way while still having a place to call home.

On my walk, I passed the fire pit where I had recently sat with my suitemates to watch the LNYF fireworks display. Some of my floormates – performers in the cultural celebration – waved through the Ibby's window. A Gregg 2 memory jumps to mind: when I helped a friend from next door carry an ornate drum to the elevator on his way to rehearsal. As he listed off more and more members of our floor who were involved in the show, I knew then that I would be going to support them this weekend.

My suite is one of only a few on the floor that did not come over from Lien, but from the way we were so quickly brought into the fold, you'd never know it; that is why I hope to spend my entire college career living in – and working for - residential communities. As a homebody fortunate enough to have spent 18 years in the same house with an indelibly close nuclear family, I knew transitioning into college life might not be easy for me. I am forever grateful for my current suitemates, whom I met early on last year, as well as my sophomore floor, for giving me a place that actually feels worthy of being called “a home away from home”.

That evening's walk back to my suite was not the only time I've looked beyond the name and thought about the story WashU has written: each and every member of our community lives

in the same place, and does the same general things, but makes such different memories. I have never found anywhere else that offers the same level of diversity in background and in passion, and there certainly isn't anywhere else that supports it quite so thoroughly.

That said, I must also acknowledge the challenges I faced in connecting to my floor, and my roommate in particular, during my freshman year. We struggled to find common interests and common ground. Though I tried my best to step out of my comfort zone and engage in some of his hobbies, joining in on games of *FIFA* and watching sports with his friends, he didn't take interest in reciprocating and we continued to go our separate ways. I began to spend less time in my room, taking on leadership roles and throwing myself deeper into my activities and other relationships; I realized that I did not need to be best friends with everyone and practiced "knowing my audience", finding balance in my discourse with those individuals whose personalities differ strongly from mine. In my work as Scheduling Chair for the university's tour guides, when I send out email blasts to 200 members, I see this need again. While some may appreciate a meeting reminder written entirely in the form of a *Star Wars* title crawl, I need to be sure information is conveyed and not lost in the midst of personality. Yet, that is all the more reason why I always smile at my RAs' registration poster, "May the course be with you": no matter what, I will always be accepted for who I am - and always find someone to connect with - in a residential community.

Living in a residential community is the essence of my experiences at WashU, simultaneously inspiring, enhancing, and exemplifying the many memories I've made since I tearfully squished my dogs goodbye in August, 2014. So while my time has undoubtedly had its peaks and valleys, I must borrow the way in which I end descriptions of my busy schedule and discussions of how much I push myself: *that's college, and I wouldn't have it any other way.*