If you come into first year with grand plans of finding Prince of Wales and all that they are likely to be wrong. Read on for a few stories of unexpected turns at the U of A.

Alexandros Papavasiliou

Sure, university seems like a super fun time. Orientation hopes you up as much. Week of Welcome has the beer gardens and everybody is busy in their denial that school has started. You think you’re going to meet so many cool people and everything is going to be amazing and perfect. Prolonging the inevitable doesn’t last long, however.

When all the first week festivities disappeared the following Monday, campus became a barren, desert wasteland. In a lecture theatre full of 400 students, I had never felt more alone. Every day was spent going to class and thus becoming another sheep in the herd. You lose yourself in university, and end up spending your days studying and struggling to keep up with your course load. I spent my first year being sleep deprived and having my dreams shattered by the overwhelming competition from other kners just like me. University is ruthless.

Kate Black

Before I came to the U of A, I thought university would be an abundant Promised Land of high-kids hooties. I had it all played out in my mind: I would catch the intramural cage of a suite across the romantic vistas of quad, engage in a deep and meaningful conversation, then proceed to bang each other’s faces off in the back stacks of Bovard.

You can probably imagine my grave disappointment when I realized good-looking people didn’t stock my Psych not lecture hall like a Chipotle-styled cushion line, and that most people who made eye contact with me wanted my notes, not my education. Turns out, the selection of the U of A was just like high school, except everyone was a little older and, maybe, a little smarter.

But not all is lost, lovebird first-years — I ended up getting lucky.

eventually. My advice? Your way is likely to result in someone who loves your lists off by joining a student group that aligns with your interests, rather than aimlessly wandering around campus, relying that someone will throw their genitals at you. Until then, focus on having fun and soaking up your easiest year of post-high school life. You’ll still flower eventually, but don’t check out if they don’t fall into your lap. Like, right away.

Peggy Jankovic

Looking back, I realize that nearly every misconception I had about what university life would be like was something high school teachers had told me in order to prepare me for university. They made university sound super unappealing: a place where nobody cares about you, especially your professors, and where you need to know what you want to do with your life sorted out by the time you walk on campus. They couldn’t have been more wrong on both counts.

It turns out that your profs are more than happy to talk with you, and to get to know them you can actually lead to super-cool undergraduate research opportunities. Also, there’s really no shame in changing your mind about your degree. After all, you applied to the University of Alberta when you were still a lonely high school student. University life will expose you to way more possible careers than you ever thought possible: did you know you can do more with a Science degree than go to medical school?

Take the time to feel things out. This may take more than four years, but if you absolutely fall in love with some obscure area of study, you’ll see that being open-minded is worth it.

Richard Catmapuy-Llew

You’re just one of 20,300 students on campus, so who cares how you dress, right?

Three weeks from now, a horde of students will mob the SUB bookstore, as select U of A crest-lovers, sweaters and sweatpants will be discounted to 70% off. Kudos if you want to show off your school pride, but everyone already knows you go here. The real reason everyone wants U of A apparel is because they’re dirt cheap. Since they’ve such a bargain, chances are you’ll buy a week’s rotation worth of heather-grry goodness.

A lot of students fall into the dreaded "smart pant" phase. I know, it’s tempting, especially with the harsh winter months and amount of time you’ll spend in the library, conscientiously studying. I fell victim to the sweatpants phase in my early university career; the only time I would stop wearing them would be on football day (fraternal enough) or if the lucky crotch were out.

True, most people probably don’t care if you wear sweatpants every day, but that doesn’t mean you shouldn’t put some effort into the way you dress. Nobody’s going to treat you like crap because you’re wearing sweats, but nobody’s going to notice you either. Maybe you don’t want to be noticed, but when you are, it’s a really good feeling and a huge confidence boost.

I’m not telling you to wear a suit and tie everyday, but just because your friends tell you “nobody cares what you wear in university” doesn’t necessarily mean you should just mail it.

People do care about the way you dress, and those are usually the people who matter.

Shannon Kovalsky

Maybe it was because I started university when I was already 20, but going in, I had no desire to get the quintessential “university experience.” I wanted to go to classes (hehe, sometimes) and then go home. The idea of participating in anything felt like a chore. Sure, you could meet people, make a friend in class or you had a backup for getting notes, go to RATT and get day-drunk, but I just wanted to get a degree and get out.

Sometime after my third year, I realized this probably wasn’t the brightest idea I’d ever had. It wasn’t so much that I was wrong to not want a university experience, but my goals changed by being a part of the university. I was less content to get the bare minimum and I loved seeing new people. I wasn’t the curmudgeon I thought I was. Volunteering with The Gateway, I got the first hint of my university experience, and it turned out to be more fulfilling (and less of a chore) than I’d expected.

In my case, I didn’t have a misconception about my first year of school. I fully intended to not participate, and I was perfectly content with that. But for me, anyhow, as a small little older, I realized I wanted something more to take with me after I’d (finally) finished my degree, and I found it.