

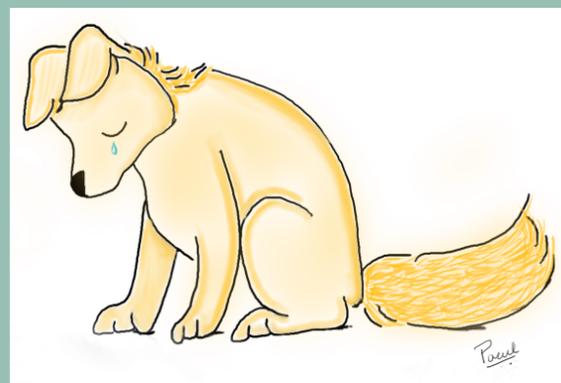
# TIPS TO FEEL CONNECTED IN COLLEGE

By Makenzie Lock and Lexi Singh, Class of 2019

Entering college can be fun and exciting, but it can also be stressful. Finding classes, adjusting to college course work loads and navigating the social scene can seem daunting. For many students, college can be their first time away from home, friends, and family. Everything is new and it can be hard to find where you belong in the sea of students. Loneliness and homesickness are things that all college students deal with, whether they are brand new freshmen, transfer students, or graduating upperclassmen. We interviewed students from various walks of life and asked them what tips they had for dealing with loneliness. They suggested strategies that were helpful for making connections and finding their place in college.

## KNOW THAT YOU ARE NOT ALONE

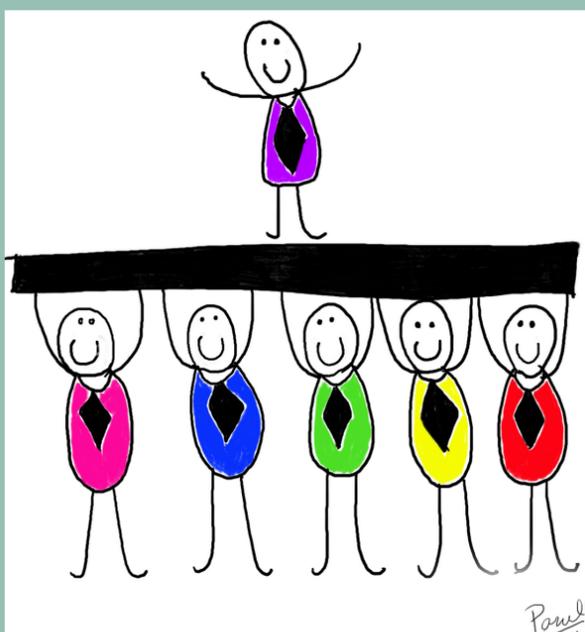
There are lots of students who are also experiencing the stress of navigating a new environment and finding meaningful connections with others. It is normal to feel this way. Consider attending on-campus events designed to connect students to organizations and resources so that they feel more familiar with the campus environment. For incoming students, this could be Welcome Week workshops and celebrations. For ongoing students, this could be involvement fairs and other campus events like ASUCD's Sunset Fest or Picnic Day.



## CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

Sometimes being alone can be a good time to reflect on who you want to be and what you want to do. View your new environment as an opportunity to develop new interests and skills. You can make a plan for things you want to try, develop personal goals, and find resources to help you achieve them. For example, if you decide that you would like to spend more time in nature, consider joining a hiking club or looking into the trips Outdoor Adventures at UC Davis offers. The Office of Educational Opportunity and Enrichment Services (OEOES) at UC Davis also offers various workshops covering topics like time management, academic skills, and goal setting. Additionally, they have appointments for Success Coaching, where a professional staff member can guide you through self-reflection, goal-setting, and action planning.

## GROW YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM



Starting conversations with people you don't know can be intimidating. Fear of rejection can keep us from speaking up. Asking the usual questions like, "Where are you from?" or "What classes are you taking?" can be the beginning of a friendship. You won't know what you have in common with someone until you ask. These initial connections can be strengthened through consistent conversations – consider sitting next to the same people in your courses every week, forming study groups, or joining organizations that your new acquaintances are involved in. However, not every acquaintance you meet will flourish into a significant friendship, and not every club meeting will be exciting for you. This is not failure; this is part of the process of finding friends. You may have to engage in multiple conversations and explore different organizations until you find something that sticks. There are tons of opportunities to meet people in your courses, in organizations, at campus events, in office hours, and more. It's okay if it doesn't work out on the first try.

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR SCHOOL'S RESOURCES

Your college chose you and they want you to succeed. There are lots of social, academic, health, and cultural resources available to you; you are encouraged to learn about the various services they offer. See this website for an extensive list of resources at UC Davis:

<https://honors.ucdavis.edu/resources>.

Reach out to professors, classmates, and counseling services if you ever need them. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Your college Dean's office, major advisors, the Academic Assistance and Tutoring Centers, and the Office of Educational Opportunity and Enrichment Services are also there to support you in your academics.

**College is often referred to as "the best time of your life," but our culture sometimes fails to acknowledge that the adjustment period can be lonely and difficult. Putting yourself out there and actively searching for places to get involved can be tiring. It can also be exhausting to stretch yourself socially, especially when rejection is a possibility. It's important to be aware that this is a common experience that college students face, and things will get better over time. Reach out for help when you need it and keep pushing forward; your place and your people are waiting for you!**

We are grateful for the UC Davis students who generously shared their experiences with us. We would also like to thank Robin Ducatillon and Kathy Holmes, MSW for their insights and suggestions.