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The Cord Weekly
Being The Change
Opinion 11 – Mediocrity is Stagnation
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In the March 5th edition of the *Cord*, writer Kimberly Elworthy opined on the merits of being average. She 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.

She argued how she is a reformed over-achiever and 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? Why not apply yourself more wholly to your studies? You are, after all, paying to learn (how to learn), so why would you not want to get your money’s worth?

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? Does sitting in a small cubicle at work after driving in a large car through a traffic-jam describe average? Does working for a system with 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? Does everyone want 1.8 children and a 3 bedroom fully-detached house out in the suburbs? 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 did my undergrad at Laurier and in my first two years I went out nearly every night (when Phil’s was only \$1.50 a drink). In my last two years I averaged 120 days of skiing, and managed high enough for acceptance into a graduate program. I also co-founded and then sold my interest in, a now thriving business (ARC Cloathing Co.), and sustained a loving and enriching common-law relationship, spent time with my entire 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).

Now as a Graduate student (and as I write this) I am coming back from Vancouver where I presented at Globe 2008 and took a few extra days to participate in an anti-war rally, examine a research site, and ski (my 70th, 71st, and 72nd days of the year). I surely have not given anything up for my studies; I have incorporated them into my life. I do not feel as though I have missed from activities any more than any of my friends have.

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 I have not gone out to the bars as much as in years past, but my liver was sore and the parties I do host or

attend are even more enriching than the everyday trips to Phil's ever were. I see my friends or make new ones everyday and could generally not be happier with the freedom and individuality in my life and quality of my work; the two feed off each other. Kimberly's "associated downfalls or sacrifices" 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 nobody will be working to better society because they are afraid to stand out. Not to say that you need a university degree to be exceptional and 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.