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Column: Misconceptions discovered about ESF students

By Laura Kelly

Stumpies, tree-huggers, hippies — we all know the stereotypes. But how much do Syracuse University students really know about students at SUNY ESF?

Not much. SU students obtain their information from tainted campus gossip. Negative feedback about State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry thrives within that gossip. Despite sharing the same residence halls, eating the same food and walking the same grounds, a severely strained relationship exists between students at the two schools.

After talking to people on my floor, I realized most students at SU possess little knowledge about ESF. Even after attending SU for over a year, two sophomores told me they didn't know anyone in ESF and were uncertain about the classes offered there.

The freshmen I spoke to threw the term "tree-huggers" at me, along with the notion that students at ESF are noticeably "insane." I also got the impression that most SU students believe ESF students "get to use our stuff," while paying a cheaper tuition.

Sounds simple enough: ESF really just consists of future forest rangers who grub off their SU privileges and slack off in their easy, irrelevant classes. Right?

Not quite. Laura Eiselen, an environmental pre-law junior at ESF, clued me in about the reality of the college. According to Eiselen, ESF is the number one environmental program in the United States and holds the reputation of being a world-renowned college consisting of many different majors. A degree from ESF goes a long way and is regarded very highly in both the environmental world as well as other professions, said Eiselen, adding that students can move on to become lawyers, managers in natural resource planning, foresters and professors in several challenging subjects.

Eiselen agrees that SU freshmen don't really understand the ESF community.

"It takes time to grow into both environments," she said. "As soon as you get to know people from both sides, the stereotypes disappear."

Looking around campus, it can be nearly impossible to distinguish ESF students from SU students. Why bother trying to single out ESF? I know firsthand that ESF students are some of the funniest and sweetest people I've ever met. Get out there and make that discovery for yourself.

Laura Kelly is a sophomore public relations and english textual studies major. E-mail her at lckelly@syr.edu.

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