



By Andrea Vessel, St. Ursula Academy Class of 2011

With 21 school days left in my high school career, I'm looking toward bigger and better things, like our senior trip, summer after graduation, and college. It's easy to say that my mind is not really in high school anymore. So, it was interesting to pull from my brain all of the experiences at St. Ursula, the good, bad and ugly so that I could give you the best advice as incoming freshmen at SUA.

I'll let you know that coming to SUA was not my choice, and I didn't want to be here from the get go. But despite my parents' decision being indisputable, I came to St. Ursula freshman year bitter and closed off and determined to NOT like it here. So that leads into my first piece of advice:

1. Freshman year is an eye opening experience and you have to come in ready to branch out, away from your grade school friends who may have followed you here or even that you left behind. You have to get with the SUA energy as soon as possible and accept the differences of junior high and St. Ursula.
  - a. Without a doubt, SUA is going to be harder than grade school and maybe even a lot of other high schools. You must look at your strengths and weaknesses right now, when it comes to getting work done and balancing everything you are doing because those strengths and weaknesses will carry on to high school.
    - i. One of my weaknesses is easily procrastination. It's been with me since grade school and it has caused me to do numerous all nighters and be stressed out. But those consequences stemmed from the choices I made and although more often than not, I got the grades I wanted, I made it harder for myself than it had to be.
2. My second point is simple. St. Ursula is a competitive school, with competitive students. Some of them are used to being the best and place all their energy on school work. DON'T be that girl. When I came to St. Ursula with no friends and no will to really make new friends, I did what I knew best, which was get that "A". It seemed like all my energy was being spent at St. Ursula or in some way, revolved around St. Ursula. I hadn't gone to any football games at Saint X or hung out with anybody outside of school and I was unhappy.
  - a. You have to take a step back from the school environment and have some fun, because St. Ursula can suffocate your life if you allow it.
3. Finally, if anyone, like me, has received scholarships to attend SUA, don't forget to say thank you. It gives you a chance to show appreciation to the donors and reflect on your

accomplishments. Let's face it, it is a privilege to be accepted and attend St. Ursula. But, it is up to you to make the most of your time here and to use the resources and opportunities St. Ursula has to grow and mature.

Coming from a girl who did not want to be here at all, wanted to leave after every year, but was able to do well in all my classes and finally use my leadership skills inside the school. I know you guys can and will make it at St. Ursula. Naturally some of you may find that you're the only black girl or minority in most of your classes or at the lunch table. Now is the time, to get to know the girls sitting next to you, who will be with you when school starts in August. You will support each other from freshman to senior year, and many years later.