

Editorial

Mary Rogal-Black

I must be getting smarter: now I'm an idiot

"The more you learn, the more acutely aware you become of your ignorance," writes Peter Senge, a systems expert from MIT. In other words, the smarter you become the more you realise what an idiot you are. That is pretty scary. Fear of change might be one of the most crippling, and yet most natural instincts of the human mind. For those who haven't mastered their fear, the coming years at UNB could be truly alarming. Whether you look forward to change and embrace progress, or go to bed every night praying that tomorrow will be the same as yesterday, change is difficult for everyone; there is no way to know exactly what it will bring.

First year students have probably been hearing a lot about how their years in university will be the most exciting in their lives so far. It's true, but probably not for the reasons they expect. With the first female president in over 200 years of the institution's existence, a revitalized Student Union Executive, and another infusion of new students, UNB promises to be a dynamic place in the coming year. And, while it would be comforting to believe that earning a carefully-chosen degree and maybe making the Dean's List a couple of times will guarantee employment, today's job market is much more challenging. Often, it requires a range of knowledge and an ability to learn new skills on the fly. This means that finding out *how* to learn will be as important as *what* you learn while you're getting your degree.

Fresh out of high school, I decided to make practical choices and spent my first year of university at Mount St. Vincent in Halifax, which offered a four-year Child Study program. I expected that after plodding through this well-rounded program in early childhood education, I would emerge as a tidily employable package at the end of four years. Two majors and one transfer later, with a year off to work in the "real world," I've decided that choosing the "right" university to attend or which program to take does not guarantee anything. Big black-and-white choices which we expect to clarify so much in our lives will be balanced by hundreds of other decisions as we learn to trust the idea that following our own interests will lead us to the path that is right for us.

So, plan to personalize your university degree. Simple ways to do this include taking a part-time job, choosing an eclectic elective, or doing volunteer work in a field that particularly interests you. When you develop the habit of broadening your activities, your education is no longer limited to your university career. It becomes a lifelong process and, if you're lucky, you'll learn to love it, difficult as this may seem.

Learning is a process of change, so relax and enjoy the ride. After all, you are in the driver's seat. Keep your mind open, develop your own strengths and appreciate the abilities of your fellow travellers. It may be scary going down the road without being able to see the whole map but if you celebrate the journey, you'll get where you're meant to be.

*I found my locker and I found my classes
Lost my lunch and I broke my glasses,
That guy is huge! That girl is waitin'!
First day of school and I'm already failing.*
- Grade 9, The Barenaked Ladies

*Feet on ground
Heart in hand
Facing forward
Be yourself.*

- Good Mother, Jann Arden

Mudwump

Joseph W.J. FitzPatrick₃

Call me a loner, tell me I'm not a team player, and then ask me if I care.

I had a great Froeh week. I went to a seminar, and they told me how to act at UNB. I was a bit confused because a pretty lady told me about bad diseases you could get by having sex, and also not to rape anyone this week, then a short man passed out condoms.

Then I was really scared by a man named Dean. He told me to look to my left and to my right, and said that one of those people wouldn't be here after Christmas. I was really worried because I was sitting next to a wall.

After the seminar, I got to walk in a parade. It was fun until a nice lady told me I was walking with the Nurses, and if I wasn't gay, I would have to leave the parade, so I went over to a group of 9 boys and 2 girls and felt better. I asked a lady standing there in a blue suit why there were only 2 girls there, and she said "We now tell young women that choosing a spouse is even more important than choosing a career."

I always thought that they didn't teach stuff for women in Engineering, but a boy walking next to me let me read something called "chemical analysis of a woman," so I guess I was wrong. He also told me that it was cool to be an Engineer because there was a big ceremony on December 6 when the girls walk around with candles and the guys worship a purple post.

Later in the parade, some men in hoods led around all the foreign people with signs saying where they came from. I thought segregation was outlawed a long time ago, but I never knew much about history.

After the parade, I found an Orientation Committee member, and they took me to the Orientation Office. On the way, I got a credit card and a coffee cup from a man at a table. Then I used it and a lien on my car to get some clothes, a whistle, a milk mug, and lots of recyclable paper from a girl at the Orientation Office. I found out later that the boys were supposed to get frisbees, and girls got whistles, but I wasn't sad; I always liked whistles better than frisbees.

Some of the paper I got was really cool. But I was shocked to see an ad for a car because I didn't have a license from the government. "We're not telling you to buy one," said a man at the office. "The car company is there and it's going to advertise anyway." I always thought advertising was supposed to get people to buy things, but I was in Engineering, not Business so I knew I must be wrong.

The next fun thing that I was supposed to do was go to a big concert. I was happy at the concert because they found my favourite band from Junior High. I didn't know they were still together.

After the concert, I went to get my room keys. I got a great room. There was a big 'moosemilk' stain in the middle of the rug, and it had new windows that wouldn't open enough to hang out of, but at least there were no bars on them. My roommate said he felt really safe because our residence had security guards, video camera, and an electric fence. He was really old for a residence student, he was there two years. "50% fall first year," he said. "But at least it's a fun year."

I asked where all the other people his age were, and he told me that all the trouble-makers from last year who didn't fall or weren't kicked out of residence for drinking out of plastic buckets (he said you're not allowed to drink from glasses or bottles, so they didn't have a choice) were moved away from each other.

My roommate also showed me where the dining hall was. The floor was so shiny and bright, I could barely see the food. "That's the idea," my roommate said. "If you can't see it, you won't complain that it's less filling and more expensive." I was really lucky to have such a smart roommate.

On the way back to our room, I heard a man talking to another man with a briefcase carrying a tape recorder. "Residence students don't worry about school," the man said. "Because if they can find a time when their roommate isn't drinking out of buckets (no

bottles allowed), playing songs with obscene words, or being raped, we have Academic Resource Persons (ARPs) to help them with homework." I was jealous of the man with the tape recorder, because I thought tapes were cool.

At the end of the day, I was really tired, so my roommate and I went to a bar where a whole bunch of people were fighting in the parking lot, and the big bouncers were throwing people around. Cool, I thought. "Great bar," he said. "Yeah," I said. "Better than the Social Club." "What's the Social Club?" "A place where they drink out of fish bowls." Ugh. Guess they can't afford glasses.

When I woke up in the middle of the night, I was back in my room. And suddenly, that moosemilk stain on the carpet didn't seem so bad. My head was pounding, but I was glad because I had a great roommate and I was at a great school.

I really hate Froeh week. Far from some sort of valuable adjustment time, it's a week long orgy of "don't rape anyone (here are some condoms), don't get drunk (here's a 'milk mug' - nudge, nudge), be socially responsible (wear stupid clothes and get drenched with a fire hose) and be a good student on Monday (when your 'milk' hangover wears off from Friday's concert)."

If Froeh week did what it was supposed to do, if it did what the name Orientation Week implies, we wouldn't waste the first two weeks of classes getting everybody settled down.

Maybe Orientation is there to get students used to staying up late at Student Union-sponsored concerts, or going out to drink (or just pay admission) at events sponsored by companies owned by the Student Union. Too bad they didn't get a ballet with that froeh pack, then there might be more than 1 in 4 students voting at Student Union elections.

With Froeh week given the importance that it has, there can be no wonder a UNB-commissioned survey found 57% of new students think UNB is a party school.



the
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This issue is dedicated to:

Little minds with BIG ideas

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