

STUDENT AMBASSADOR

THINGS I WISH I KNEW BEFORE STARTING COLLEGE

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CLASS OF 2026

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Precious Onah / [Stillman College](#) »

*Precious Onah is a current student at **Stillman College** in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. We asked her about her experience in college and whether there was anything she wished she knew before enrolling. A major period of transition and growth, college brings with it a number of joys and challenges that not everyone expects. Follow along to hear about Precious' experience as well as our advice to new college students!*

Going to college is like entering an entirely new world. Prior to coming to college, I had always had this vision of how I thought it would be. The books I read, the movies I watched and the stories of people's experiences influenced my mentality a lot. Of course, a few things have aligned with how it initially played out in my head, like going to classes, meeting new friends, living in a dorm, and going to parties. However, some things turned out to be very different. Though I may enjoy much about my time here, there are a few things I wish I knew before starting college.

Time Management

Prior to coming to college, I was always that student that got things done on time. My teachers knew me to be the first to turn in my assignments and projects. Not that I didn't have other things to do but I just never believed in last minute work. Now, I feel like if there was a competition for procrastinators, I would win 1st place. Like every other habit, procrastination grows over time, from turning in that essay late to not turning it in at all. In college, there are multiple distractions: parties,

social events, social media, and extracurriculars. I noticed that I started procrastinating more after I graduated high school. I wish I knew that procrastination only gets worse in college if it isn't worked on.

Even the students who got straight As in high school will find that managing time and keeping up with coursework can get difficult in college. Living independently, making new friends, and the fast, in-depth nature of college classes take some getting used to. Never take for granted all of the time-management tips that you come across; you might find that different strategies work for you as a college student than those you used in high school.

For more time management tips, see the following:

30 Time-Management Tips for College Students

Time Management for College Students: How to Keep Your Head in the Game

Homesickness

Earlier, I mentioned how coming to college is like entering an entirely new world because it really does feel like it. Being an international student especially is like getting an entirely new experience. New accents, new food, new weather, and an entirely new culture. I was beyond excited when I knew I was coming to the United States to study. I imagined how I was going to tour different states, buy more fashionable clothes, go on field trips in school, make new friends, and make amazing memories. But I wish I knew how homesick I would be during these experiences.

Some days, I wake up and wish I could hear the sound of the television with my mum and dad in the living room and talk to my brothers for hours about random things. I'm excited to know that I am taking a big step in my life by getting a degree here and that's what motivates me to keep pushing. However, feeling homesick is inevitable, especially when it feels like my regular routine changed overnight. I wish I knew how much I'll miss the food from home. There's nothing like a home cooked meal, as people say. I wish I knew that it would take a while to adapt, and even when I do, I'm still bound to get homesick.

By the time you're a senior in high school, you might be aching to leave home and get some independence. And you're likely to enjoy that independence once you get it! No amount of fun and freedom, however, can prevent at least a little bit of homesickness. As human beings, we're drawn to the familiar. It makes sense, then, that transitioning into a completely new lifestyle will make you miss home every once and a while. It's normal to feel unsteady at times, and there's nothing wrong with longing for home.

To read more about living on campus, see the following:

Rethinking Homesickness: How to Love Where You Are and Where You've Been Should You Live On Campus Freshman Year?

Social Withdrawals

Before I came to college, I wish I knew that withdrawing socially will happen a lot to me. I'm an extrovert, but sometimes I withdraw when I feel burnt out from all the activities I get involved in. This started happening a lot to me in college, and I realized part of it was because I felt burnt out and I needed rest. Being in four organizations that demanded my time and attendance didn't help that

much. I wish I knew that it was okay to take breaks when needed instead of pushing forward and ignoring the stress I was going through.

Just like homesickness, burnout and stress are very common among college students. It's important to check in and decide whether it would be good for you to spend a night in or do anything else to help you unwind and rest. And if you're ever feeling a little too overwhelmed, reach out for help! Many schools have counselors available to talk to anyone struggling during college. These professionals are very familiar with the impact that stress can have on students' mental health. Talking to a counselor, your resident advisor, or a close friend can be a great way to keep you supported when things get tough. No matter what, remember that many are going through similar situations. Once you can take care of your needs, you can take on all of the challenges ahead!

For more information, see the following:

[Things to Look for During Your College Search: How Colleges Support Mental Health](#)
[8 Ways to Take Care of Your Mental Health](#)

Courses are Challenging (or Not Challenging Enough)

Prior to coming to college, I thought my classes were going to be like it was in the movies, where everyone is enthusiastic, the classes are interactive, and the professor for that class is friendly and interactive to the students. I wish I knew that it won't always be like that in school. I enjoy some of my classes, but some get repetitive and boring. I realized that it's actually very normal for students to feel this way. Another key thing that causes students to feel this way is personal preference. One student might enjoy a particular class over the other.

School is school, right? There are still homework, deadlines, and degree requirements to care about. It's hard work! One of the great things about a college education is that most of your education will comprise your chosen area of study. Hopefully, that means that most of your classes will be relevant and interesting to you. That said, general education requirements—even some courses specific to your program—aren't always going to be very exciting. It is very important to get a well-rounded education, and even the courses unrelated to your major have different perspectives and ideas that will help you be an astute critical thinker. Not fully convinced? The good news, at least, is that every class will be over within a single semester!

For more information, see the following:

[Why You Shouldn't Ignore the Benefits of Tutoring](#)
[20 Signs It's Time to Change Your Major](#)
[How to Survive College Math](#)