PERSONAL ESSAY

What four years of tuition gets you



ILLUSTRATION BY LUCAS CASTILLO-WEST

The following is satire and does not reflect the author's own opinions, actions or facts. Except for the part where she is depressed and broke. That part is real.

I've heard enough of Branford bragging about the fact that when you Google "Yale," an image of their college pops up, thanks to Harkness Tower. Actually, I've had enough of every pretty, impractical location hogging the spotlight as if it contributes anything to student life. Harkness, Sterling, Cross Campus — what have they ever done for you besides look tall, dark and handsome? Not that I dislike tall, dark and handsome. Quite the opposite. But that's neither here nor there.

Visiting parents this weekend, ditch the standard campus itinerary. If you're truly invested in learning what has gotten your children through Yale, this is the tour for you.

Behold: The Yale tour they don't want you to take.

1. Humanities Quadrangle Bathrooms

When I spent my summer here at Yale, the greatest piece of knowledge I gained wasn't from philosophical discussions or rudimentary calculus. It was discovering that Yale has, in fact, built a bathroom fit for human civilization.

After any matcha latte, my lactose intolerance inevitably catches up with me. And considering that nearly every other bathroom on campus is a Donnerbalken, HQ feels like time-traveling 3,000 years into the future. Air conditioning. Automatic flush. Modern sleekness. As someone who knows all too well the urgency of finding a decent bathroom, I can attest that HQ is nothing short of a sanctuary.

And as a cherry on top, you can even thank your future baristas on your way out. Just peek into any HQ classroom, where rows of English, film and art majors are hard at work earning the degrees that will one day qualify them to ask, "Would you like that hot or iced?"

2. G-Heav

The next snapshot you'll want to take is of the place that has all but replaced your home cooking. You may ask yourself: wouldn't that be the dining hall? Well, that would require your college student to maintain a balanced diet.

Every time I walk into G-Heav, formally known as Good Nature Market, I have to stop and ponder what's more impressive: the endless aisles of snacks, the hot food buffet, the seemingly endless deli options — or the sheer lack of Red 40.

I'd recommend visiting around 3 a.m. on a Friday to see G-Heav at its busiest. Whether students are stumbling drunk after a night out or fueling an all-nighter is up to fate. As someone who has done both, I can testify to its indispensable role in Yale's culinary economy. To ensure with 100 percent certainty that you'll witness the first brand of students, visit Popeye's instead.

3. The Stacks

Have you ever gone about your day and thought, "I wish I were miserable right about now?" No? Well, your children certainly did when they applied to Yale, accepted their offers and then proceeded to rush finance clubs.

If you've ever wanted to get inside your child's head and understand a Yale student's thought process, I present: the Stacks. 16 floors of bookshelves, dim lighting and, admittedly, access to centuries of knowledge that would make any parent proud. It's an incredible place to actually learn something, with absolutely nobody around to tell you that whatever you're thinking is a bad idea.

Now, we may be in the minority, but the first time a couple of friends and I saw the Stacks, we took one look around and thought: the Cracks. Sixteen floors of accumulated knowledge, and somehow we managed to throw it all out the window, where it promptly landed in the gutter. Turns out, we weren't entirely wrong.

4. Any frat party — DKE excluded for obvious reasons

After Dante left Inferno, he had to go through Purgatorio before he could reach Paradiso, as any Directed Studies student will jump at the opportunity to tell you. After a long day of studying at Bass, you have to go through "Touse" before reaching the Yuzz's single. If you're unsure who is throwing during your visit, promptly download Fizz. Hell, put it on your dock, snug right next to Phone and iMessage, because your child probably uses Fizz just as much. Certainly for more time than they've spent calling you.

Hopefully, we can trust our beautiful frat brothers to be respectful of their elders, so you won't have to do much pushing and shoving at the door before reaching the mulchy backyard, where you'll discover your newfound appreciation for house music. If you're lucky, you might even get a photo on Luther's stairs.

I'm beginning to realize this tour reflects my own priorities. Notice the glaring lack of lecture halls, classrooms or anything remotely related to getting an education. Apparently, the Yale experience is less about what you learn and more about where you end up at 3 a.m.



STEPHANIE ALTSCHUL / WKND EDITOR

In pursuit of those noble goals, I somehow find myself spending an awful lot of time at places like those frat backyards.

And what do I have to show for it? I'm single, without a ticket to the Game and $8 poorer after buying a drink at G-Heav. So this is what four years of tuition gets you.

Still, I'd like to use this space to say thank you, Harkness, for your bells. You woke my hungover self up for my Sunday 10 a.m. volunteering shift when I forgot to set my alarm. If nothing else, Yale has made sure we're awake enough to keep paying for our decisions.

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WEEKEND RECOMMENDS:
CALLING YOUR PARENTS