Letters to Kate - (Avoiding) The Second Semester Slump

Kate,

It’s freezing out. Like the feeling of just chopping your head off would be better than the feeling of the wind attacking your face kind of cold. Did I forget to mention that when I said you should totally come to UMass? My bad. We should have gone to school in Hawaii. Just kidding … well sort of. Just wait until you get the snowplows beeping and plowing and dumping at 4 a.m. It’s really something.

The snow, wind, and bitter cold is certainly worth it though. With your first semester done, wouldn’t you agree? I can’t tell you how happy I am that you’ve made a home away from home in the same school I did. My roommates kept me updated on your first semester over skype. I knew you’d love UMass as much as I have.

Since we are at the start of your “first” second semester, I want to talk about how to make the most of it. The spring semester is tough, I won’t lie. The weather is less than great, the allure of being back at school has faded and everyone is starting to ask the dreaded question, “what will you be doing this summer?” Oh how I wish crashing on the couch and marathoning Netflix was an acceptable answer.

What I suggest doing is find a professor you really click with. If you already did first semester, excellent. But if not, take advantage of office hours early. FYI, you are allowed to go to office hours for professors you are not currently taking a class with. It’s
all about making connections and learning about what opportunities are available. Who knows? It might help you snag an internship or research position for the summer. At the very least, you’ll know whose classes you’ll be taking come fall. You never know when you’re going to need a recommendation, reference, or piece of advice – professors are good for all of the above.

And of course, your weekly lesson from abroad: always be the person who smiles and waves, not the person who didn’t wave back. Being friendly goes a long way. You’ve barely scratched the surface when it comes to meeting cool people here at UMass. Keep your mind open and be prepared to make friendships to last a lifetime. I know Ireland would have been a much lonelier place if I hadn’t been brave and waved first (sometimes metaphorically, sometimes literally). It’s so simple and so powerful.

My door is always open.

See you around,

Marie

Blog Column: Letters to Kate

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