My Life As A Freshman Impacts Longwood University

By: Heather Waldo

Last fall a new program was created at Longwood University known as My Life As A Freshman (MLAAF). MLAAF’s mission is to accurately depict what freshman year is like for Longwood students. Throughout the many journals I wrote and videos I was involved in, I tried my best to meet this goal.

Sabrina Brown came up with the idea of MLAAF. Her idea stemmed from a program she had done at a different institution that consisted of two students’ hand-writing their experiences during their freshman year. The students’ work was later published into a viewbook for the institution. This was done several years ago, and Sabrina wanted to revamp this idea but now using the internet by the members writing blogs for the university’s website. Sabrina mentioned “with blogging it makes it a much better vehicle with getting students to share their experiences and anytime you can have authentic voices in anything you’re doing to recruit students to a university is always good.”

In order to fulfill the MLAAF mission, ten students were asked to write at least two journals a month describing their experiences during freshman year. During the beginning of my freshman year, I mainly wrote about adjusting to college life. I even wrote a journal about living with a roommate and suitemates in a dorm. Sabrina had asked us to write as real and raw as possible and that is something I really tried to show in my journals.

Every journal written by a member gets posted by Sabrina on Longwood’s website under freshmanlife.longwood.edu. All of the members’ work is saved and could be used for different publications in the future for the university. MLAAF was even mentioned in all of the welcome packets sent out to potential students. Also, one of my own stories was published in the Longwood Alumni Magazine that I had initially wrote for MLAAF. I wrote a story about how my grandmother had saved a Longwood sweatshirt for over thirty years and then gave it to me. The story published in the magazine, on my MLAAF page and on Longwood’s Facebook page.

Members of MLAAF were also told to reach out to Ryan Fletcher (a videographer for Longwood University) if they knew they would be doing an interesting activity. Ryan reached out to me and I was involved in a few videos. When I went to the G.A.M.E, Ryan filmed my whole experience and created a video that was later published on the same website mentioned earlier.

Another one of the members, Daniel Easter is seemingly an outgoing guy but has really become more involved on campus due to MLAAF. “My Life As A Freshman is an opportunity to get yourself out there and to get a head start…it makes you keep track of things that are happening and it gets you nine other potential friends.” When out filming for Oktoberfest Fest, Daniel said, “I don’t think I would have talked to that many people or done those things if we hadn’t been walking around with Ryan.” I was also involved in the Oktoberfest video with Daniel and we participated in pretty much all of the activities available. From riding the mechanical bull, to walking around and looking at the different booths and everything in between.

 When Daniel isn’t being involved in videos, he also enjoys writing journals each month for MLAAF. Daniel mentioned how he puts a lot of thought into what he writes and how it will affect his viewers. In most of Daniel’s blogs, he focuses on the activities he does on a daily basis or a couple of times a week. “I’m thinking about how I’m writing to people who will be coming freshman year and how in the first semester of freshman year, how important a routine is.”

 Daniel’s advice paid off when a perspective Longwood student reached out to him because of MLAAF. The student received the welcome packet, saw the MLAAF section, and sent Daniel a message through Instagram. Daniel shared his experiences with her, and she ended up accepting her Longwood invitation and will be a student in the upcoming semester.

Since MLAAF is a brand-new program, some of its aspects will change in the future. Sabrina mentioned how the project overall was a success, but still has some room for improvement. Next fall the project will be run under a coaching group with Sabrina and Jason Faulk (Dean of Admissions). “I thought it was an opportunity to make it (MLAAF) more formal and making it a part of something bigger at the university.”

My Life As A Freshman has done wonders for the students involved. It has pushed them to be more involved on campus and to form more friendships. Daniel and I are good examples of what this program can do for its members. Being a member of MLAAF has really pushed us out of our comfort zones and we have in turn provided content for future Lancers to read. It has also been beneficial for Sabrina Brown. Sabrina mentioned how she is pleased with what we have created for this program and has enjoyed getting to know all of us. According to Sabrina, Daniel and myself, MLAAF was a successful program and will continue to grow presence in the Longwood community.