

## ***Coping with College Series***

### **Diversity: Now's Your Chance!**

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Although you may think that “everyone” attends college these days, you’d be surprised to know that nationally speaking, you are actually part of a relatively small percentage of people that will obtain a college degree. So what does that mean? You have a chance to take advantage of opportunities others may not have. Your college experience at Illinois State University provides a rare opportunity to experience diversity. Now's your chance!

I know people get tired of hearing about diversity, but it really is important. We all have stereotypes and preconceptions about others and limited experience with people different from us. Luckily, college gives you the chance to experience things for yourself. It's time to further develop those critical thinking skills by taking risks to learn about others and venture outside your comfort zone. During your years here at Illinois State, you can make an effort to experience new things and arrive at your own conclusions. Now's your chance!

Why bother? Experiencing diversity now, can help you learn to communicate effectively with people of various backgrounds. Diversity awareness promotes both personal and professional growth. Often we are scared or threatened by people and things we know little about. As the saying goes...the more we know, the less we fear. Learning to understand others is a step in the right direction. Although we can learn something from everyone, we often gain lots from those whose experiences, beliefs, and perspectives are different from our own. Now's your chance!

Remember that being “educated” is not only reflected by the successful completion of a college degree, but also by your ability to effectively live and work among those different than you. You'd be surprised how having respect for others' cultures, beliefs, and experiences will improve your relationships with those different than you. It's really a nice feeling when people know they are being judged by the quality of their character – instead of aspects such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, appearance, age, and weight. Many of us come from communities in which people are very similar, and attending Illinois State provides you access to a wide range of individuals – don't graduate without ever getting to know someone who is different from you. Now's your chance!

Ultimately, diversity awareness will enrich your character and broaden your horizons. College is a time to be open to new experiences and test some assumptions. Now's your chance to take some risks...like eating at a restaurant that sells food representing another country. Now's your chance to experience a different culture...attend one of the many cultural events sponsored by Illinois State. Now's your chance to join a student organization and learn how to work with others who have similar interests, but are different in many ways. Now's your chance to develop your own unique personality, and possibly have some views different from your parents. Now's your chance not to let stereotypes determine your decisions, but experience difference for yourself.

Diversity is something we all have in common. Celebrate it daily and don't let all these opportunities pass you by. Now's your chance!