

Becoming a Knight? Get it right.
A freshman's survival guide to UCF.
By LaQuita Brown



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Being the new student in school can feel like you've stumbled into a jungle. Before getting lost on the road to college, learn about your surrounding habitat for the next 9 months. Bear Grylls is an explorer known for his intense survival tactics in unfamiliar territories. While you do not have to wrestle with bears and snakes for a living, you must tackle the beast of college life, and here's how you will survive.

Mission One: Find other survivors.

The best thing about starting a new adventure is meeting other travelers with similar goals. Sarah Wood, a member of the Education Writers Association and education reporter for U.S. News, writes one of the eight mistakes college freshmen should avoid is avoiding peer interactions. The University of Central Florida's campuses are filled with students who explore different interests. Before planting your roots in your dorm for the semester, consider finding a tribe and tackling the wilderness together. During your first few weeks as a Knight, recruitment for fraternities, sororities, clubs, and student organizations will fill the campus. Interested in science? Join the Actuarial Science Club. Love being active? Consider joining a sports team. Want to try your hand at performing? Audition for one of Theatre UCF's plays. The possibilities are endless. If you need help figuring out where to start, UCF posts its student events calendar online at <https://events.ucf.edu/upcoming/> and on the MyUCF mobile app. Pick your favorite event or activity and show up to start building your survival team.

Mission Two: Have an escape plan.

Now that you've found students going through the same experiences consider making a schedule to manage your time. Lauren Herskovic, Chief Operating Officer at an admissions and mentoring company called Admissionado, praises going to class as one of her top three pieces of advice for a freshman. While it may be tempting to stay out all night partying when you have a lecture class in the morning, devise a plan to get back to your room and get plenty of rest before class.

With so many options available to students on campus, it's easy to get overwhelmed and overlook the resources available. Two services available to all UCF students should be kept in your plans for health and well-being. UCF Counseling and Psychological Services, known as CAPS, is in room 101 of the counseling center. CAPS offers resources to help you cope with difficult situations. Best of all, many CAPS services are included in your tuition. Check out the services provided by visiting them in person or online at <https://caps.sdes.ucf.edu/>.

If you're considering foraging for your next meal, visit the Knights Pantry with your UCF ID instead. Located in room 7H-101 at Ferrell Commons, students have access to five food items daily, along with toiletries and clothing.

Mission Three: Enjoy the experience.

Yes, college can be daunting with transitioning to an autonomous way of life. But it is also filled with enriching experiences that you'll always remember. You found your adventuring party and mapped out your escape plan. All that's left is to enjoy your experience. Visit the Recreation and Wellness Center, known as the RWC, to exercise free of cost. The RWC features group classes daily to help you explore all types of fitness, and there's no out-of-pocket cost to participate. While in the thick of the jungle, embrace your surroundings and conquer each challenge as it appears. You don't have to know it all upfront, and there are too many options to remember, but speak with your advisor, peers, and professors when all else fails.

Stepping onto a college campus alone and for the first time can be a frightening experience, but you've got this. Take a few deep breaths, find other survivors, make an escape plan, and enjoy your experience, and you will survive. Now that you have your freshman survival guide grab your UCF ID and prepare to brave your first year as a UCF Knight. We will "Charge On" and complete the journey together.

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