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The Cord Weekly
Being The Change
Opinion 11 – Mediocrity is Stagnation
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It has been argued that to excel in school or in life means that you have to give up aspects of a fulfilling or well rounded social life. To earn scholarships and entrance into graduate school means that you have to put your head in the books, fall asleep in the library and brown-nose your way around.

Recently, a 'reformed over-achiever' opined that she has much more time for herself in her new-found 'average' life. I could not help but wonder: what is the great advantage to being average? Since you are paying to learn (not to learn) at University, I think applying yourself to achieve something more than average would be desired. You can learn how to follow orders for free in the army, or at SunLife, they will even pay you.

Universities have to be about creating new knowledge not just attaining a diploma for an 'average' life. Instead of University you could have gone out into the work force and got a perfectly meaningful average job or you could have used your \$22000 four-year tuition money, plus your \$20000 or so in rental and ancillary fees and traveled the world and gained a perspective few ever get; no one would force you to be an overachiever while traveling.

What is it about the high point on the bell curve that is worth working for? Sitting in a small cubicle at work after driving in a large car through a traffic-jam should not describe average. Does working for a system you may not agree with, while having no chance of changing it in the ways you want to see due to the limitations of being considered only as a perfectly rational being by those who define your life while being represented by only a number describe average? 1.8 children and a 3 bedroom fully-detached house out in a former forest with a plot of chemically treated imported grass is an absurd form of average. The reward of being average is that you don't have to be an individual; you can turn off and fit right in with the mass.

I undertook my undergraduate studies at Laurier and spent much of my first two years in a Phil's induced, life-directing and somewhat cloudy state (\$1.50 a drink). In my last two years I averaged 120 days of skiing, and managed high enough marks for acceptance into a graduate program. I also co-founded and then sold my interest in, a now thriving business (ARC Cloathing Co.), sustained a loving and enriching common-law relationship, spent time with family, and created new friendships to go alongside already established ones. I threw away no benefits for the sake of my "success" (success is happiness after all). Many other graduate students have similar histories.

Conferences are a great part of academics and students have ample opportunities to attend or present at conferences that are of interest to them. After participating in a conference in Vancouver, I was able to stay a few extra days to participate in an anti-war rally, examine a research site, and ski. Harmonizing and incorporating your life with your achievements and successes will ensure you do not have to sacrifice very much.

I have applied myself more thoroughly this year and for the first time received academic scholarships and have been awarded a pair of prizes. Perhaps the pubs have missed my patronage a little this year, but an average life is not dependent on pubbing.

Honour roll and otherwise 'over-achieving' undergraduates and all graduate students do have time to hang out with their friends.

Some believe that there are associated downfalls or sacrifices with 'over-achieving' but these are universal, please do not forget that even the average fail, we are all humans. It is what you don't sacrifice (ethics, values, morals) that makes one exceptional.

Striving for mediocrity will bring nothing but *Idiocracy*, wishing only for the status quo invites apathy. Hoping for only average will lead to cultural and social stagnation as there will be nobody working to better society because they are afraid to stand out. I do not believe that one requires a university degree to be exceptional, I do not yet consider myself exceptional, but if you want to be average, do not continue University: save your money and time. You can be perfectly average without a degree, and too many average people with WLU degrees brings down the value of that degree for those who wish to achieve beyond the status quo.