

Lansing Grads Return To Reveal The Truth About College Life

It's one thing for teachers to keep encouraging high school students to manage their time, keep up their grades and get ready for the challenges of college. But when the person sitting in front of you is a former schoolmate telling you about experiences he or she has lived since September as a new college student; well, then, you've got to sit up and take notice.

On their first day of school following the holiday break, Lansing High School students got a trustworthy reality check about life after high school when 19 members of the classes of '95 and '96 spent all day describing their collegiate experience and answering questions from attentive students at every grade level.

The daylong program was organized by the Lansing High School chapter of the National Honor Society under the chairmanship of Tina Ellis. This is the tenth year the collegiate-high school connection program has operated, said Honor Society advisor William Suarez. To ensure a high level of credibility, only grads from the last two years were invited.

"Academically, the program's most effective for our youngest students," said Principal Bill Rankin. Contact with last year's graduates starts them thinking about college from the perspective of students who've just completed the preparatory process.

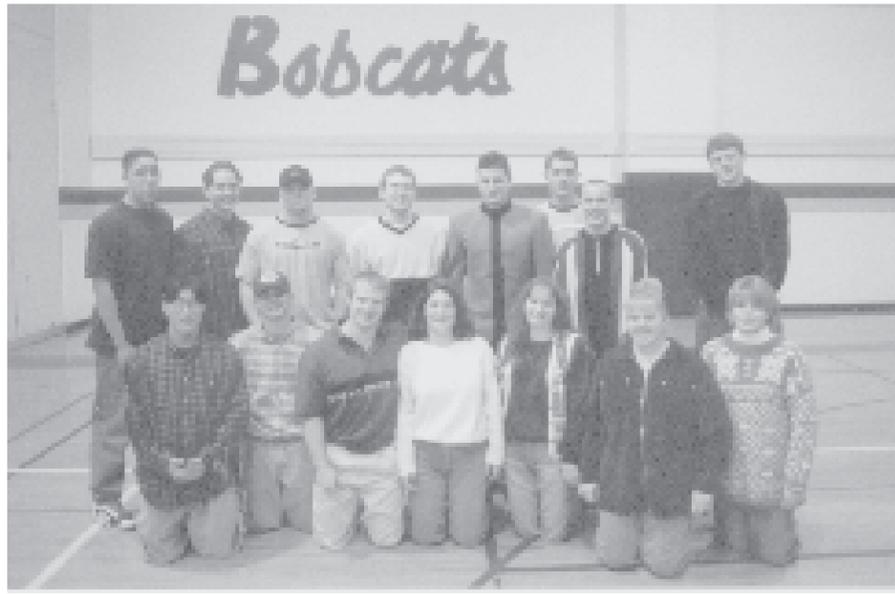
Classroom Visits

English students in Julie Berens ninth grade and Letha Henry's 12 grade classes listened attentively as their former schoolmates described the process of adjusting to college life and the daily challenges they encounter on their own away from home.

Ninth grader Jeff Dende wanted to know how long it took the freshmen to adjust to college. Univ. of Connecticut freshman Tim Wright said that it takes several weeks to get settled down while Cortland State sophomore Lori Stinson gave the good and bad news about adjusting to campus life. "It's a whole new freedom," she said, "but if you don't take charge of yourself no one's there to help you."

When asked how best to prepare for college, Cornell freshman Joe Cook told Mrs. Henry's senior class to get ready for the change from a small school to a big school. "Procrastination is easy," he warned. "You're the only one responsible for you."

Melissa Henry explained that you have to watch out for "cuts" (missed classes). Too many missed classes and the grade automatically comes down, regardless of what you score on a test. "Even if the teacher's teaching straight out of the book, get your butt to class," said Henry.



YOU CAN COME HOME AGAIN - '95 and '96 Bobcat alums gave up a day of their Christmas break to share their collegiate and military experiences with every student at Lansing High School. Standing are Mike Clark, Tim Jennings, Max Kerry, Joe Cook, Brian McLean, Brandon Hammond, Joe Doucett and Casey Crandall. Kneeling are David Heisler, Tim Wright, Kevin Kessler, Erin Connors, Kate Diedrickson, Sheila Bowman and Lori Stinson.

Current Lansing students also asked about what courses they should take to prepare themselves for college ("If you can type, it helps a lot."), the quality of campus food ("OK, but we get to love eating Ramen noodles in the dorm room."), money ("Off campus jobs are easy to find or get a work-study job that's linked to your academic interest."), sports ("The calibre of the competition is a lot stiffer than at high school.") and social life ("Play the dumb orientation games and meet as many people as possible.")

The ninth graders paid rapt attention and seemed particularly impressed because the college students sitting in front of the room had, themselves, recently been behind the student desks in Mrs. Berens' class.

The Graduates' Perspective

The Lansing Community News also met privately with a number of the returning grads to ask (1) what aspects of Lansing High were particularly useful in preparing for college; (2) what suggestions they'd make to the Board of Education for improving preparation for collegiate life; and (3) what advice, if any, they'd like to share with the current high school class.

"Overall Lansing prepared me well, especially in English," said '96 grad David Heisler of Asbury Road. The Roberts Wesleyan University freshman said that writing term-papers came easily, thanks to Lansing's emphasis on written communica-

tion. Art major Heisler regrets Lansing's lack of electives in the technical aspects of art. "I'm a little behind now," he said. His tip to high school students? Learn time management. "Don't waste your free time," pleaded Heisler. "Read something; there's always something to be done."

Lori Stinson '95, of Dates Road, studies at nearby Cortland State. "Lansing had a strong sense of community and the teachers always gave 1-on-1 attention that really paid

off in college," she explained. Lori noted that many college freshmen begin with 3 or 6 college credits and wishes Lansing could offer more advanced placement courses. She also feels that expanded computer courses should be mandatory at Lansing.

"I really enjoyed high school, but college is a great experience," said Lori. "Study hard and challenge yourself. When you apply to college, they'll look at whether you took easy or tough classes."

Alfred University freshman Casey Crandall, of Marion Lane, was frankly surprised at how well Lansing had prepared him in English and math. "A lot of guys on my floor didn't know the basic stuff about writing that I took for granted because we did them again and again." The hardest part of college is social life, said Crandall. "There's lots of free time in college with no one looking over your shoulder; you've got to stay focused on why you're at school."

Kate Diedrickson was also concerned that her freshman year at Penn State competing with students from large high schools would be a big struggle, but "Mr. Gallo's class is like a prep school; he taught us like a college professor."

The transition to college is difficult because you've got to do it all on your own, said Kate. She advises Lansing freshmen and sophomore to start looking at schools now in terms of student body size, majors and campus life. "It's definitely not too early," she said.

If these returning students fairly represent the most recent crops of Lansing's educational consumers, teachers and administrators can take comfort that they've gotten far better than passing grades.



SELF DISCIPLINE & TIME MANAGEMENT were the two messages delivered again and again by returning Lansing graduates. The grads attended English classes all day long on Thursday, January 2 and had the opportunity to answer questions about college life from every 9th - 12th grade student.

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