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College of Charleston as a “Bohemia”

In my high school, students were encouraged to mastermind a plan for their future with everything laid out to the T. We knew exactly what clubs would look good on our resumes, what leadership programs would stand out on college applications, and what classes we should take to help us achieve credits in our desired career paths. I had to do well in high school so that I could be accepted into an exceptional college, which I had to well in in order to get into a superior medical school that would lead me to find a well- paying job. My counselor’s warning always played in the back of my mind: “Every choice you make affects your future, so be wise when making decisions.” Alright, perhaps some of this is exaggerated, but most of it is not. College was just the next stepping stone that brought us that much closer to the ultimate career that would facilitate buying the standard home and raising a family. I dragged these preconceived notions along with me as I left for college.

When I arrived on campus a mere three weeks ago, I was thinking of college as anything but a bohemia. I will be the first to admit that I was proved wrong these past three weeks. Before college, the term, “bohemia” wasn’t even in my vocabulary. After spending almost four weeks at the College of Charleston (C of C), I have not only added the word “bohemia” to my repertoire, I have even composed my own definition of it. A “bohemia” is a place that allows freedom of thought, expression, and action, favoring individuality and the unknown, especially among the youth. A bohemia allows its people to take their time and figure out life as they go, enabling them to have more time for experimentation, spontaneity, and self- discovery as opposed to following a specific plan. Therefore, bohemians are similar to how Jerrold Seigel

described modern gypsies in the sense that they live “simply, and wholly for the moment” (24). Leisure is essential to a bohemia as it helps its members become more equipped and confident in choosing a course for their lives instead of selecting a career path just for the sake of following a regimented outline for life.

As I previously stated, one main theme of living in a bohemia is the discovery of oneself. The College of Charleston, being a liberal arts college, is the perfect environment for students to accomplish just that. Back home in New Jersey, it was looked down upon at times if a student was going in as (gasp!) “undecided,” but at the College of Charleston it is embraced. In a short three weeks, I have met a multitude of people, each with different interests and majors, with about half of them beginning their college journey as “undecided.” Some might believe that Honors College students are all completely confident in their majors and careers, but that is simply not the case. For example, one of my friends in the Honors College absolutely loves dance and the arts, but she is interested in biology and medicine at the same time. Thus, she chose to take a few art classes and a few science and math related courses to help her make her decision. Another friend of mine who is not in the Honors College has absolutely no idea what she wants to do with her life, so she is taking five courses that have nothing to do with one another, hoping that at least one sparks an interest. The College of Charleston actually encourages its students to wait to declare a major, simply because it offers a vast array of classes, which can hopefully give many students like these two time and a boost in the right direction that could lead to finding a new passion.

You may be thinking that some students such as those attending the business and engineering schools at C of C already have their master plans drawn out, so therefore not *all* students have to figure things out. However, what is unique about the College of Charleston is

that it is mandatory for students to take a number of general education requirements in different departments. Who knows? Perhaps a student at the engineering school will discover that he loves history, or a student at the business school will find that she is inspired by psychology. The College of Charleston as a bohemian ensures that its students are open to new experiences and opportunities, even if everything seems set in stone.

At this point, there should be no doubt that the College of Charleston (including its student life) is a bohemian. The student body is a diverse grouping of young people who strive to make something of themselves, despite the external pressures thrust upon them. They don't worry as much about the uncertainties of life, as long as they are making progress in discovering what they love. The student body of College of Charleston embraces the brainiac, the artist, the athlete, the fashionista, and all of those who have yet to discover themselves or do not fit into a specific category- a characteristic that truly makes it a modern day bohemian.