

Far from the stereotypical "lost" college freshman, Laura Arabian realizes the mistakes she has made during her first year at California State University, Fresno. Now that she "has her feet wet," she realizes the many positive experiences as well.

"My first year has been a time of dabbling for me," the thoughtful student says of her freshman experience at CSUF. "Guitar. The University Presbyterian Church. New friends. Speech class. It's been a growing experience for me.

"My mom says, 'You're always at school. Aren't you stressed out? It's making me nervous!' I tell her, it's making me happy. This is home."

High school was a busy time in Laura's life, but college is making her early educational experiences pale by comparison.

"I expected college to be very much like high school, or terribly different," she explains. "I did not expect there to be so much going on around me. This is a much bigger world than high school. I was not expecting the variety of students. Older students. People from all over the world. It's really exciting to me.

"The standard question is, 'How do you like college?' I love it. The time that I've spent here has been very good for me. The people in classes are really into discussion, which is very different from high school. It's much more intense. I've had to bear down."

Reviewing her first college memories, Laura is able to laugh at herself. She

recalls the frenzy of studying she undertook prior to her first test at CSUF — a biology quiz. "I went overboard," she remembers, laughing. "I studied for three days straight."

While studying for a quiz as if it were a final exam may constitute going "overboard," Laura says the demands of college do require a responsible attitude. The rewards gained from meeting those demands are very real, as well.

"I think I've grown up a lot...already. I've been challenged academically. I've been challenged physically, just to get the work done. I think that is good for me. It's not ominous. It's good. I also know I still have a long way to go."

Laura points to the international environment at CSU, Fresno as an excellent learning experience for students who study here.

"I'm very glad I'm attending a culturally diverse university. The world beyond college is equally diverse. Not only do my experiences here afford me a more realistic view of the world, it's a more interesting world as well."

A psychology major, with minors planned in Spanish and biology, Laura is studying to become a genetic counselor. Her goal is far from whimsy. Rather, her career choice is well-researched. She spent her summer as a volunteer in a local genetic counseling center, an opportunity that brought



Laura Arabian
Freshman

her face-to-face with the individuals she hopes one day to counsel. In the year ahead, Laura is planning to work in a cytogenetics laboratory, assisting in the analysis of human cells for genetic composition.

"I didn't even know what genetic counseling was when I first read about it," she admits. "I thought it was great that there was a place for people with genetic concerns to go for support and information. So, I called to ask if I could volunteer.

"Genetics is such an interesting field. It's like a puzzle to me. So many little things must come together so perfectly to create life.

"I started studying to be a doctor when I was six," she recalls fondly. "I gave up on it when I was six and a half. Today, I still want to be in a position to help people. I think I'll find a counseling position really gratifying."