

Art Student Tells How They Found Friends in College

By Amy Loveless

The change from high school a school with 66,183 students can really shock freshmen to their core. But one UCF upperclassman has the answer for how they waded through the massive student body and found friends.

The trick, they said, is to not be afraid to reach out to others and to be the one to initiate conversations. A lot of their friendships bloomed from one icebreaking greeting.

Sabrina Janosz, a junior studying visual arts and emerging media management, had been through transitions similar to this before. For reference, Janosz uses the pronouns they/them.

In high school, Janosz moved from Chicago to Orlando and therefore had to make new friends in a new school. Janosz realized that they were expected to introduce themselves and really make an impression on their classmates. Taking the leap to say hello and introduce themselves was all they needed to get started on some real friendships.

“It’s the same thing in college,” Janosz said. “Everyone’s new. You can go out and say some stupid things, and then maybe those people never follow up again. Either you’ll make a friend or at least someone friendly that you’ll see occasionally, or you’ll never see them again. So, it’s not really a worry.”

In high school, Janosz said, people try not to stand out or be seen as the weird kid. But in Janosz’s first day of their freshmen art class, they realized that sometimes the goal is to be the weirdest person in the class.

“At one point I said to the guy next to me in class, ‘Hey, interesting thought to use shot glasses and condoms to store your paint. Tell me more,’” Janosz said. “And then I met this dude who was cool, and he had, like, cool takes on painting. And storing his paint, I guess.”

At the beginning of their freshman year, Janosz attended Lavender Lunch, an informational meet-and-greet event hosted by the UCF LGBTQ Services. This event allowed Janosz to meet people they could relate to. Janosz went with a close friend, and together, the two of them were able to muster the confidence to walk up to people and start up conversations.

Janosz also met most of their friends simply by proximity – and in college, this isn’t uncommon. According to the Journal of Adolescent Research, situational factors can highly influence who students befriend. Living in the same residence hall can lead to students interacting more and becoming friends.

“For me, finding friends in college became a lot about just being open to having the people that I already knew introduce me to new people,” Janosz said. “And that’s how I met people like my future roommates.”

Janosz’s roommate, computer science major Arati Banerjee, made her college friends the same way.

“A lot of my friends were from my classes, and some were through my roommate.” Banerjee said. “I met Sabrina [Janosz] that way. And that was really handy because I wasn’t necessarily changing myself or my usual habits. They were just all people who I could relate to and I would already be around.”

Now, both juniors, Janosz and Banerjee have tight-knit groups of friends that they met simply by talking to people and being open to new friendships. The roommates now have weekly gatherings to play Dungeons and Dragons and hang out with old and new friends.

“A lot of it,” Banerjee said. “Is just reaching out to people nearby wherever you happen to be, and you’ll find that you click in a lot of different ways.”