

Dear Prospective COMM TAP students,

Hey everyone! Congratulations on your acceptance to the University of Massachusetts Amherst! My name is Whitney Kmetz and I am currently a sophomore at UMass, but last year I was enrolled in the Communication Talent Advancement Program (COMM TAP). I am most definitely glad that I chose to do COMM TAP.

I thought the academic opportunities were some of the most important offered by COMM TAP. First off, you take both introductory Communication courses (118 and 121) in your residence hall. This is definitely a plus because you don't have to take a ten-minute hike on days when it's cold and windy or if your class is on the early side. You can just roll out of bed and walk downstairs. This means that the professors come to you.

The COMM TAP students on your floor are usually the only people in the class with you. So that means that you know everyone and that this is a small class. In my experience, it definitely made the material seem more interesting because everyone got more involved. Because the classes are small, and not large lecture classes, discussion is encouraged and the classes can actually be pretty fun.

Most students trying to get into the Communication major have to take these introductory classes as large lecture. Everyone I know who has enrolled in these large lectures say they were more difficult and that the material sometimes lacked clarity. As a COMM TAP student you develop a personal relationship with your professor and, if anything confuses you, it is very easy to ask questions. Additionally, if you are applying for an internship and need a teacher recommendation, your professor is able to write a one based on his or her personal knowledge of you. Students in larger classes may find it more difficult to find a professor who actually knows them and can write a letter of recommendation.

Another academic benefit is that you are already declared as a Communication major upon enrollment. All other prospective Communication students have to go through an application process.

COMM TAP also has good social benefits. Starting your freshman year can be a bit overwhelming, no matter what your situation is. This isn't to say that you will never feel homesick in the TAP program, but it is nice to be on a floor that is either all or predominantly COMM TAP freshmen. Everyone is in the same situation as you, and you have at least your major in common. Plus Communication students tend to be pretty social anyways. You are given an immediate group of friends and, especially in the beginning of the year, everyone on the floor hangs out together, no matter the occasion. You pretty much always have someone you can spend time with if you are feeling lonely or want to do something fun. As the year goes on you'll probably see that people branch out more and settle into their own group of close friends. Everyone will still get along well, but you may find that you do not share the same level of closeness to everyone on the floor. But I think this is a good thing, because while the program does provide you

with about twenty other people who are immediately your friends, you are definitely still able to branch out and meet new people.

Overall, I think the program is a great investment for anyone who is considering the Communication major. You are given academic opportunities that are the envy of all non-TAP students and a network of friends who are in the same position as you.

If you have any questions about COMM TAP, please e-mail me at wkmetz@student.umass.edu. I look forward to hearing from you and possibly meeting you at the COMM TAP reception on April 6th!

Sincerely,

Whitney Kmetz
COMM TAP Student Ambassador
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