

Journal Entry 7

Reading the mini-memoir prompt has caused me to begin to reflect upon my experiences and feelings as a student at Georgia Tech so far. I am reminded of when I received all my college decisions; my other top choice was a university in the UK, Imperial College, where I had also been accepted as a CS student. Back then, my parents were in favor of me going to the UK, as I was more familiar with that country, and also had close relatives living just a couple of Tube stations away from the university there. I, on the other hand, was largely dismissive of their concerns: I was excited to visit a new country, felt I could adjust easily given my exposure to American culture, and preferred the scale of opportunities as a CS major here. After several discussions (and some heated arguments), as well as considering finances, we decided that Georgia Tech was the right choice for me.

Almost immediately after landing in the US, I began to appreciate some of my parents' concerns more than I did before. Some of the most major challenges I faced as a student at Tech were within my first two weeks here. As an international student in an unfamiliar country, I had to adjust to many little cultural differences, from the upside-down light switches and nonsensical measurement units, to the fact that I was conscious of my accent or my varying interests and sense of humor compared to people here. Additionally, I missed over half of the Week of Welcome, as I arrived in the US late because the plane tickets for earlier dates were too expensive. An added challenge was that my roommates, whom I had selected randomly, ended up being quieter and more reserved than I expected. Simply put, I felt quite out of place during my first few weeks.

However, as time passed, I began to feel increasingly comfortable here, to the extent that I now feel like I belong here to a great extent. One of the first instances that made me feel this way was an international student meetup event during the Week of Welcome. Seeing so many international students from countries all over the world allowed me to realize that I was not alone here. Moreover, I met two of the three other students from Pakistan at that event, and ended up going to many of the remaining events with them. Later, during my third week, I attended my first football game with my roommate, who apparently knew just as little about American football as I did. Learning the basics of the game with him was an enjoyable experience; I still remember how my excitement over our win died down a bit when I realized the opposing team was in a lower division than us. Later, I began to get involved with student organizations and clubs: in particular, I met many accomplished people from all over the country and even world at the meetings for a robotics team, and ended up making some friends in the process.

Looking back now, though I have made significant progress, I still occasionally feel out of place in some ways. For instance, though I have gotten to know my roommates better now, I cannot say the same for people in my hall in general: I've found that many people on my floor have been friends from high school and tend to stick together as a result, which has made it difficult for us to bond as a community. Additionally, there are no other international students on my floor to the best of my

knowledge. Besides this, I have also felt like I didn't belong in some of my classes: for instance, I was hoping to get to know people in my Math 1554 studio class, as it is one of my smaller classes, but I found that other people in that class did not seem as interested. More generally, I think that I have yet to form the same kinds of friendships that I had back in high school, though I feel like this will improve with time.

Ultimately, I can't deny that I sometimes continue to think about how much easier it would have been to adjust to the university in the UK or even one in my home country where most of my close friends ended up going. Nevertheless, on the whole, I feel like I have adjusted to life here quite well so far.

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