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First-year Students Acclimate to College Life as Family Weekend Approaches

Matt Parks , Volunteer Reporter

It's been a month since the class of 2025 moved in and started their college journeys at Seattle University. As a first-year myself, I can attest to how this time has been a swirling wind of joy, chaos, fearlessness, fearfulness and emotions that change almost as quickly as the weather. Students look forward to the upcoming Family Weekend as they can share their excitement to be back in the classroom this year with their loved ones.

The transition to college has been a big change as we are faced with a new environment, increased course load and separation from the familiarity of their home and family. For many including myself, the last four weeks have been the first step of independence as students venture back to in-person education amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, the college transition has been harder than it has been for others.



Kennedi Finnes

Students gather outside the library during lunch

First-year Pre-major student, Van Roeder, speaks about the challenges of living independently and adjusting to life at Seattle U.

"I like college—it's been a little stressful," Roeder said. "It's taken a lot to get used to being away from my family. The hardest part for me has been not having my support system here with me all the time, but they're only a call away. Overall, it's been a positive experience."

First-year Psychology major Reign Riley states how his adjustment has been going smoothly thus far.

"It's actually been really good so far—classes haven't been too hard, as far as assimilating into college life," Riley said. "It's pretty easy, it wasn't something I had to have a huge adjustment for. I think orientation week helped and I haven't had any problems so far."

Talia Friedman, a first-year criminal justice major with a specialty in forensic psychology, suspects that increasing challenges in class are an indicator of what's to come.

"I've really enjoyed Seattle U so far," Friedman said. "It was really fun and a little bit easier the first few weeks. I think this week has been the hardest so far and a little bit telling of what's to come in the future. So far in terms of course work and social life, it's going well—a good track."

Since the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted "normal" school life, students are getting acclimated back to an in-person learning environment.

First-year Creative Writing student, Jaden Lindsey, explains how it was important to be back in person after spending his senior year of high school online.

"I haven't really been academically challenged [in a classroom] in a really long time, so being able to do that here is really nice," Lindsey said. "I work best when I'm in classrooms and feeding off of energy from the teacher and the other students, so that was really important for me to step back into it."

Friedman shares in the enjoyment of being back in person. She mentioned that Seattle U's smaller class sizes and the ability to learn surrounded by her peers makes academics more engaging.

"Out of the two classes I have in-person, I really like them because it's nice to be in a classroom again," Friedman said. "I really like how small the class sizes are, especially compared to what my high school classes were. It's a lot nicer because I get to see and know everyone."

From Oct. 22 to 24, Seattle U will host a Family Weekend for students and their families. Director of Parent and Family Engagement, Laurie Prince, detailed what can be expected from the upcoming weekend, which is a blend of educational and social programming.

"It's an opportunity for families to come back and see their students settled in and hopefully feeling more at home than they did a month ago," Prince said. "There's fun things going at Redzone and Student Events and Activities Council (SEAC), there's student showcases highlighting some student clubs, organizations, and groups ... There's also a brunch on Sunday morning with a panel discussion about what Jesuit education is and how we live it out here [at Seattle U]."

Additional highlights include trivia night, screenings of "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" and a keynote address from newly inaugurated Seattle U President Eduardo Peñalver. As a reminder, all students and guests are required to wear masks and complete the Safe Start Health Check each day as a part of the university's COVID-19 protocols.

With the opportunity to reunite with their families for the first time, students have different plans for the upcoming weekend. While Roeder plans on seeing "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" and showing off Seattle U's campus, Riley looks forward to exploring Seattle with his family. Friedman doesn't have her weekend structured yet, but she's looking forward to being with family, which is ultimately what this weekend is all about.

"I don't really have any plans," Friedman said. "I am hoping to just say hi to my parents and show them my dorm room. I don't really know Seattle well enough yet, so my plan is to say hi to them and give them a hug."

For first-years, it's been a time of change and adjustment, but for the most part, it's been a welcome one. As new students are now beginning to find their way, Family Weekend gives them the chance to show off their new homes to their loved ones.