

The Week of Welcome: fun times or colossal boner?



OPINION
STAFF

Group
Commentary

Unless you're totally oblivious to everything around you, you'll no doubt have noticed the wide assortment of booths and activities that are currently going on around campus by now.

The Week of Welcome is designed to expose new students to campus life, while welcoming the returning ones back to the University at the same time.

Despite all the free candy and swag—or the excuse to get drunk on campus and show up to class without pants—we can't help but wonder if all the brouhaha is actually worth the time and energy that's put into it.

Jonn Kmech

To me, orientation week has always seemed like some kind of grotesque, David Lynch-directed music video for R.E.M.'s Shiny Happy People. Everyone has their happy face on, campus is bustling, and the first-year girls are dressed like those expressionless mannequins in the storefront of a designer clothes outlet.

This is all a very clever façade that masks the midnight train of cold reality that rolls around by the end of September, when stock prices for sweaters and pajama pants go through the roof. But out of this nightmarish carnival of faculty cheers and fair-weather school spirit, the most amus-

ing element in my opinion is the clubs fair.

The clubs fair is like the giant room of vendors at the Calgary Stampede or Capital Ex, but with a slightly smaller selection of miracle mops and as-seen-on-TV food slicers.

Even though you know that you don't particularly need or want what anyone is offering, it's still intriguing to walk around, marvel at the sheer volume of groups you can be a part of, and pretend that in just several months' time, you will still be a dedicated member of the Society for Cheese Enthusiasts, the Freddie Prinze Jr Appreciation Club, or the Model Swedish Parliament.

Interestingly enough, almost every first-year I talked to said they were only there "because they had an hour to kill," reaffirming my entrenched belief that the clubs fair is the place where time goes to die.

Victor Vargas

Orientation is supposed to be a big welcome to new students, but every year it comes off as a giant, candy-coated "fuck you." Rather than give incoming students what they want, the Students' Union, against all logic and reason, continues to create an event that resembles Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, when it *should* resemble a short trip to a postsecondary establishment.

What new students want is to get their One Card, find their classes, find the location of their relevant labs and libraries, receive some pieces of wisdom about campus life, and then be directed towards the closest bar. It's inexpensive, sensible, and would only take an hour of their lives.

Instead the Student's Union insists that incoming students also want to be led around by an insane person wearing a tacky, neon-colored "Orientation" T-shirt who insists on singing annoying songs that are supposed to show school spirit, but which really only serve as a mating call for other like-minded crazies.

In addition, these pied-piper wannabes then expect new students to follow them for hours and stay through spectacular events that include picking up generic swag with the SU logo on it, chanting "Green and Gold," and listening to campus leaders make speech after boring, recycled speech.

It's like all the sane students are the ones who decide to skip the whole debacle and go get their One Cards in 30 minutes flat so they can go home and play *BioShock*. Whereas the future SU executives seem to be the only ones that actually enjoy the whole monstrosity and believe it's worth the massive price tag.

Maria Kotovych

Clearly the best thing about Week of Welcome is the sheer number of barbecues that student organizations hold in Quad.

I can turn into the biggest supporter of any club or student group that can provide me with a tasty burger for just two bucks. Having BBQ for lunch is awesome—plus it's cheaper and tastier than most other options on campus, and I get to support different student organizations on this campus.

I also love that these barbecues continue in Quad long after the rest of the first week's hoopla has ended. While most of the Week of Welcome activities will die down by Friday, barbecues

will often keep springing up in the subsequent weeks, allowing students to enjoy a decent and cheap lunch here on campus for once.

The thing that I like the best about these barbecues is that they're quiet, unobtrusive, and considerably less obnoxious than the deafeningly loud beer gardens that usually overtake Quad—not unlike a bad bout of gangrene affecting an innocent limb.

After all, a barbecue only takes a small amount of space, makes very little noise, and has no bearing on passerby who have no interest in participating.

Any student clubs interested in doing a bit of BBQ-style fund-raising during Week of Welcome (and beyond) are sure to have my support.

Conal Pierce

Week of Welcome is by far the biggest clusterfuck many of you are likely to ever encounter. Everybody's all shits and giggles, asking "what did you do over the summer." Unfortunately, the answer is never, "I remembered not to stop in the middle of a crowded hallway to fucking chitchat."

It's bad enough that almost everyone woke up late, meaning the roads are congested as hell, but what's worse is getting to campus and finding that it's practically a mosh pit.

Even if you somehow manage to find a way to beat the crowds—either by taking clever detours or simply relying on the tried-and-tested method of pushing people out of the way—there's still no escaping the sea of lies.

Whether it's orientation leaders pretending school is nothing but cheers and beers or an English professor tell-

ing you that you've got a promising future in anything but retail, nobody wants to peel away that shiny foil to reveal the cold, week-old chicken inside.

The fact is, that drunken guy fighting to maintain his balance in the beer gardens is, despite his claims, most likely not a medical student; a ski club card will not get you all the fly ladies; and despite appearances, that's not actually beef in your RATT burger.

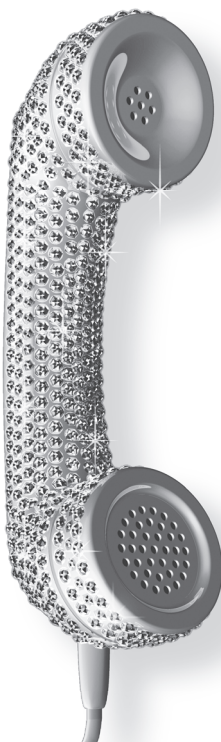
You might think that I'm just being jaded and cynical, but when that two-week-long "start of school" bender ends and suddenly everything you eat seems to taste slightly of stale vomit, you'll get the vinegar in you too (unless you're snorting Unicorn horn, that is).

Paul Blinov

I'm one of those students that the SU surely hates: my apathy greatly outweighs my interest, even when it comes to Week of Welcome's celebrations. I skimmed the poster only to see if any bands that I know were playing, then put my eyes back down and kept walking.

Don't get me wrong; there's an undeniable atmosphere of excitement bubbling around campus these first few weeks, and that's absolutely great and justified. However, that doesn't mean I want to hear someone chant science-pants in French, or shout about how my Arts degree will net me that sweet-ass fry-cook job.

After two years, the whole thing feels a little forced, a little too over-the-top and, generally just a little too much. Fuck off, and let me do my learning in peace.



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