

Homecoming exceeds expectations for some

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Just so you know what my expectations for Homecoming were: I came to UMBC from a relatively small high school (Oakland Mills High School) of approximately 1200 students. My homecoming was always a very big event, and it wasn't explained to me until I was a senior that it was not for me, but instead for the alumni, hence the name. So the way I have always looked at it is fun for everyone. Every year (rain or shine I should say) we had a parade that starts at noon. After this, we had a football game, where we often lost, preceded by a tailgate. At night, there was a dance for the students. The entire week, homecoming is led up to by hall decorations and other exciting competitions, many of which are not for alumni. So homecoming day (Saturday at the end of the week) is this huge explosion of fun. At all of these events, a majority of the school comes out to see the school at its best. Remember this for later; my high school has celebrated homecoming for decades.

Enough about my high school and me. I heard too many things about UMBC homecoming (most things bad). This didn't really help the idea that homecoming is a fun thing, which is what it should be. I can tell you that I have had fun. I'll get all the negative aspects out of

the way just to satisfy all of the naysayers. It rained all week. The bonfire was cancelled. I had to pay 10 dollars for one of the tailgating events-the alumni one (which I actually thought had wings). Therefore, I really didn't have all the facts communicated to me clearly.

In all honesty, some of those things were my fault (I'll admit that I'm not the smartest person in the world, who is?). In fact, the good things that happened are a much longer list. Where to begin? I got to see Demetri Martin, a professional comedian that would normally cost me more time and money to go see at any other time. I got to see him and laugh my ass off for the convenient price of 10 dollars (wow!). This is a perfect seg-way into another great point about the week. Most of the really fun things have been either "FREE" (the magic word for bored college students) or affordable. The amount of free food I got would have cost me over a hundred dollars at a theme park. Wait, and I also got two free t-shirts. Wait, you mean, I don't have to pay 15 dollars for a Homecoming t-shirt? I get it for free! And also, because I'm in the pep band, I got a t-shirt there too. How wonderful!

This brings me right into what opened homecoming for me. Playing (I play trumpet) in the band during the Midnight Madness event was quite fun, partially because the crowd actually responds more to the groups that

participated. I thought of a pep rally as an attempt to get people excited, but it actually looked liked people were genuinely excited (unlike my high school which only had a few people). When we were playing the fight song, the crowd did a wave that continued, several times, around the entire gym. That was very cool. In fact, that was almost as cool as The Wizards' dunk team. Oh yeah, and did I forget to mention the free swag there too? I am a little confused about why it's called "Midnight" Madness if it started at 10:00, but maybe it's because that's when the basketball season officially began. (By the way, I'm leaving off a lot of the great groups that participated because of space; I could ramble about how great they were for pages.)

Homecoming day was actually more fun than I expected; I really didn't know what I was going to do. The alumni tailgate had pretty good food. It was a little like a VIP section when I returned for the soccer game (hint, hint, alumni). I guess it was worth 10 dollars because of the unlimited food, and it was a shelter from the rain, and open for a good three hours (pretty good deal). Making my way over to the student tailgate in The Commons garage wasn't really that fun because of the rain, although it was very cool how it was sheltered. Yes, the unlimited wings were there and yes, I got a free Homecoming t-shirt there.

The first half of the soccer game was

fun. The stands weren't completely filled which I thought was unfortunate, because it was pretty bad compared to my high school's losing football team (this year the team lost again but the stands, at least, doubled the soccer crowd). I thought our soccer team was good, but I guess not good enough to get people to stand in the rain.

I left after halftime because I was cold (and didn't want to get sick). After putting on some dry clothes (in my dorm) I went to The Commons and got some free food. Then, I participated in the Greek Alumni-Student Social. I just became an Associate Member in Lambda Chi Alpha and thought I would go. After seeing that there was only one alum (not even from my chapter), and since I was the only one from my chapter, I attempted to do some sort of representation. This actually got me thinking about all the other groups on campus.

Couldn't other groups do things to make homecoming a more cohesive experience for everyone? It doesn't seem like there is a whole lot of involvement on campus. Or rather, some of the only involvement is the complaints and whining about how homecoming isn't exciting, or fun, or cool. I don't see why there couldn't be more things happening. I remember Welcome Week being very fun and exciting. I kind of got that vibe off of homecoming.

While doing some preliminary re-

search, I found out that in previous years there was a dance and other fun things, but the lack of student involvement made those things go away. And usually when the weather is nice, the Alumni do come out in greater numbers (thanks rain). In all honesty, homecoming is actually one of those great things that can be a nice break from studying.

One thing that I really should mention about my experience: I went to a fraction of things that were happening because many events happen simultaneously. If I had time to go to all of the ones that interest me, I would. It just goes to show how many things are going on around campus.

I'm sure that it is clear that this is my first year as a college student. I am very optimistic about homecoming because I had a great time at my high school's homecoming. The one thing stopping great things from happening at UMBC is the negative opinions tearing down good ideas. To those people, I say if you don't like it, change it. Talk to people with the power to do so, or actually get enough support. Otherwise, just stop talking. It ruins the experience for the rest of us. I mean, wouldn't it be nice to come back to your alma mater 10 years from now and just have a good time?

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