

# AN ANTHOLOGY OF ADVICE

Words of wisdom — from seniors, for first-years



Seniors who are studying a range of disciplines, from anthropology and Chinese to neuroscience and music, share some wisdom they've learned about Amherst during their four years. First-years reading this Zine may find it especially helpful, though any undergraduate student can learn from this advice. Below are questions about finding internships, staying healthy and making friends during your first year at Amherst, along with some advice which is edited for clarity.

## What resources do you wish you knew about as a first-year?

"The Q Center, a.k.a the Moss Quantitative Center, has always been so helpful. The person I meet with for homework help has a PhD in chemistry, and it's a really low stress environment. You don't feel like you need a grasp on the material like you might feel in front of a professor during office hours."

"I'm applying for fellowships right now, and I wish I took advantage of the Office of Fellowships when they reached out to me before senior year. For some fellowships, you need up to eight letters of recommendation. You don't naturally accrue eight letters of recommendation during college — you need to actively search for those letters. I didn't know that as a first-year, and I wish I'd been more open to the help that I was offered."

"There is so much money at the school, and they'll pay for anything you want within reason. My sophomore year I wanted to go to a biomedical conference but didn't want to pay for travel and other expenses. I asked the head of the department, and they took care of it."

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## What study habits or time management strategies have helped you?

"I use a planner, calendar and checklists. I try to set aside time throughout a unit to study so I don't have to cram before an exam. After class or on a specific day of the week I read through my notes. The more you look at something, and the earlier you do, the more like you retain it. It's definitely helpful."

"I tend to start my assignments earlier than I think I need to. I'm someone who doesn't work well with deadlines. If something is due at 11 p.m., I need to finish it by 6 p.m. because if I'm working up against the deadline, it becomes rushed."

"Know when to cut corners for your own health. Know what you need to try hard on and don't in terms of time management. It's impossible to finish all of your work if you're giving everything 100 percent."

## What are some ways to support my mental health?

"Do things outside of the Amherst community. A lot of people here feel isolated, constricted and claustrophobic because the school is small and everyone knows one another. Taking a class at UMass, Smith or Mount Holyoke and getting out of the bubble a few times a week can be helpful."

"I really liked working in my coffee shops in town. One of the best things was being able to leave campus and take a breath and find a change of scenery. I chose to come to Amherst because I wanted to come to a small school. It can be claustrophobic sometimes. Being able to leave campus — and realizing that Amherst is tiny and that there is a whole world outside of it — can be refreshing."

## Where can I find a job or internship?

"The summer after my first year I worked as a camp staff coordinator. Though it didn't directly relate to STEM, I learned management and independent work skills, which are applicable for any career. I found my next jobs doing research via professors and the Amherst Handshake website. I've been able to explore several health-related fields, which is nice because I'm unsure about what I'd like to do in the future."

"I completed my first internship after my first year. I got it through the Loeb Center internship program. It was a formative experience for me because I worked at a small psychiatry firm, and the man that I worked with was an Amherst alumnus who's now my mentor. He's helped me find other opportunities, and working in a clinical research setting made me realize that I want to go to medical school and not get a PhD."

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## How can I make friends?

"I met my friends in so many different contexts. One of my closest friends at Amherst is my first year roommate. I met friends through a cappella, just around campus, through mutual friends and at parties. I have friends who I don't remember meeting too."

"My friends support me more than any resource at Amherst. There've been times when I've felt like I didn't do as well as on a task that I could have. A strong support network of friends was a big saving grace."

## What other advice would you like to share with first-years?

"I missed the opportunity to take random, non-major classes because I thought 'I have to get my major requirements done.' But this is a liberal arts school: You can, and should, take whatever you want, like classes that make you happy. I took one dance course, which was so fun. I wish I took a visual art class. I used to love visual art in high school. Take those fun classes that don't necessarily relate to your career plans or major. It's worth it."

"Some of the best experiences at Amherst first took me out of my comfort zone. For example, auditioning for a cappella groups was scary, but my a cappella group and the friends I've made there have made my time here so much better. Get out of your comfort zone."