

From a school size of one to 15,000: What the transition to UNH is like for homeschooled students.

Zea McGarr, Contributing Writer

Transitioning from high school to college has always made students nervous. How do people make friends? What will classes be like? That's what University of New Hampshire (UNH) students Kailey Deighan and Bryce Stetson were thinking when they went from having a class size of one to thousands.

Deighan and Stetson were both homeschooled from elementary school through the end of high school. Both are second year College of Life Science and Agriculture (COLSA) majors.

The two faced what can be described as “culture shocks” when first arriving at college. Deighan did not know the “right way” to take notes, so she would try a new method every week. Stetson says he didn't know how to study for an exam and struggled with taking notes due to the change in teaching styles.

Deighan was scared the first time she walked into a lecture hall. She recalls not knowing where to sit and if she had to worry about assigned seating.

Though he wasn't intimidated by the large lectures, Stetson still prefers having a smaller class size. He feels that it was easier and that it felt more natural to ask his teacher questions before college, compared to having to ask a question in front of a couple hundred students.

“Taking exams with that many people around me was a lot for me,” said Deighan.

The Virtual Learning Academy Charter School (VLACS), is an online education system for students ranging from kindergarten to twelfth grade. Exams for Deighan were formatted the same on VLACS, so it took time for her to adjust to the variety of teaching styles.

They both attended orientation before the start of their freshman year, which helped them adjust. This event is nerve-racking for most — homeschooled or not — but luckily for Deighan, she already knew the campus well. Stetson also had a good experience, saying he made friends at the event.

One of their main worries was the social aspects of college and how they were going to make friends. Stetson was nervous that he would be seen as weird. He says, “I didn't know if I was going to be, like, weird. I feel like I still was kind of weird, comparatively to the social norm.” However, Stetson did not struggle to find friends. He says he gained a lot of social experience from doing volunteer work during his time in school.



Annabelle Havens

Kailey Deighan (left) and Bryce Stetson (right).

Karen Deighan, Kailey Deighan's mother and homeschool teacher, was worried about her daughter's transition into college at first, thinking that she had sheltered Deighan too much. "She quickly acclimated," said Karen Deighan.

When it came to whether Deighan was prepared enough academically, Karen was not concerned.

"Academically, I was not worried at all, because even though she maybe didn't take all of the same subjects in the same way, she learned how to learn and she knew how to learn," said Karen Deighan.

Deighan also thinks that it was easier for her to make friends since she was involved in a lot of activities during her time in school. "I think it depends on your homeschooling because I definitely think me and Bryce were 'brought out' into the world" she jokes.

There are currently no student organizations for previously homeschooled students at UNH, so Deighan is glad to know someone else who was homeschooled before college.

"It's great to have someone who knows what I'm talking about," in regard to her experience as a homeschooled student," she said.