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Camp Dartmouth



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My first encounter with summer camps at Dartmouth was through my younger brother, a tough-guy type who told me horror stories of his stay in a place called “French.” He and his rowing buddies did order close to \$150 worth of Boloco smoothies, so it didn’t sound like the worst experience in the world, but I digress.

This was a few weeks after I visited for Dimensions, where I raged (read: played Apples to Apples until 1 a.m.), watched a bunch of people dance around in silly costumes (R.I.P. real Dimensions) and ultimately made the decision to matriculate.

Despite the fact that we all know the real Camp Dartmouth is sophomore summer itself, the Co-op boasts a sign outside its door that suggests camp at Dartmouth also has something to do with sports.

“Welcome, Camps!” the sign proclaims cheerfully, ignoring the suffering it perpetuates in ’16s. We are the ones who have to avoid trampling brace-faced, lacrosse-stick-wielding 13-year-olds on our way into FoCo, and we are the ones who must also avoid being trampled ourselves by overzealous rugby players in the stir-fry line.

What exactly is going through these campers' heads? Are they already considering applying to Dartmouth, or is the College on the Hill just another summer camp for them? Are all of these campers the smart kids who managed to cheat the system and tour the College without their parents?

When they're not blocking your way into Collis as part of a tour group, most prospective students during the summer can be found being sporty somewhere. Though I've heard of current students who went to debate camp or math camp here, the sports camps seem to be the most prevalent. There are more of them and they tend to travel in packs.

Here's a rundown of a typical day in prospie-land:

8:15 a.m.: Up and at 'em! So psyched for practice today, guys! I love summer! This is so much better than getting up for school!

8:45 a.m.: Oh boy, this dining hall has so many options for breakfast! All-you-can-eat? I'm so there!

9:30 a.m.: OMG did you see that college student studying for a test over there? She looked so focused! Gosh people here are smart! [Said college student continues to browse Facebook].

10 a.m.-2 p.m.: Activities! Sports! Friends! Camp!

2 p.m.-5 p.m.: Let's go down to the river and then later roast hot dogs and make s'mores! What are classes?

During one rainy afternoon this past week, I watched three eager adolescent boys clicking away at a First Floor Berry computer, smiling surreptitiously as they continued with their clearly not camp-related activities and thought, "That's it. They're trying to hack their way in early. Admissions, you've been warned." Worried that they might approach me with queries of "What was your SAT score?" and "What's the pre-med major like?" I avoided eye contact and scurried away. Better to be safe than to interact with high schoolers.

Should you chance to actually encounter one of these youngsters, keep in mind that you represent our school. Some of them may actually have legitimate questions. Answer them honestly and keeping in mind that there is no one true Dartmouth experience. They may not believe you about the cold at this point, but if all goes well, they'll learn soon enough.

Smile and try not to cringe when that camper's follow-up e-mail is preceded by considerable schmoozing. I know I didn't want to deal with taking down my tour guide's blitz address after my own Dartmouth tour.

"Your full name?" I thought, "including middle initial? And class year? How many people actually go to this school?"

Campers, this sort of behavior will be shared with everyone your tour guide, who is likely very facetimey, knows. And though your tour guide is not going to get you into Dartmouth, the follow-up e-mail is a nice touch to complement that orphanage you helped build last summer. Just something to think about.