

Go West, young freshman: Dookies look for the party

BY CHRISTINA NIFONG

STAFF WRITER for THE NEWS&OBSERVER

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DURHAM -- Renee Della Ratta and Ana Mate - you know the girls from Giles dorm? Well, they brushed their hair and smoothed on the lip gloss and stuck a pair of sparkly studs in their ears. They were all black pants and spaghetti straps. Melon colors, of course. That's what's in.

Can't you just see them? Giggling, nervous like. Galloping down the stairs.

They were, you know, the best friends any of them had at this point. And they weren't about to sit in their dorm rooms on their first weekend night in college.

But they were clueless.

They stood outside in the glow of the security lights. Three feet from the dorm's front door.

"So are we going somewhere?" asked a blonde in a chartreuse shirt.

"My legs don't want to move," replied another of them, scrunching her face into a frightened, excited smile.

"Where exactly would we go?" Mate piped up. No one seemed to know.

They did know this much. They were on Duke's East Campus, which is dry and set aside for underclassmen. And they wanted to be

on West Campus, where the upperclassmen were throwing the sort of wild parties they'd always heard college was made of.

Or so they'd been told.

The only way they'd ever find out was to board the campus bus. But that meant entering a whole other world. It can be scary, you know. They weren't sure they were ready.

"I don't know how they're going to treat the freshmen over there," Adam Kole said. "I was there earlier today and they seemed kind of unwelcoming."

Kole and his friends had joined the Giles girls and they were all waiting at the bus stop now. From those

six girls, the group had grown to 20, then to 50. It happens every year: The quest to reach West turns into a way for all the freshmen to meet each other.

Finally, the bus arrived. And everyone piled on. It was flirt central, standing room only.

Then, before they'd even managed to get that cute boy's name, they were there. Dumped beneath the shadow of Duke Chapel, looking out onto the empty quads. It was deader than East - unless you knew where you were going.

"I know where the party is," said Shalin Patel, moving up to lead the pack. "I just don't know what it's called."

They marched down the sidewalk in a huge cluster that practically screamed: We're freshmen. Then turned toward a frat party spilling out into the quad. They couldn't have had more clues: Thigh high speakers. Colored plastic cups.

But ohmygod if they didn't walk right past it. Under the arches and out onto the breezeway, which was quiet as the library on a Friday night.

Yet the Giles girls and their newfound friends didn't seem to mind that they'd missed the party.

"Now we're standing on the other campus, doing the exact same thing," shouted Paul Lisi to his cohorts. "But who cares? We're in college!"