



"Do you remember your first year of university?"

If you are like most people, that first term is a combination of pure excitement and a profound sense of being out of your depth.

For over twenty years I have been teaching first year university students, and I have had the opportunity to see the challenges they face. It is a surprise to most of them that going to university is quite a bit more complicated and demanding than just switching from one school to another. That alone is stressful enough, but add on top of that all of the other things that come with it. Many students are living away from home for the first time. Some are in a new city, some in a new country, some are even in an entirely new cultural setting. The academic work is both harder and in many cases of an entirely new type. There are a whole host of issues that arise outside of the classroom that revolve around social life, time management, personal development, the list goes on and on.

It can be, and often is, really overwhelming.

What I was seeing is a regular pattern: talented and excited but unprepared students were struggling for reasons that had little to do with how "smart" they were. I saw many very capable students failing classes or even dropping out altogether simply because they were not prepared for the full scope of what the transition to university involves. Even the students that were passing their classes were under mountains of largely unnecessary stress and strain.

I decided that I needed to do something to help.

I looked into the courses on transition that were offered by high schools and while they did a good job at some things, they lacked the details that can truly make a difference. It became obvious that what was needed was a simple, detail oriented, practical and affordable way to help first year students be prepared for what they were about to dive into.

Drawing on the experience and expertise of both myself and a group of colleagues - all recognized as outstanding educators - we developed the framework for the Smooth Start workshop. Our work was directed by a central question:

"If you could go back and do it all over, what do you wish you knew?"

After considerable research, we identified the primary areas that trip students up and the methods to avoid those obstacles. The information was packaged into a six hour, one day format and the Smooth Start workshop was born.

We will be offering workshops beginning in the Spring of 2018.

For more information, please see our website www.smoothspaceeducation.ca

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