

One Billion, Six Hundred Million Dollar Flowers

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Ahh, the fresh scent of newly sprouted grass. In most places this burgeoning commences at the beginning of spring. At Boston College, on the other hand, this blooming season is saved for the few days preceding graduation. In preparation for the arrival of approximately two thousand families, the Boston College grounds staff transforms the already beautiful campus into a Disneyland-like utopia. With rollout instant grass, brown patches become nonexistent, and the foundation of Boston College flourishes with luscious, expensive greens. The campus goes from snow-rutted to full-bloomed with the addition of thousands of flowers lining the grounds from the front gate to the tip of the reservoir. The purpose is to show parents, when they arrive, that their money and time go to an extremely worthwhile cause.

The theme of the BC campus is growth. Not only the school, but also its students strive for infinite improvement and expansion; especially when someone is watching. Boston College paints a description of itself with grand architecture, convenient location, rich history, and intelligent people. So while parents send their kids to be educated in such a majestic environment, the school finds it necessary not only to give the student the riches that they pride themselves on offering, but also to show the parents an even more magnificent façade. With fresh paint on the streets, walkways and buildings, visiting parents stroll by structures with sparkling, immaculate windows on paths so clean that eating off of the ground would be no more of a concern than eating from a dish.

When BC is aware that visitors are in proximity, not only is the campus greatly

altered, but also the manner in which the college behaves is adjusted. This is apparent at football games during the annual Parents' Weekend. While thousands of parents travel the varying distances it takes to get to Boston College, the events staff prepares to make their weekend stay with their kids as pleasant as possible. This includes changing routines and regulations to make them less rigid. Under normal circumstances, before football games while fans are relaxing and socializing in the parking garage near the stadium, a commanding, frightening police officer drives through the garage warning everyone that they have to pack up their possessions and immediately head to the stadium to watch the game. On the other hand, when it is Parents' Weekend, with parents and students alike enjoying the pre-game festivities, they are presented with a petite blonde girl driving through the garage asking everyone if they could please begin to finish up with their fun and start heading down to the field as soon as they possibly can.

The school itself is not the only guilty party in this theme; no, the students also go to great extents to present themselves in a more polished manner. Look inside any communal recycling bin in any freshmen dorm a few days prior to Parents' Weekend; there lies all the evidence in the world. Every inch of every bin is filled to greatest capacity with Bud Light cans. The books come out, the alcohol is disposed, sheets are washed and rooms are drowned in Febreze, all for the parents. The cost of sending a child to Boston College is roughly fifty thousand dollars a year; that is a fifth of a million dollars in just four years, equal to buying a house or even a flaming red Lamborghini. Parents want to know that the fortune they are spending goes to giving their kids as great an advantage as they can afford, and to know that their kids are taking that advantage. Otherwise, they would much rather be speeding around in their solution to the all too

common mid-life crisis. They do not want to find out after a month of school that their child is a drunk who has gotten nothing done except pick up a keen liking for hookah.

Surviving Parents' Weekend is not just a goal set out by students anymore; it is an endeavor involving everyone. With all of the pressure that parents put on their kids' shoulders, it is easy to forget the salon visits, the wardrobe upgrades, and in extreme cases, even the online courses—to ensure the ability to sustain scholarly conversations with professors of course—that parents use to prepare themselves to revisit the old college campus. All of this effort, and then parents wonder where their child gets it. The uniforms of parents include a polo sweater borrowed from a daughter's closet for mom, a classic sports jacket covering a striped polo for dad and matching khaki slacks for both. While mom awkwardly perches herself on the roommate's bed and surveys every little nook and cranny with her eyes, dad walks around the room cracking jokes about his good old days of outsmarting campus alcohol policies. Why do they act this way? A question you might find yourself asking. At home they were never this embarrassing. It is part of the masquerade that parents become a part of as soon as their child leaves for college. Just face it, as imperative as it is for you to conceal your double life at college, it is equally as crucial for them to adopt their new uniforms and quirks.

In the end, Boston College is beautiful; it is filled with extremely bright and caring educators as well as aware, lively and driven students. The charade that the University and its attendants put on during times of evaluation does very well exist; however, it is a learned behavior. The students mirror their parents' behaviors; who, to their own defense, gained their skills of deception through their own college experiences, as well. So in the end students are predisposed to acting in this manner, but can you

blame them? Look at the examples they are given, look at what Boston College has surrounded them with, because all-in-all two hundred thousand dollars, eight thousand times over buys a lot of flowers.