



Tips for a Successful College Experience

Success in college may be predicted by high school grades and SAT scores, but true success is realized with: initiative and responsibility; careful time management; building social, professional and academic relationships; and mental and physical health care.

Initiative and Responsibility

The biggest hurdle to overcome as a first-year student is realizing that you are much more on your own. It will be your responsibility to start conversations with faculty members, explore clubs and organizations, and decide what courses to take. Although many universities have extensive advising programs, there is no equivalent to the guidance counselor in your high school.

Time Management

A related adjustment factor is the number of extracurricular activities competing for your time. Your first obligation is to your academic career, so choose carefully. Weigh the amount of time these activities require against your amount of weekly homework.

Class time: First-year students often misjudge the amount of time each course will require by looking only at actual class time. If a class meets only once a week for three hours, those three hours are precious. The student will be expected to do a certain amount of work outside of class time. Therefore, pay attention to time allotment. One day a week where you may not have classes is not a “day off,” but rather time to study, do research, or to do your work-study job. If you have afternoon classes, use those mornings to accomplish self-scheduled activities.

Student Employment: Students on financial aid will be expected to contribute to their tuition. Be careful of taking on more work during the school term than your studies allow.

Social, Professional and Academic Relationships

Some of the relationships you develop in college will remain with you for the rest of your life. Take every opportunity to widen your circle of friends in college.

Get to know your professors and let them know you. Take the plunge and ask a question in class.

Form study groups. Research has shown that explaining something to another person enhances your understanding.

Maintain ties with your family by sharing insights you have gained. E-mail has made parent-student communication much easier: You may write when it is convenient for you; they may answer when it is convenient for them.

Physical and Mental Health Care

Stay active! More college students than ever participate in non-competitive programs like weight training and yoga. Others, however, fearing the loss of that academic edge forego activities they would normally do. Make the time for some regular physical activity each week.

Eat well and be mindful of a balanced diet. Vegetarians should be extra cautious about maintaining balance among all the food groups. Speak to the college or university nutritionist about how to keep a balanced diet on institutional food.

Take care of yourself. When you feel poorly, consult with the university health services. There is no need to expose others to your germs, either. Remember take care of yourself the way a parent would!

If you have been admitted to college, you can do the work and earn the degree. Remember, college is not an extension of high school but a new level of intellectual inquiry. Good Luck!

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