

How Far I've Gone and Where I'm Going: Reflections from a Senior Student

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I've heard it said that your college years are the best years of your life. I never knew exactly what that meant. When I came to Bates as a first-year, I disliked college to a huge degree. Of course, that was when COVID was at its peak; grab-and-go boxes, standing in insane lines in Commons, waking up for early-morning Zoom classes and the era when being caught in a Residence Hall that wasn't your own could get you temporarily expelled from Bates. I didn't like what college meant. It was the first time I was truly on my own, yet I still felt like I was living with my parents. There was an entire list of things I couldn't do. I wanted to experience the college that so many people were telling me about.

I didn't know it then, but life at Bates was going to get significantly better. My sophomore year, I was finally able to experience what college was truly like. Finally, I was sitting with my friends at a table in Commons, going to sports games, and enjoying house parties. It was everything all at once, and it felt incredible. So many people I knew, and myself included, were determined to make our second year at Bates replace the first.

Eventually, though, it was tiring. I exhausted myself trying to constantly get back the year of college I thought had been taken from me. It felt like the same things were occurring every day, every weekend. It felt like there was no excitement, nothing new to look forward to. I stopped caring about what was around me and started focusing on time. Specifically, how much time was left until I could finally leave Lewiston, Maine. I was more than ready to leave the bubble, and experience life after Bates.

I'm still unsure of when it hit me, but it did. I remember it was sometime in junior year. I found out one of my close friends had gotten into the three-two program, and was leaving Bates to attend Columbia University. A week later, I found out another one of my closest friends was also going to be at Columbia. I was very happy and excited for them, and then I understood what it really meant: I wasn't going to be spending senior year with two of my closest friends who I met at Bates. Though I was a junior, I realized that soon I was going to be a senior, and my entire year was going to be filled with lasts instead of firsts, and there was going to be a day where I was going to have to say goodbye. Suddenly, it felt like there wasn't ever going to be enough time to spend with all the people I knew. I wished that time would freeze so that I could keep them all with me. I might see them again, but it would never be like how it was in college. At Bates, if you wanted to see someone, all you had to do was text them. They'll respond, and ask where to meet, and in minutes you'll see each other. Whenever I was going through my classes and saw I had three assignments due on the same day and started to have a nervous breakdown, all I had to do was walk into my roommate's room and talk to her about how stressed I was. When will I ever be able to do that again?

My first year was incredibly tough, and it feels like so much was taken away. But I was still able to make memories. I met my two best friends in my first year, one who was my roommate, and the other her sister. I was able to win a National Championship with nine of the most hard-working people I know. I then lived in the best Village suite, with four people who had my back when I needed them. Now, I live in Smith with eight amazing people who make my day better every time I see them. I am still around the people that love and care about me, and I hope you are too. Live in every single moment. You might be ready to say goodbye, and when it comes down to it, I'm ready too. What's changed for me, though, is that I'm no longer counting down the days until I walk across the stage. I'm taking in every moment. I'm ready for life after Bates, but I'm not ready to leave my favorite people, because after this year, I might have to go to great lengths to see them. Now I can just knock on a door, or walk five minutes. Life after Bates will come, and for now, I'm making sure I have no regrets when it does.