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Opinion | Wait, freshman year is over? — The Panther Newspaper

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5-6 minutes



Orientation Week provides an opportunity for incoming freshmen at Chapman to become familiar with campus and their peers, but it's also an introvert's worst nightmare. The Panther Archives

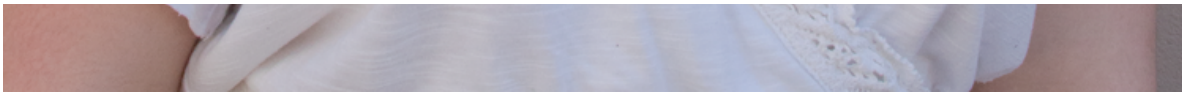
I've never been someone that's adjusted well to change. The idea of being in college?

Exciting.

The reality of leaving my friends, family, home *and my cats* behind to go to an unfamiliar place?

Uh, no, thank you.





Sarrah Wilkes, Web Editor

However, that day in late August came where I had to say goodbye to familiarity and adjust to a whole new chapter in my life. I've always been one to idealize the thought of college, but I didn't really know what to expect until I was actually at Chapman.

My social anxiety was at its peak during Orientation Week, where everyone looked like they already had friends, and I had no idea what I was doing. As someone that hates icebreaker games and the scariness that comes with meeting new people, O-Week was practically my worst nightmare.

But after surviving a treacherous five days of uncomfortable extroversion, I started to get a little more familiar with my surroundings. I had become busy with classes, I started to form friendships, and I began going to Shabbat dinners at Chabad — where I've now met some of my closest friends.

Slowly, over time, my cat-separation anxiety became a little more manageable.

Before I knew it, the weeks flew by, and my love for college-life continued to grow. I had no problem adjusting to waking up for 11 a.m. classes or feeding my coffee addiction through using my Panther Bucks at Starbucks and Einsteins — I mean, how could I not?

I loved my friends and newfound independence. Being a part of Chabad, The Panther and a sorority (Kappa Alpha Theta) allowed me to go out of my comfort zone and meet new people in an exciting new environment. Trust me though, I still had many

moments where my homesickness took over, and I just wished I could go home.

Whenever I needed a break, which was quite often, my love for music would be my getaway. [With the click of a button on Spotify](#), I could instantly pretend work didn't exist. I would put a quick pause on the five midterms I had in one week (yes, that happened) or the terrifying, seven-page final for my First Year Foundations Course (FFC) and press play on Taylor Swift or Paul McCartney.

Thanksgiving, winter and spring break all passed in the blink of an eye, and here I am now, wishing I could stay a freshman forever — unpopular opinion, I know. I am yet again struggling with the change that I am almost done with my first year of college.

Looking back, though, I couldn't have asked for a better introduction to the college experience. I will miss the beach trips, studying on the third floor of the Keck Center for Science and Engineering, the late-night dorm chats, the routine of my friends and I getting breakfast in the Caf three times a week and simply just being in the college environment.

I'm forever grateful that the toilets in North Morlan overflowed two weeks before I was supposed to move in, and that instead, I was placed in Pralle-Sodaro Hall with my sacred walk-in closet and a personal bathroom.

I am not entirely sure I will miss the loud, mysterious clashes I hear day and night in the hallway above me, nor traveling to every floor of my dorm just to find a washing machine that doesn't have clothes in it or even the cilantro lime chicken in the Caf. But suffice to say, all of these memories have still added to my college experience.

Though I'm filled with nostalgia as I reflect on all the people, places and moments that defined my first year of college, I know that many of these things will be waiting for me when fall 2022 rolls around and sophomore year begins.

I used to differentiate Chapman and home. But now, I've built a different home for myself here. And while Orange doesn't have my cats or my parents cooking, it has a community I've built for myself from scratch where I've had some of my best memories, challenged myself, made life-long friends and became a more confident version of myself.

Am I scared of the fact my first year of college is basically done, facing the reality that I'm getting older and soon to be confronted with further change?

Absolutely. But let's not focus on that reality just yet.