

# The Challenger

A Publication of the Harper College Honors Program

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## TRANSFER STUDENTS AND THE MIDWEST EPIDEMIC



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# Down with the Sickness

By Stefanie Guarino

Are you a male or female college student between the ages of 18-25? Are you bored to tears almost every night? Do you find yourself seeking refuge in the city to escape suburban stupor? Are you feeling jaded, uninspired, and weak?

If so, you may be suffering from Northwest Suburbia Syndrome, a condition caused by excessive exposure to monotony due to living in a small, quiet, residential suburb. This is a serious condition that can become life-threatening if proper measures are not taken. Please seek immediate attention if you develop a dull social life, routine habits, and a stale lifestyle. Failure to alleviate symptoms may result in dangerous and harmful situations and cause your life to become a scene from Office Space.

If any of these symptoms are affecting you or your loved ones, do not worry. Support groups and rehabilitation for this condition do exist. There are many treatments available, but the only permanent cure is to move far, far away. Opportunities for escape are abundant, especially with transfer students, who have the best survival rate.

## Average Illinois

By Stefanie Guarino

Andrew Wilson, Professor and Coordinator of the Honors program, knows that the majority of Harper Honors students transfer to Illinois colleges and universities, like Roosevelt, the University of Illinois, UIC, Northern Illinois, and Illinois State. On average, only a couple of transfer students each year decide to be fearless explorers (like yours truly) and conquer new lands. While Professor Wilson does not have hard statistical data, he does communicate with Honors students and even assists them with the transfer process by writing letters of recommendation and advising students on schools and scholarships. In his own words, "the majority of our Honors folks transfer to Illinois schools, from what I have observed over my years as Honors Coordinator."

I would like to take this time out to announce my own collegiate venture, which will take me one thousand miles east, all the way from Arlington Heights, IL to Boston, MA. Most would agree that there is no comparison between a meek suburb and a lavish city, so for the sake of argument, I have decided to compare Chicago to Boston. In honor of my departure, I have prepared a quaint memorandum.

Dear Chicago,

You may have the tallest building in the world, be the largest city in the Midwest, and home of the Chicago Cubs (nothing to be proud of) but I have a bone to pick with you. Somehow, you keep your population captivated by Lake Michigan. I must hand it to your clever trickery because you even manage to make people delusional, thinking that your artificial sand and phony beaches are real. But I must warn you before your ego begins to inflate, if it hasn't already: you will never be the Atlantic Ocean. I will be more than happy to trade you in for Massachusetts Bay. Boston has more history and culture in the tip of its bean town than all of the two hundred and thirty four square miles of the

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Windy City. Oh and what's that? Step outside of the Chicago city limits and you will encounter nothing but the Northwest Suburban abyss. Boston's neighbors include the White Mountains and the beaches of Cape Cod, and its closest urban neighbor is New York City. Don't even get me started on the food options. Which would you rather have, a soggy Polish sausage or juicy steamed lobster? Chicago has around forty-five colleges in the city. Pretty impressive, right? WRONG. Boston is home to over fifty schools within fifty square miles, which translates into over 250,000 college students. It isn't called "America's college town" for nothing. Let us not overlook Boston's status as the intellectual capital of the United States. If you aim to be a productive, brilliant, introspective, visionary college student, then you are welcome amongst the prolific masses.

Well Chicago, I am not sorry that it has come to this. It seems that we were just not made for each other. It's not you, it's me. Please don't blame yourself and all your flaws. It was just time for me to get an upgrade, to start my life in an enhanced city.

With anticipation,  
Stefanie Guarino

## **Just Another Brick in the Wall**

**By Stefanie Guarino**

So Harper Honors students pride themselves in having 3.5 GPAs, high praise from professors, and the opportunity to be recognized for all of their hard work. If we consider Honors students to be so intelligent and forward thinking, why would they conform to being just another face in the crowd at a large state school?

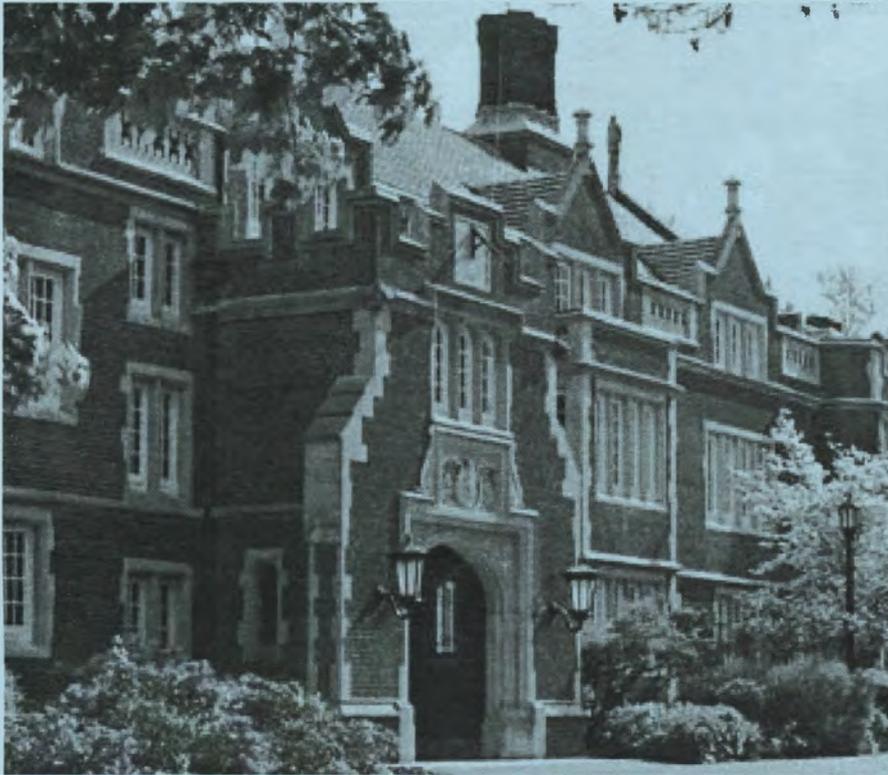
Hey, it's easy to get caught up in the monotony of suburban life. I understand that after a couple of years of living in a passive town and living the simple life, home sweet home becomes your average routine of work-sleep-eat-let's-do-the-same-thing-every-day-until-our-lives-become-predictable. At least try to open up and refresh your view to the alternative, experimental education.

I am going to boldly ask my fellow Honors students to step outside of their comfort zones. Yes, that means moving away from mom and dad (a.k.a. the moneybags) and your annoying siblings. You will also miss your friends, but college is all about new experiences, making friends, and starting your own life. In the spirit of ventures, I recommend the following four colleges, each hailing from the North, South, East or West regions of the United States.

Although there may be a great contrast in distance, the quality of the educational programs at these select colleges is identical. Each one embodies what every college aspires to have; a welcoming atmosphere, personalized curriculum, small class sizes, professors that moonlight as mentors, and students that are venerated and trusted.

# West: Reed College

By Stefanie Guarino



Ever since Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio was reduced to an underfunded pile of bricks, hippies everywhere have stained their Birkenstocks with nostalgic tears. Hippies fear no more. Reed College is here!

Warning: Reed College is not for the careless. It provides one of the nation's most intellectually rigorous undergraduate academic criteria, including a qualifying exam junior year in order to be accepted into senior study. Once accepted, seniors must complete a year-long thesis with an in-depth investigation of a topic in the student's major. Reed College has produced thirty-one Rhodes scholars and students consistently win Fullbright and Watson fellowships.

Reed is fifteen minutes away from Portland, Oregon, a large metropolis known for its close-knit community feel. Portland avoids the landlocked deathtrap of the northwest suburbs by being a short distance from other major cities such as Seattle and San Francisco. Reed itself is nestled in the lower Columbia River valley divided by the Reed canyon, a twenty-eight acre watershed separating the campus east from west. The Multnomah Falls are only an hour away and an hour-and-half drive can take you to the beach, a ski cabin, or the Mountains.

Small class sizes are the norm, conducted in seminar-style settings for open discussion. The college functions with a student-faculty ratio of 10:1. Professors encourage students to address them by their first names, because before they are scholars and instructors, they are friends and educators. Cheesy line? Maybe. The utter truth? Definitely.

Here are just a few of the advantages of Reed:

1. The Honors Principle is an ethical code created for students, by students, who get to determine which behaviors are acceptable and which are not. Translation: no written rules or regulations.
2. Renn Fayre, short for Rennasiance Fayre, is an annual three day festival, beginning on the last day of classes for the spring semester. It starts off with the Thesis Parade, in which graduating seniors march to deliver their theses to the registrar and burn all their notes in a bonfire on campus. The party itself includes, but is not limited to: bug-eating contests, naked Slip 'n Slide, motorized couches, fireworks, naked people painting themselves blue, full-contact human chess, parachuters, castle-storming and bike jousting, a fire-dancing performance by the college's own Fire Troupe, and a general sense of mayhem.
3. Only school in the United States with a nuclear reactor for its science undergrads.

4. Although there is a Physical Education requirement, how could you complain when your options are sailing, rafting, kayaking, skiing, hiking, rugby, tennis, or juggling for three semesters?

If you are a student ready to transition into a liberal atmosphere, Reed College is waiting.

## North: Knox College

By Stefanie Guarino



For those who are still grasping on to their mother's umbilical cord and cannot fathom the idea of moving so far from home, Galesburg is just a three hour drive away from Northwest Suburbia.

With only 1,400 undergraduate students, Knox is the quintessential small town College designed for the student who gets homesick for the Midwest (I don't condone this type of behavior) and enjoys the fact that everyone knows your name. Knox's location will keep you connected with grand ole' Illinois flatland; it is only fifty minutes away from Peoria, the Mississippi River, one hour and thirty minutes away from ISU and only two hours away from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Illinois history is packed into this private liberal arts college. The college was founded in 1837 by anti-slavery reformers and in 1858 it became the site of the fifth debate between Abraham Lincoln and Stephan Douglas. In 1860, during his presidential campaign Lincoln received the first honorary doctorate ever bestowed by Knox College.

Although you may feel a disconnect with the rest of the world, Knox College does not go unnoticed. The nationally ranked college has a distinguished reputation for academic rigor. Past commencement speakers include Madeline Albright, Bill Clinton, Stephen Colbert, and Barack Obama.

It is no secret that Knox produces a different type of student, one that is distinctive, inspiring, and ready to take action. If you are one of the select few that is chosen to go there, be prepared to develop a customized education plan that will guide you through the next four years of your schooling. Valuable real-world experience is promised through its internship opportunities and forty study abroad programs. Although the plains and cornfields are dull and mediocre, Knox creates diversity with the student body. Over seven percent of Knox students are international and over eighteen percent are American students of color. In addition, your professors are accomplished scholars, active in their own fields, who work closely with students.

What's different about Knox:

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1. No semesters. Classes function in three 10-week terms, in which students take only three courses. This gives faculty members more time for one-on-one mentoring with students.
2. No cheaters or pesky watchpersons. Most schools send students to testing centers, which are full of surveillance cameras or annoying guards looking over your shoulder. However, tests at Knox are not supervised or determined, which means that students can take their tests wherever. That may not sound like such an innovative advantage, but just think of the level of trust Knox has for its students.
3. Home to the only Peace Corps Preparatory Program in the United States.

If you can't bear the thought of an out-of-state school, then Knox College was made for you.

## East: Hampshire College

By Stefanie Guarino



Hampshire College's motto is "We provide a graduate school education at an undergraduate institution."

Forget everything you know about traditional academic curriculum. Hampshire students design their own academic concentrations instead of following them, receive detailed written evaluations instead of letter grades, and write papers and create projects in place of taking quizzes and exams. You should also forget about freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior standing. Hampshire College works on

a "divisional system," in which you receive your Bachelor's degree after completing the three "divisions" of learning; starting with Division I: broad examination, Division II: focus on specified interests, and Division III: finishing with an independent project that takes one year.

If this sounds like the modern cutting-edge academic program of your dreams, do yourself a favor and fasten your jaw to refrain from drooling, because it only gets better from here. Hampshire College participates in the Five College Consortium, which means that over 6,000 courses are available to students at no extra charge. If you can't find a distinct course at Hampshire College that you like, feel free to mosey on over to Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, or University of Massachusetts.

Hampshire College has definitely redefined the term "college student." You make the academic choices, design your own concepts, and partake in short-term field studies, internships, volunteer work, and advanced independent projects. Never again will you find yourself in a classroom yawning out of boredom or hunched over a desk with scoliosis.

Forewarned is forearmed: All that student freedom has a price to pay. The workload is heavy, but the Professors are always willing to help you in whatever way possible.

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The surrounding campus is home to many college students, indie music performances, art shows, social activism, and political protests. Due to its location in Western Massachusetts, Hampshire College is embedded in the Pioneer Valley, offering a balance between rural life and college life. However, if the tranquil pastures and farm animals start to annoy you, Boston is only two hours away.

There are many privileges to being a tormented creative genius, the most indulgent of which is a college student's social life. Hampshire College students' implicit motto must be "work hard, play hard." Here are just a few of the traditions:

1. Hampshire Halloween was regarded by Rolling Stone as a "must-see" party, earning the nickname "Trip or Treat" for the amount of hallucinogenic drugs and all-out debauchery that ensued.
2. Students celebrate Easter every year with their own traditional "keg hunt." Instead of hiding decorated eggs filled to the brim with candy, students hide kegs of beer in the woods near campus, while others go out in search of the kegs with plastic cups in hand. Most participants get drunk and lie in the grass, play Frisbee, or run around naked.
3. Each spring, the gay, lesbian, and transgendered student alliances organize Drag Ball. It entails a campus-wide dance party featuring live music and performances. Most students follow a gender reversal dress code, which consists of males donning makeup and heels and females flaunting facial hair and tuxedos.

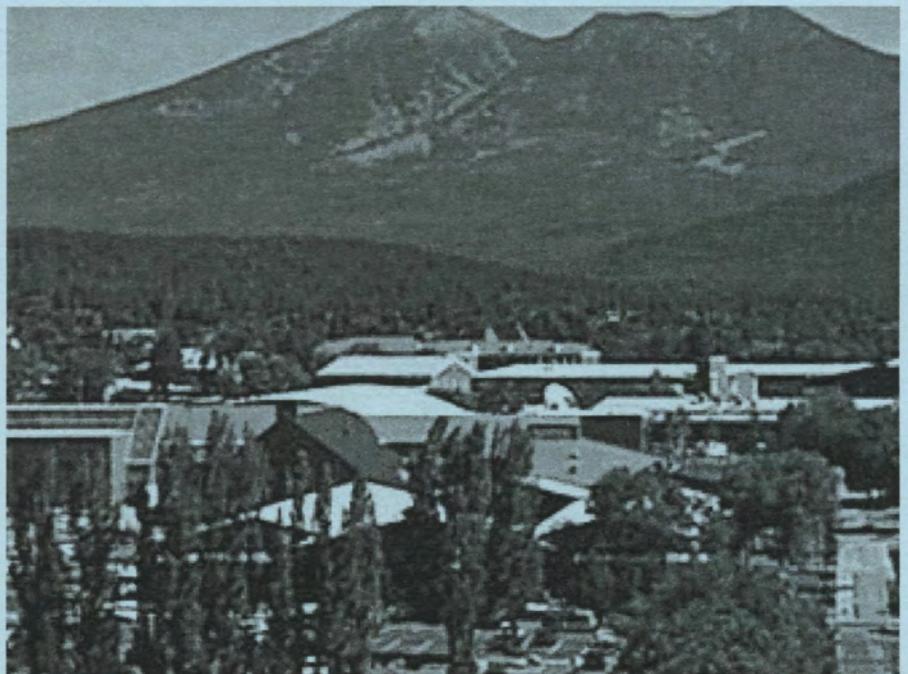
Overall, Hampshire College would appeal more to the mature and intellectual soul, eager to make a change in the world. If you are up for the challenge, if you like to break conventional mores and most importantly, if you desire no tests and no grades, go forth and apply!

## **South: Northern Arizona University**

By Stefanie Guarino

For those who are looking to veer away from private liberal arts colleges, look no further. Northern Arizona University was built in the 1800s, originally as an institution for the mentally insane. It was not until 1899 that NAU became a public university.

If you detest the superficiality of Arizona State or the scorching heat of Phoenix, then Northern Arizona University is for you. NAU is the perfect hybrid of modern day "green" conscious hippie and the antecedent tree-hugger. The campus is located in Flagstaff, AZ, surrounded by the largest ponderosa pine forest in the United States. It is only seven miles away from the San Francisco Peaks and one hour away from the Grand Canyon. The natural environment experiences all



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four seasons, reinforcing the outdoor stamina of hippie enthusiasts. What other college could have a legitimate School of Forestry?

NAU takes pride in their efforts for environmental conservation and commitment to sustainability. NAU's Applied Research and Development building is officially the greenest building in America. Their modern comprehensive distance-learning programs are located in thirty-seven different locations across Arizona. Their largest extended campus is located in Yuma, only thirty miles away from Tijuana. Because of their versatile setting, NAU is open and welcoming to student diversity. It is home to the Institute for Native Americans, the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals, Native American Student Services, and the Applied Indigenous Studies program. In fact, more Native Americans get their Master's degrees at NAU than at any other school in the country. Not to mention that their Yuma campus has been recognized as one out of eleven publicly funded institutions nationwide that have produced a majority of Latino graduates. NAU's own W.A. Franke College of Business is ranked among the top fifteen in the country, putting it alongside Harvard, Duke, and Northwestern.

In addition to all of their achievements and dedication to educate the community, NAU understands a student's struggles with affordability. NAU offers a "block tuition program," which puts an end to the rising costs of tuition by guaranteeing incoming freshman the same tuition for four years.

Even though it spans across seven hundred and forty acres of land with a population of 24,000 students, NAU keeps its student to faculty ratio at 17:1.

In addition to the postcard-worthy scenic location, almost all of the students on campus will greet each other, regardless of whether they are friends or strangers. Whether you are preppy, a hippie, an activist, a snowboarder, or any type of non-mainstream subculture, you will love it here.



My new front yard, Boston Public Garden! Where will your studies take you?