

First week of school worth pain and confusion

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I can't function without at least eight band-aids on my feet. I have blisters on my ankles, toes, Achilles tendons, heels; basically any spot that touches shoe.

I didn't hike Mt. Everest nor experiment in walking across hot coals. I pep-stepped across campus in 100-degree weather on my first day of school.

But enough about my painful peds. Let's talk about the rest of me and my first experiences at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

I come from a small town with a population of 2000. We had no stoplights, no sidewalks, and there was only one store in town, called (you guessed it) The General Store.

So, moving to Las Vegas was an exciting yet stressful time for me. Everything is foreign, from the traffic to the heat to the campus. Even the music, activi-

ties, and wide variety of ethnic groups threw me for a loop.

Adjusting to a whole new lifestyle comes easily in some areas and with much conflict in others.

Driving to UNLV on my first day tied my stomach into a knot even the best Boy Scout couldn't replicate. Traveling east on Tropicana, I ran into a turn lane I didn't know was coming, so I panicked and cut someone off while merging right. My victim honked, startling me again, but I got over it. A few minutes later, a cab pulled up beside me, rolled down his window and screamed profanity and other unpleasantries at me for reasons still unknown.

The good news is that my body and car made it to school in one piece. The bad news? My mind wasn't quite as intact as it was when I pulled out of the driveway that morning. I did manage to find a decent parking

spot, which I later learned was only because I have an early class on Monday. Tuesday's 10:30 a.m. class is different story entirely.

No offense to the person who hung the room number signs in the Classroom Building Complex, but the arrows on the papers were misleading. Problems arose when a sign read "room 124-136 turn right," when in actuality I needed to turn left or go straight.

Had I followed some of the signs in the CBC building, I probably would have ended up knocking on a handicapped stall asking if this "is where English 101 is held."

I've met students inside and outside of the classroom and, happily, my encounters have all remained comfortable and positive. I stopped and asked directions from people who seemed like upperclassmen judging from their appearances.

Are you wondering how I could tell which students might have a clue? Freshmen walk about with class schedule in hand, furrowed brows and their eyes turned upward searching for landmarks, signs, or divine inspiration. Upperclassmen look straight ahead because they have a clue where they are going and lack that "first day of school, perfumed, pressed and polished" look.

A couple of other great things I've noticed about UNLV are my professors and the campus.

Everything on campus is so untraditional. I love the modern architecture; it gives the school a young feel. Instead of some old codger proudly posed on his steed, we have a humongous flashlight. And the MSU is a totally fun place just to hang out and watch people. In fact, I love everything about UNLV, except the heat. I fear I may need to

hijack one of those golf carts to get around campus.

My professors are completely different from what I expected. They're young and no toothpicks were required to hold my eyelids open during class. I was psyched! The classroom atmosphere remained pretty relaxed and each instructor was surprisingly energetic. This was a relief because one of my biggest fears was being bored in my classes, causing me to fail. I don't foresee this to be a problem this year.

This first week of school has been an experience I will never forget. I remain optimistic despite the blisters, cab drivers and near-death experiences.

Concerning the homework load, I'm assuming that if I avoid procrastinating it will reduce much of the worry. Only time will tell, but hopefully once I learn the ropes sailing will be smoother.

Enrollment

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sis, like extra punctuation at the end of a sentence.

Ticos enjoy the freedom offered through this avenue of personal expression socially denied those of us raised in North American, WASPish households. To this day I still swallow or reach for Kleenex whenever an abundance of oral liquids build up, all the time looking over my shoulder to see if Mom is watching.

If only I could spit without guilt, 'cause I'd really love to! You know the expression "So angry I could spit"? Am I the only student on campus who had three-fourths of his classes canceled at the last minute due to under-enrollment? And white men can't spit?

Evidently not. I saw one pale lad walk out of the Registrar's Office last week (after standing in line for an hour with scores of others) and muster up a frustrated mouthful, only to have the mess splat on the toe of his otherwise spotless Nike Airs, by virtue of ill-timed trajectory as he walked along. Spit to the side, man, not straight out in front! Ticos know this.

This whole class cancellation thing really stymies me. In and amongst the thousand other first-week-of-school-things on my agenda, I now had to re-structure and reconstruct what I thought in the spring was a pat schedule of classes.

What really burns my bum, though, is the class that got axed Tuesday morning, after the class met for the first time on Monday! The students were there, the instructor was there. We had already received syllabi, projects, first assignments. It had been the one anchor in my otherwise whirling cesspool of this fall's opening academic experience.

If enrollment wasn't

enough to justify holding class, some decision-maker must have known before Monday morning. Decision-maker asleep at the switch is more like it.

I decided to take a proactive approach. My photo-journalism class, also dead because of insufficient enrollment, had almost enough students to live. I drummed up a couple of other names and talked to Gary Kreps, executive director of the Greenspun School of Communication, about the possibility of reviving the course if enough students would enroll.

Yes, it was a possibility, he said, but I must speak to Associate Director Steve Nielsen to make the impossible possible. No can do, Nielsen replied to my inquiry. It's simply too late; try again in the spring.

Well, okay (never mind those of us actually trying to graduate on some kind of a schedule). But why then was it not too late to cancel my Monday class after we'd already met once? Spit to the side, man.

I do need to compliment Drs. Kreps and Nielsen for their accessibility and willingness to listen.

I'm a senior on a slightly-less-than-ten-year plan, with just degree work left. I've taken everything the U says I should take to be a well-rounded citizen of the world, so I turned to the schedule to find something I could take. From architecture to water resources management, I scrutinized.

Anyone who has shared this last-minute registration rigamarole -through no fault of our own, I might add—will understand that at first blush, the course offerings at UNLV seem endless. Until you read through them.

The selections that apply to our degree work are fairly limited on a semester-to-semester basis. Staggering the courses offered in a given department makes sense from a scheduling standpoint; no one can take everything required for a degree in just one semester.

But that, coupled with the minimum-registration-to-actually-hold-a-class policy enacted

by the Office of the Provost leaves a growing number of students high and dry each semester.

As educated adults we understand, of course, that there are economic exigencies involved in running a university. But what about the university's incumbent responsibility to its students? If we could all spit in the same direction, we might be able to float a little compassion into the provost's completely bottom-line oriented policy.

To develop a policy that mandates a minimum of 15 students to justify a course seems arbitrary, irresponsible, completely lacking the knowledge or recognition that some classes, for example, those teaching a technical skill like photography, or others, like writing workshops, function best in smaller groups. Is learning no longer our focus? Since when did our university become a cookie factory?

Blanket policy is half-baked policy, but we're talking here about a university that can't even manage to keep its clocks running on time.

I asked Dr. Nielsen if anything was being done or even considered to mitigate the policy to address the needs of students. His "no" was honest and direct. He even seemed empathetic, but "no" is still "no."

Guidelines should be developed by the provost for each course, or efforts made to give each course a classification that could have blanket minimums within each category. That seems like the minimum effort the provost could give the students of UNLV.

How many of your classes were canceled? Are you angry enough to spit? I think we all need to practice. How about those clocks that do nothing but take up wall space? They'd make great targets, for starters.

Blah, blah, blah...



GLASBERGEN

"If you'd like to press 1, press 3.
If you'd like to press 3, press 8.
If you'd like to press 8, press 5..."

HE LOVES ME...
HE LOVES ME NOT...
HE LOVES ME...
HE LOVES ME NOT...
HE LOVES ME...
HE LOVES ME NOT...

I HATE YOU!

with GLASBERGEN