A college where the teachers know everyone’s names

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lar unstated reason for a man to take a course at Wellesley is to meet women. Why else would one put up with the 45-minute commute twice a day? I myself am somewhat guilty of this attitude: This semester, when I saw a female MIT student in my macroeconomics course, I was surprised to think that she would want to take a course at Wellesley.

Of course there are other reasons to take a course at Wellesley. Normally, a variety of reasons are cited, like the fact that Wellesley has actual departments of history, music, and English, rather than a catch-all “humanities” department with courses filled with non-majors.

Although the idea of being surrounded by women may be at the back of everyone’s minds, I haven’t seen the other male MIT students in my classes at Wellesley trying to be friendly with the other students in the class. Just the reverse — in the three Wellesley courses I have had with other MIT students, the other MIT students virtually ignored the Wellesley students in the class. On the whole, Wellesley students seem less academically motivated than MIT students. In my experience, MIT students either get excited about a class and do a lot of work or they punt as much as possible. At Wellesley, students seem to do the expected amount of work — not more, not less. Of course there are exceptions.

The teachers at Wellesley seem to take a different attitude towards their students than their MIT counterparts. Without exception, every teacher I have had at Wellesley has made a point of learning the names of every student in the class, even in my world politics class with over 60 students. For the first few weeks of the course, teachers walk in and practice naming each student in the classroom from memory. I have seen a similar performance only once at MIT.

This Tuesday was “Lake Day” at Wellesley. My philosophy professor says that Lake Day is the one arbitrary exercise of power left to the college president. One nice day during the spring term, the president of the college spontaneously declares the day to be “Lake Day.” The bells in the bell tower are rung and all of the day’s classes are canceled. Students are supposed to go outside and enjoy the spring.

I think that Lake Day is the one day in which Wellesley is artificially forced to live up to the sense of timelessness the campus portrays. Normally the students are too busy, too concerned about classes, papers, and jobs to stand back and appreciate the beauty around them. Being an outsider I see it more, because the surroundings there are so different from what I am used to. It’s important to remember that the world is not made of granite and concrete.