



Two of the three freshman dorm halls. You might get to live or have classes here.

## How to Thrive (Not Just Survive) During College

### By Downtiana Vazquez

Feel everything that you're feeling right now. You are officially a college student! No matter what your journey looked like, you are here. Feel it, live it, and love it. The next four years will help to shape you into who you will be. No pressure, though. You might have a million thoughts. *What can I do? Where can I go? What clubs can I join? What internships can I find? I want to do a double major and a double minor! I want, I wonder—hey!* Listen, I love the enthusiasm. Keep that fire. You're going to have times when you will desperately need it. Or, you might be having other thoughts. *How am I going to keep myself afloat? What if I don't do as well as I would like? What if college class workloads are too much for me?*

When I decided to come to Loyola, I had a gut-wrenching mix of these two mindsets. As I've been here for the past year, I have found tricks on how to not only make it through your freshman year of college but to also succeed in your academics and your life. Hopefully, these same tricks work for you as well! Although, I can't say that I have a trick for remembering your keycard. I kind of forget mine in my dorm. A lot. Like, genuinely, way too often.

### CLASSES ON CLASSES: HOW TO FIND WHAT YOU LOVE

Loyola offers tons of classes. I know it sounds like an obvious thing, but seriously. If something interests you, you'll find a class which, at the very least, relates to your interest. I love psychology and biology. I found biology classes here based around bugs, aquatic animals, human cells and even cancer. For psychology you have classes on psychopathology, on addiction, and special topics, like why couples fight. Maybe biology and psychology aren't your favorite, that's cool. Loyola offers fascinating classes in every subject. If you still need to test the water to figure out what you like, that's fine. With the core classes, you get to dip your toes into every topic and find what makes you happy. Thanks to the size of Loyola, you are never reduced to just your student ID number. In all your classes, your professors will care for you and your education.

If you don't find classes directly related to your interests: try clubs. Do you want to be a doctor, dentist, nurse, or even a veterinarian? Try the [Pre-Health](#) club and its various shoot-off clubs all related to those jobs. There are also clubs for [Pre-Law](#), and different business clubs for investing and consulting. Maybe you get enough exposure to what job you like in class, and simply want something fun. We have clubs for that too! At Loyola you'll find gaming clubs, craft clubs, and club sports. Some clubs can help you build experiences, like helping the local community through [Health Outreach Baltimore](#). And, if you can't find something you like, then you can easily create your own.



Maryland Hall, home of AASC, DAS, and the Writing Center in the basement.

## WHAT TO DO WHEN CLASSES SEEM TOO MUCH

Know your resources and use them. I cannot stress this enough. Loyola offers countless resources that can help you.

During your first year, you'll be placed into a Messina group. The professor of one of your Messina classes will be your advisor until you declare your major. While all professors here will care about you, your Messina professors and mentor go above and beyond to make sure you are taken care of. As Professor Nina Guise-Gerrity (my own first semester Messina professor) puts it, "we get to establish an early and lasting relationship with [you] so we can continue to be a source for [you] for the next four years." When I struggled during my first semester, she led me in the right direction to get help.

Your professors aren't your only resource. [The Study](#) offers free tutoring and classes on time management that can help you, while also providing an amazing study space. Our library offers classes and events throughout the year, ranging from cultural events, crafts, or certifications in programs ([click here to learn more](#)). The library website aids students with the resources they provide, such as their archives and JSTOR. Another resource that I find extremely helpful is [Disability and Accessibility Services](#). If you have or need any accommodations for classes—or, honestly, living on campus at all—they are who to talk to. When asked about services that DAS offers for students, Abigail Hurson lists accommodations for testing, notetaking, textbooks, housing, and meal plans, but clarified, "[w]e review all accommodation requests on an individualized, case-by-case basis... we receive many other types of requests." Even if you feel like any accommodation you will need is different, you should still talk with DAS to help make your college experience more suited for you.

## HOW TO GET THROUGH ROUGH PATCHES

So, great, you now have all this knowledge about how to make classes easier. However, your grades are far from the only thing you need to worry about. I'd even argue that if your mental health is down, your grades will subsequently follow. A lot of things change when you come to college. I'm not saying lose your whole personality and become someone else, but be open to change. Acknowledge that some battles are too large to handle by yourself: that's why our campus has a Counseling Center, to help students gain better skills to keep themselves afloat. The Counseling Center offers short-term counseling in both one-on-one and group settings, workshops for anxiety, and can help with adjusting to college ([find more here](#)).

Homesickness often affects students who live full-time on campus. Even if you are the most independent, head-strong person, you might find your-



The Study, located on the Quad.

"WE GET TO ESTABLISH AN EARLY AND LASTING RELATIONSHIP WITH [YOU] SO WE CAN CONTINUE TO BE A SOURCE FOR [YOU] FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS."  
PROFESSOR GUISE-GERRITY



One entrance into the Counseling Center is right across from Starbucks. Get yourself a drink before you go in!

self missing your hometown, your friends, your family, or your pets. My suitemate Molly Wisinski ('26) struggled with this greatly when we first moved in. She spoke about how her adjustment to campus took her some time. By the beginning-middle of Fall semester she felt better, "getting out of my room and immersing myself in activities on campus helped me get over my feelings of homesickness." Of course, for some students, getting out might be easier. The wonderful thing about the first few weeks of college is that not many people know each other. Plus, throughout the semesters, there are tons of events to find more people, and groups to get involved with.

Throughout the school year, plans can change out of nowhere. Annya Wisinski ('27) was a rower-turned-rugby-player, until she started having severe back pain. I cannot stress this enough, but rugby was Annya's *thing*. She loved it, even trying to push through her pain to continue playing on the team. A few weeks after her pain became severe, she found out she couldn't continue with rugby. "At first, it was really hard because I couldn't do any form of fitness and it put me in a really bad place mentally," Annya recounts, "but eventually I grew a lot closer with my roommate and we would watch shows together to pass the time that I couldn't walk." While Annya is still recovering from her back pain, she is learning to learn with the current state of her body. She advises new students to "[h]ang in there, and know that no one has their life together right now, we're all flying by the seat of our pants."



Busy day on the quad!  
On nice days, find a spot on the quad to hang out.

## JUST REMEMBER...

one has all the answers yet, the tips I told you might not help you, but always keep an open mind to finding ways to help yourself. Good education leads to a good career, sure, but college isn't just about grades. Have fun! Live life! Have an amazing first year—it'll set you up for an amazing college experience. Even if you don't do exactly how you want to during this year, that's okay, you can still do better the next year. Take time, and care for yourself. Welcome to the pack. Explore, grow, learn, love, and remember...

Don't leave your keycard in your dorm.



Find your pack! Friends are the best thing you can have. Find the people who bring out the best of you, and support you when you're down.

(Molly Wisinski ('26), Annya Wisinski ('27), Downtiana Vazquez ('27))