

Getting the
MOST
out of
COLLEGE

by Alan Farber, Ph.D.



Dear Students,

As a college student, you have a lot to look forward to, and a lot of work to do. But if you've made it this far that means you have the tools you need to succeed. You just have to put those tools to use.

This booklet will help you set your priorities, learn the ropes, take care of yourself, succeed in your classes, and prepare for the future. This is an exciting time for you, so turn the page and let's get started.

Alan Farber, PhD

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PART I

Succeed Academically

Academic success involves more than attending class, completing assignments, and taking exams. To be successful in college, you need to be organized, “study smart,” and know how to get the most out of your classes. You also need to make wise academic decisions.

Succeed in the Classroom



After four years of college, you will have occupied a classroom, lab, or lecture hall for approximately 2,000 hours. Here are some recommendations to help you gain the most benefit from those 2,000 hours.

Attend every class

When you miss class, you miss lectures, assignments, discussions, and information about upcoming assignments and exams—and in some classes, your grade may be partially based on attendance.

You didn't know that your professor decided to add the Mesolithic Period to this week's test? You would have, had you attended class last week.

Sit in the front

This is critical. Arrive early on the first day of class and sit in one of the first three rows. The closer to the center, the better. That may become your permanent seat.

When you sit in the front, you're able to see what is written or displayed, hear what is spoken, and you send a positive message to your professor. Also, students in the front seldom talk to one another, text, chat, tweet, doze off, or walk in late, so there are fewer distractions.

Come prepared

If you're covering Chapter 4 on Wednesday, read Chapter 4 in advance. You will get more out of the lecture, you'll know what's going on, and you will be able to ask and answer questions. Regularly refer to the course syllabus provided by your professor on the first day of class.

Participate in classes

Unless the class is 100% lecture with no opportunity to participate, get involved by asking and answering questions. The material will be more interesting, time will pass more quickly, and your professors will get to know you.

Make presentations early

If you are assigned a classroom presentation, volunteer to present as early as possible in the semester. You'll get it out of the way, and you won't stress out watching the presentations that precede yours.

Mute your cell phone

This includes disabling the vibrating function. There is no better way to alienate a professor than to disrupt a class with a ringtone or a vibrating phone.

In class, use your laptop or tablet for classroom purposes only

If you use a device to take notes, avoid the temptation to email, text, chat, tweet, search the web, etc. Stay focused on taking notes, and participate in class discussions.



Have contact information for two students in each class

If you miss a class, you'll want to contact a classmate to get a copy of the notes and/or handouts—and learn if any new assignments were made.

"If I could tell freshmen only one thing, it's to go to every class. It seems like every time I miss a class something is covered that I need for an exam or an assignment." Lana, senior communication studies major

Be Organized



Successful college students typically have one thing in common—they are very organized. In college, no one will wake you to go to class or call you when you miss a class. And no one will remind you when assignments are due. Perhaps for the first time in your life, you are totally responsible for managing your own time and affairs.

Use an Academic Planner or Homework App

To help you stay organized, use an Academic Planner (available at the campus bookstore) or a cell phone Homework App (such as myHomework or iHomework).

Here are some items you need to record and keep updated.

- ▶ Assignment due dates and exam schedules
- ▶ Class times, professors' office hours, and extra help sessions
- ▶ Course withdrawal deadlines
- ▶ Course registration dates and deadlines
- ▶ Deadlines for payments (tuition, housing, meal plans)
- ▶ Deadlines for applications—student employment, grants, loans, scholarships, work study, internships, study abroad programs

Don't rely on your memory. Write down (or enter) everything that needs to be done today, this week, and throughout the semester.

Make To Do lists and prioritize tasks

Make a daily list of the things you need to do and rank them in order of importance.

Focus on one task at a time. When it's done, cross it off your list. At the end of the day, take the tasks that didn't get done and put them on the next day's list.



"Trust me—you can't just wing it in college. You need to create lists and plan out your days. I'd be lost without my planner and To Do lists."

Shivani, senior finance major

Know Your Professors



College teachers, or faculty, go by many titles: full professor, associate professor, assistant professor, adjunct (part-time) faculty, instructor, and lecturer. They may be young or old, novices or veterans, entertaining and inspirational, or just plain dull. These are the people who will impact the quality of your education. *Developing positive relationships with faculty is one way you can directly influence the quality of your education.*

Develop relationships with professors

Sit up front, ask questions, and get to know your professors. Most professors genuinely enjoy sharing their wisdom and knowledge with motivated students. In addition to providing academic guidance, professors may share valuable career information, and serve as references for graduate school.

Professors are often engaged in writing and research. Visit the departmental website for a link describing each professor's research and professional interests. If you share their interests, volunteer to assist with their research.

If you're struggling in a class, talk to your professor. Meet during office hours rather than trying to catch your professor before or after class. If you are enjoying the class and value the knowledge you're gaining, let your professor know.

Tip: When addressing a professor, use Dr., Mr., or Ms. When emailing professors, be polite, write in full sentences, use correct spelling and grammar, and remind the professor what class you're in.

"I've gotten to know a few of my professors pretty well just by dropping in during office hours. Sometimes we discuss the class, but mostly we just chat about whatever is happening on campus or going on in the world. I enjoy talking to someone who's older and smarter than me."

Keith, sophomore mechanical engineering major

Make Wise Academic Decisions



Academic planning will help you navigate your academic world wisely and efficiently.

Register as early as possible

Students are typically given a registration date (or range of dates) according to the number of hours they have completed. Some classes fill up quickly, so always register at the earliest possible date.

Closed out courses are not necessarily closed out. If you really need a class, see the professor and plead your case. He/she may add a spot or put you on a waiting list.

Tip: If your school offers a "College 101" or "Introduction to College" course, take it. The course will provide you with valuable information, and you'll learn a number of helpful college success tips.

Check out the courses you are considering

- ▶ Review the course description, the course requirements, and learn how grades are determined.
- ▶ Go to the college bookstore and leaf through the required textbooks.



Tip: Email the professor and ask if you can sit in on a course you're thinking about taking. Before or after class, ask a few students what they think of the course and the professor.

Spread out your most difficult courses

When you're taking a particularly difficult class, you may have to devote twice the normal study time to it. If possible, avoid taking two challenging, time-consuming classes during the same semester. Consider taking a "killer class" during the summer when there are no competing classes demanding your attention.

Schedule classes wisely

Selecting the right courses is important—but so is the way your courses are scheduled. Let's face it, many students (especially freshmen) stay up way too late. So unless you're a "morning person," avoid early morning classes.



Back-to-back classes have advantages and disadvantages. Stringing classes close together provides longer blocks of uninterrupted non-class time. But back-to-back classes make it harder to arrive early and stay late to confer with professors or fellow students. This is especially true when classes are on opposite ends of the campus. And you definitely don't want to be rushing from one class to another on exam days. So, decide which works best for you—back-to-back classes or classes that are more spread out.

Understand withdrawal policies and procedures

At some point you may want to consider withdrawing from a class. Before you decide to withdraw, consult your college catalog and/or meet with your academic advisor to get answers to the following questions:

- ▶ What are the policies of the college (or my department) regarding withdrawing from classes?
- ▶ What is the withdrawal deadline?
- ▶ Will withdrawing from a course affect my financial aid?

If you plan to withdraw from a course, don't wait until the last minute. You may not get the paperwork completed in time.

"Last year I signed up for a course that was too difficult for me. By the time I realized I was in over my head, the drop date had passed and I was stuck. I ended up barely passing the class." Sarah, junior English major

Get to know your advisor

Once you arrive on campus, you will be assigned to an academic advisor (or academic counselor). It's very important that you make regular appointments with your advisor to ensure that all of your academic plans and decisions are sound ones. Do not make academic decisions based solely on the advice of friends or family. Academic offerings and requirements constantly change, and they can be very confusing. Rely on an expert.

Meet with your advisor early and often

Schedule an appointment with your advisor as early in each semester as possible. Do not wait until registration starts—that's when advisors are the busiest.

Prior to your appointment, read the academic requirements in your college catalog. Review the general education requirements and the requirements for your major/minor. On the day of your appointment, arrive on time, bring your online degree audit, and be ready with questions to clarify and confirm what you've read in the catalog.

Here are some questions you may want to ask.



- ▶ How do I access my “degree audit?”
A degree audit is typically an online analysis that makes it possible for you to keep track of your academic progress and unfulfilled requirements. At many schools it is called DARS (Degree Audit Reporting System) or CAPP (Curriculum, Advising, and Program Planning).
- ▶ What is a reasonable course load?
- ▶ I've reviewed the required general education (gen. ed.) courses and the courses required for my major. When should I be taking these courses?
- ▶ What are the admission requirements for the major I've chosen?
- ▶ I'm not particularly strong in the area of _____. Is there a particularly difficult course in that subject that I should take during the summer when I have more time to devote to it?
- ▶ I'm thinking of taking courses at a two-year college near my home this summer. Will these courses transfer to this college?
- ▶ Which courses can I take pass-fail? How many of these can I take?
- ▶ When do I need to register for next semester's courses? What's the best way to ensure that I get into my classes?

Keep a written record of everything you discuss with your academic advisor. If you are confused or uncertain about anything, schedule a return visit.

Choose a Major



At a four-year college or university, you typically have until your sophomore year to declare your major.

Majors

An academic major is an in-depth study of one discipline or subject. A typical major is comprised of about eighteen 3-hour required courses. Thus, you may take 50 - 60 hours in your major, and another 60 - 70 hours of general education and elective coursework.

Major requirements

Colleges have varying requirements regarding admission to majors. Make sure you understand your school's policies. Here are three possibilities.

Open Admission – Any student can declare these majors at any time.

Minimum Admission – Certain courses and/or a certain number of credits must be completed before students can declare these majors. The department may also require minimum grades in prerequisite courses or a minimum overall GPA. While there may be an application form and an application deadline, a student who meets the stated requirements will be admitted to the major.

Competitive Admission – The completion of prerequisites does not guarantee admission to these majors (also called “impacted majors”). Admission is generally dependent upon grades, but may also be based on test scores, portfolios, auditions, interviews, and/or letters of recommendation.

More about majors

Colleges offer majors within departments such as Education, Business Administration, Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Health and Human Services. An Interdisciplinary Major is comprised of courses from several different programs of study. The number of majors offered by a college varies according to enrollment.

Although majors vary widely, one way of categorizing them is in terms of whether or not they are intended to prepare you for a specific career. Career-oriented majors include Architecture, Mechanical Engineering, Education, Accounting, Nursing, Information Technology, and Social Work, to name but a few. Although you have other career options upon graduation, you will most likely pursue a job directly related to your career-oriented major.

A great many college majors are not intended to prepare you for a specific career. These majors are often categorized as Life or Physical Sciences (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Physics), Social or Behavioral Sciences (e.g., Political Science, Psychology, Sociology), or Humanities (e.g., English, Foreign Language, History). These majors provide students with a well-rounded education, and many of the skills required to pursue a wide variety of careers. These majors also provide excellent preparation for graduate school.

Many occupations can be pursued directly from college. Others (including law, college teaching, and many social service and health-related jobs) require post-baccalaureate study (i.e., two or more years of graduate or professional school). Some college graduates transition into graduate study immediately upon completing their bachelor's degree. Others work for a number of years prior to entering graduate school.

Minors

You must declare a major, but minors (one or more) are optional. A minor typically consists of 6-8 courses (or 18-24 hours) in a program outside your major. The purpose of a minor is to provide supplementary knowledge and credentials.



It is ideal if your minor coursework complements your major by providing additional career-related skills and know-how. Because there can be great value in being bilingual, a foreign language minor is a popular and practical option. Likewise, a minor in English, Business, Communication Studies, or Computer Science provides valuable work-related skills. You should, however, consider a minor in any topic that interests you.

Professional advice

If you have a toothache, you go to the dentist. If you need legal advice, you see a lawyer. If you are uncertain about your college major or your career plans, meet with a college career counselor. *With thousands of careers available, getting professional advice is the smart thing to do.*

Study Smart



It's time to hit the books. College courses require a great deal of notetaking, reading, and research. If your school offers classes or workshops on study skills or test taking, enroll in them.

As a general rule, 2 to 3 hours of studying and assignment completion will be required for every hour of enrolled coursework. So if you're taking 15 hours, plan to work 30 to 45 hours per week outside the classroom.

Study in a quiet place

Locate a quiet, well-lit space where all you can do is study. Avoid friends, TV, and music—and mute your cell phone. By eliminating all distractions, you force yourself to do one thing only—study. Locate a quiet section of the library, a residence hall study lounge, or an unoccupied classroom. Consider off-campus locations such as bookstores, public libraries, or coffee shops.

Complete all assignments early

When you complete your assignments several days prior to the due date, you have time for editing and improvements. And if you're uncertain whether you did an assignment correctly, you have time to discuss it with your professor and make revisions.

Study according to your body clock

Are you a morning person or night person? You want to study during your body's most alert state.

Study the “worst first”

Students naturally avoid that which they find unpleasant, so they often study their least favorite topic last (if at all). This is a mistake. The end of a study session is when you are the most fatigued. If you wait until the last minute, you also may run out of study time. So study your least favorite topic when you are the most alert and unrushed—at the beginning of your study session.

Study between classes

Time is your most precious commodity. Make use of the time you have between classes to study, review material, meet with instructors, or do research. This will free up evening and weekend time.

Space your studying

A good rule is 30 to 45 minutes of studying followed by a 5 to 10 minute break (e.g., stretch, get a snack, take a short walk). During your study sessions, don't do anything but study. If you can stay focused, you'll be able to get a great deal accomplished.



Review old tests

Check on the availability of old tests at the library or from students who previously took the course. Although you can't assume the items will be identical, you will gain insight into the manner in which questions are asked and the subject matter the professor considers to be the most important.

Learn to use Microsoft Word

MS Word is the standard in word processing. Familiarity with Word's many "bells and whistles," short cuts, and special features will save you countless hours over the course of your college career. Review the free online MS Word tutorial, or view YouTube tutorials.

Back-up computer files and save often

Every student's nightmare is lost or corrupted assignments, papers, and projects. Computers crash, get stolen, or lost. Save your files on a free cloud system like Google Drive, Media File, or Dropbox, or purchase an online backup system like Carbonite or iDrive. External hard drives and USB sticks are fine, but they too can get lost or corrupted. At the very least—email all documents to yourself as attachments so they exist in the cloud.



"One of the smartest things I did was to start hanging out with people who actually care about their grades. We don't just hang out together—we study and hang out together." Christie, sophomore marketing major

PART II

The College Experience

Every student has a different college experience. You may be attending a university far from home, or living at home and commuting. Situations vary, but most college students have a great deal in common. Here you will learn what you can do to make the most of *your* college experience.

College Living



Most first-year college students live in a residence hall on campus, or they live at home and commute.

Living in a Residence Hall

Colleges and universities call your on-campus home a residence hall. But for the sake of simplicity, let's stick with the term most students use and call it a dorm. Living in a dorm is very much a "rite of passage" for new college students. Your adjustment to dorm living will have a major impact on your overall adjustment to college life.

Roommates

The first and most challenging transition from living at home is sharing a dorm room with a friend from home, or more typically, a total stranger. Roommates should make every reasonable effort to get along. That means making compromises and setting ground rules from the very start. Everything—visiting hours, bed times, noise levels, chores—should be addressed in order to prevent conflict between you and your roommate.

It's great if you're tight with your roommate, but make a point of meeting as many students as possible on your floor or complex. Years after you've graduated from college, many of your most enduring memories will be of dorm life and the friendships you developed there.

Resident Assistants (RAs)

RAs are upper level students who live among dorm residents. Their job is to enforce the rules, provide assistance, and generally ensure that everything operates smoothly on their floor. They are full-time students themselves, usually working as RAs to help finance their education.

RAs are experienced students who know the ropes on campus. They possess useful information about courses and professors, and they can make referrals to appropriate offices and campus services. RAs can also provide support and guidance when the going gets tough.

Dorm rules

Be sure to read and abide by the dorm rules. If your RA doesn't provide a written copy of the rules, ask to see one. It will spell out exactly what you can have in your room, what you can do, and when you can do it. If you break a rule, claiming you "didn't know" won't cut it during a disciplinary hearing.

Dorm life

Most college dorms offer a wide range of activities and services. These include dining and cooking facilities, laundry, TV rooms, study lounges, work-out facilities, weekend entertainment, and more. Take full advantage of all your dorm has to offer.



Tip: For many students, a big part of adjusting to dorm life is overcoming homesickness and unfamiliar surroundings. Decorate your dorm room to make it seem more like a room at home.

Living at Home

If you live at home and commute, you will still need to make lifestyle adjustments. For example, your schedule will probably be more varied than it has been in the past, which means that you will be coming and going at odd hours.

It's important for students who commute to get involved in campus activities so they feel like they're a part of the college. You'll get much more out of your college experience if you study on campus, participate in activities, and go out of your way to make new friends.

Student Activities and Organizations



One of the most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of college is the opportunity to get involved in student activities and organizations. There's no better way to meet new people who share your interests and to have some fun. Check your college's website for a list of student organizations.

Here are some examples of the activities and organizations typically found on college campuses.

Community Service – Through these organizations, students contribute their time and energy to serve the needs of the neighboring community.

Honor Societies – Superior scholarship and/or leadership are recognized and encouraged through these associations.

International – Comprised of students of all nationalities, international clubs are available for students who have an interest in other cultures.

Political – Political groups are generally associated with a political party or cause (e.g., environmental action, election campaigning, world hunger).

Professional – These organizations are directly related to a major or career. Examples include Pre-Law, Pre-Dentistry, and Accounting Societies.

Social – Fraternities, sororities, and other social organizations sponsor and organize concerts, speakers, mixers, and other social activities.

Special Interest – These groups cover a wide range of topics: Campus Spirit Club, Chess Club, Entrepreneurship Club, to name a few.

Sports / Recreation – A wide variety of sports are generally offered: soccer, Tae Kwon Do, lacrosse, softball, basketball, rugby, etc.

Student Government – Here you have the chance to work with faculty and administrators to impact the quality of education and campus life.

"The leadership skills I developed by being active in college organizations are invaluable. Now I feel like I can manage people, organize events, and solve problems in pretty much any work situation." Carissa, sociology graduate

Greek Life



If your college has social fraternities and sororities, you may want to consider “going Greek.” There are approximately 70 national fraternities and 30 national sororities. There are also numerous national and local Greek organizations for various ethnic, cultural, and religious groups. You will find a list on your school’s website.

The primary reason students go Greek is for a sense of belonging. Students should, therefore, select a sorority or fraternity the same way they would choose their friends. It needs to be a good fit. Some fraternities and sororities have residential houses on or near campus. Members often live in the houses; however, many members live in dorms or off-campus.

About 10% of the undergraduate students in the U.S. join sororities or fraternities. Some colleges have no Greek organizations, whereas others have a large and active Greek presence on campus. Schools typically have a formal recruitment process called “rush.” Any student can rush, but not every student can “pledge,” since membership is by invitation only.

All Greek organizations have GPA requirements, and many require that members perform community service. Since your primary concern should be academic success, ask about the average GPA for each fraternity or sorority you are considering. Those who have higher GPAs undoubtedly take their studies seriously and place considerable emphasis on academics.

As with all significant life decisions, you should gain as much information as possible prior to committing to a fraternity or sorority. Learn about Greek life on your campus by talking to fellow students, participating in the rush process, meeting as many fraternity and sorority members as possible, and asking yourself the following questions:

- ▶ Are these the kind of people I typically like being around?
- ▶ Are the activities they participate in the kind I will enjoy?
- ▶ If there’s a house, is it an environment I will be comfortable in?
- ▶ Do I have the time and money to be a member?
- ▶ Most importantly, will membership help or hinder my social, academic, and career pursuits?

Campus Services



“When I started here I didn’t know what was available to me besides the library and rec center. Once I made the effort, I found out that there are all kinds of services—and now I use almost all of them.” Candice, junior biology major

Every college offers dozens of valuable services. They are voluntary, so it is up to you to contact or visit them. Check your college’s website for a full list of student services. Here are some examples.

Academic Advising – Advisors are available to assist students with program planning, course selection, and requirements for graduation.

Career Services – Career counselors provide assistance with selecting a major, planning for the future, and preparing for graduate school. They also help students obtain internships and part-time or full-time jobs.

Computer Lab / Information Technology Help Desk – They offer assistance with online, software, and hardware problems and concerns.

Counseling Center – Helping professionals are available to address any personal concern you may have. The information you share will be kept in strict confidence.

Disability Services – Colleges provide assistance, support, and services for students with learning or physical disabilities.

Financial Aid / Financial Services – The Financial Aid office provides financial assistance in the form of scholarships, grants, loans, and on-campus jobs. Financial Services (Bursar’s office) does the billing and collection of tuition, fees, and other university charges.

Health Services – Doctors, nurses, nutritionists, and other health personnel are available for your health-related questions and concerns.

Learning Centers – These centers provide academic support programs to promote student achievement. Their staff assist students with class assignments, notetaking, textbook reading, and more. They conduct workshops on study skills and test preparation. Many also offer tutoring.

Libraries – College libraries have it all—books, journals, reference materials, government documents, online databases, and much, much more. Libraries are good places to study, and your school’s reference librarians are experts at locating hard-to-find resources and materials.

Recreation Center / Intramural Office – Be healthy, get in shape, meet people, and have fun. Join an intramural team, register for a yoga class, go swimming, or lift weights.

Registration and Records – They provide and maintain student records. See them about changing your address or contact information, requesting a transcript, and transferring credit. They may also be able to help with course registration, schedule changes, and auditing a course.

Religious Organizations or Campus Ministry – These organizations provide religious and spiritual support, social activities, and opportunities for community service.

Service Learning – Many schools have a program dedicated to integrating community service with course instruction. Volunteer opportunities may include cleaning/protecting the environment, assisting the elderly or homeless, tutoring, staffing crisis lines, and more. *Service should be a part of every student’s college experience.*



Student Services / Affairs – Many of the offices and departments listed here fall under the umbrella of Student Services or Student Affairs. If you have a concern or question and aren’t sure who to ask or where to go, this is a good place to start.

Study Abroad – Sometimes called International or Global Education, this program helps arrange study abroad opportunities. Gather information early in your college career and coordinate all Study Abroad plans with your academic advisor.

Money and Finances



“You don’t need a lot of money in college to have a great time. You just need to budget your money and be smart.” Maria, junior art major

Attending college is expensive. The average student graduates with over \$20,000 in education debt. Many students also run up outrageous credit card bills on non-educational spending. Your goal should be to avoid incurring unreasonable debt by living frugally during your college years.

Here are some tips.

Banking – Get a free checking account that does not incur ATM fees, and withdraw cash in small increments. Using cash is a good idea because you’ll invariably spend less when using cash vs. a card. *Do not keep large sums of money in your room, wallet, or purse.*

Budget – Establish a weekly budget and stick to it. You’re much more likely to avoid wasteful spending when you track every purchase. Create an Excel or Google Sheets spreadsheet. Or use a cell phone budget (or “expense tracking”) app such as Mint, Moneyfy, Money Lover, or Goodbudget. Or just keep a ledger in a notebook. This will encourage you to carefully evaluate your spending habits.

Be especially cautious of your spending when you go out with friends. Whether you’re going to a bar, the movies, or out to dinner, it’s important to stick to your budget, and not get caught up in the moment.

If your daily routine involves buying a \$1.00 bottle of water and a \$2.00 cup of coffee, that’s \$240 per semester for items available for free in your meal plan. That’s almost \$2,000 during your college career.

Credit cards – While it’s okay to have a credit card for emergencies, especially when traveling, you should limit its use. If you do make occasional credit card purchases, always pay off the monthly balance in full, and on time.

Debit cards /Cash cards – Use a debit (check) card or your school’s cash card. Many schools partner with local banks and offer an all-purpose card that serves as a student ID, a library card, ATM/debit card, meal plan card, and a swipe card for residence hall entry. This is a good deal if there are no minimum balances, no monthly maintenance fees, and no ATM fees.

“Our college cash card is convenient because you can charge pretty much anything, but I think students sometimes forget that it’s real money they’re spending.” David, senior accounting major

Entertainment – Before shelling out \$15 or more for a movie ticket and a bag of popcorn, check out free campus events. Most colleges offer free or inexpensive sporting events, concerts, films, café entertainment, theater productions, comedy shows, and speaking engagements. College and local libraries also have free movie rentals.

Financial Aid – There’s a great deal of financial aid available; however, the process of obtaining financial aid can be confusing. If you need help paying for college, go to your college’s Financial Aid office and ask for assistance.

Meals – Of course there will be times when you and your friends will want to eat out or order a pizza. But be careful about dropping a lot of money on extra meals and snacks all the time. *Use your meal plan.*

Textbooks – College textbooks are very expensive. Get a list of required books as early as possible, and consider buying used books from fellow students, online, or at the college bookstore. Check on the availability of eBooks and textbook rentals at your college bookstore, and know the bookstore’s buy-back dates so you can sell your books at the end of the semester.



Transportation – Unless absolutely necessary, don’t take a car to college. There are maintenance, insurance, parking, and gas costs, and you’ll become everybody’s favorite chauffeur and designated driver. It’s not worth the cost or hassle, especially since most students walk, bike, or take buses to get around.

Rules and Regulations



When you enroll at a college, you agree to abide by the institution's rules and regulations.

Colleges have rules regarding academic integrity. These rules cover cheating, plagiarism, and false citations in papers and essays. Additional policies exist regarding sexual harassment and assault, the distribution of written materials, the sale of products on campus, and more.



Students who violate campus policies may be referred to the school's Judicial Affairs office for disciplinary action. A judicial board comprised of students, faculty, and staff meets periodically to hear cases of alleged misconduct. They recommend sanctions for students found in violation of campus policies.

Most colleges have a zero tolerance policy on illegal drug use. Get caught and you will face sanctions which could include warnings, fines, expulsion from your dorm, or expulsion from the school. Get caught selling and the campus or community police will likely be called in.

Alcohol policies are put in writing and are clear cut. Because of concerns regarding excessive and underage drinking, most colleges work hard to limit the misuse of alcohol on their campuses. In addition to college rules, communities in or near college towns often rigorously enforce laws regarding alcohol use. Perhaps the most common off-campus violations involve public intoxication and displaying open alcohol containers. Students walking from a bar, Greek house, or apartment are often stopped by police for appearing drunk or carrying open containers. The citation may be compounded for underage students.

Some students mistakenly believe that they are not subject to city, state, or federal laws when violations occur on campus. Not true. The law's the law. If you break the law on campus, you may wind up sharing a city or county jail cell with other lawbreakers. Many students have experienced this, and find it to be one of the most unpleasant experiences of their lives.

PART III

Stay Healthy and Safe

Eat well, exercise regularly, get enough sleep, and avoid dangerous and self-injurious behaviors. You undoubtedly know all this—it's just a matter of doing it. College success requires taking care of mind, body, and spirit.

Be Healthy



Eat sensibly and keep fit

Eat a balanced diet that includes lots of fruits and vegetables. Drink plenty of water, avoid caffeine and nicotine, and develop an exercise regimen you enjoy.

Get enough sleep

For many students, fatigue (and the inevitable illness that accompanies it) is directly responsible for failure or poor performance in college. You simply will not be able to concentrate in class, complete assignments, memorize facts, and perform at your best if you are severely sleep deprived.

Health tips

- ▶ Keep a list of any medications or prescription drugs you are taking. Have information on your health insurance readily available.
- ▶ Go to the Health Center if you have questions about immunizations. Ask about flu shots and vaccinations for hepatitis B and meningitis.
- ▶ The benefits of sexual abstinence are obvious. Pregnancy and STDs are life changing. If you have concerns, visit the Health Center.
- ▶ Alcohol and drugs? If you're in college, you already know the dangers. Plenty of college students abstain. Ask yourself if alcohol or drugs are contributing to your well-being.

Manage Stress



College stress comes at you fast: new surroundings, new people, new demands, and new expectations. Fitting in, finding direction, and making sense of it all can be stressful.

What to do when you're feeling stressed out

When you're stressed, talk to friends and family members. Confide in those you trust. You can also drop in or make an appointment at the Counseling Center. Everything you discuss will be held in strict confidence.

Meet with your academic advisor or professor to discuss academic concerns. Visit the Health Center for medical concerns, and talk to your RA with any dorm-related issues. To address spiritual concerns, speak with a pastor, minister, priest, or rabbi. *There's no need to go it alone.*

Make changes if you're feeling overwhelmed

If you're feeling overwhelmed, or think that you may have taken on too much, make a list of everything going on in your life and determine what can be modified, delayed, or dropped.

Think about your time in terms of slices of a pie. How much time are you devoting to class, homework, student organizations, eating, sleeping, and socializing? A portion of that pie should be devoted to relaxing and rejuvenating. If you don't have time for rest and relaxation, you won't have the energy and stamina needed to perform well in your classes.

Set priorities

Do challenging tasks first. Reward yourself after you've completed each task—stroll the campus, work out at the rec center, text or call a friend. Then get back to your To Do list.

Identify aspects of your life or lifestyle that are adding to your stress. Are you failing to care for your mind, body, and spirit? Is there disparity between your current behavior and your personal beliefs and values? Stress occurs when the answers to these questions are "Yes."

Learn to relax

Check with your college's Counseling, Health, and Recreation Centers about relaxation training, yoga, Pilates, tai chi, or meditation classes.

Dealing with homesickness

Living away from home presents special challenges. You may feel like a "small fish in a big pond," and perhaps you're now questioning your decision to attend college away from home. This is common. Major life changes take time and patience. Do what you need to do to acclimate to your new surroundings and lifestyle, and give yourself some time. Place a priority on keeping up with your classes, getting involved with campus activities, and making new friends.

It's good to keep in touch with family and high school friends. But don't overdo it. Every hour you devote to phoning, texting, and visiting family and old friends, you're missing out on the new relationships that will shape your college experience. Strike a balance between old and new relationships.

Get involved

If you live on campus, don't go home the first few weekends in the fall. Colleges typically offer a variety of programs and activities geared specifically to introduce new students to campus. This is the time to meet new people, become acquainted with the campus, and learn about the various campus activities and student organizations.

What **not** to do when you're feeling stressed out

Don't fall behind academically. It's very important that you keep on top of your coursework. If you're struggling with a course, get extra help. Join a study group, seek tutoring, or see your professor during office hours. If absolutely necessary, withdraw from the class prior to the course withdrawal deadline.

Don't use drugs or alcohol to "self-medicate," improve your mood, or make you less inhibited in social situations. They will only make your problems worse. It's important to find *healthy* solutions to alleviate stress.

"I heard somewhere that you can't be anxious and relaxed at the same time. My girlfriend does yoga, and I work out at the rec center almost every day."

Miguel, sophomore math major

Be Safe



College is a microcosm of the real world. Crime occurs in dorms and on college campuses just as it does everywhere else. Studies reveal that 80% of campus crime is student against student—and that alcohol is involved in 90% of college crime. In your dorm and throughout campus, you need to exercise the same caution you would anywhere else.

In your dorm

Always lock your door when you are out of the room. Don't lend your key or entry card to anyone and don't unlock or prop your door open, even if you're leaving for just a short time. Lock your windows, especially if you have a first floor room, and never leave valuables in an unlocked room.

On and near campus

When you arrive at college, take a daytime walk and explore the campus and nearby neighborhood. Note the locations of emergency phones and the Campus Security office. Always travel in groups at night and avoid poorly lit areas. If you're concerned about returning alone to your room at night, ask trusted friends to accompany you, contact your college's escort service (if available), or call for a taxi.

Tip: Program your cell phone with the Campus Security number and three ICE numbers—people you want to be contacted In Case of Emergency.

At parties and gatherings

Be smart in social situations. Attend parties and gatherings with trusted friends, avoid open containers/cups, and never get in a car with a driver who is under the influence.

Campus police and public safety

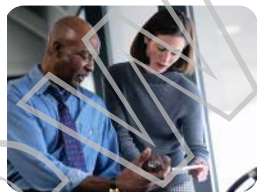
Uniformed and plainclothes officers serve and protect your college 24/7. They typically have the same training and meet the same professional standards as city or county police officers. Don't hesitate to contact them with any concern regarding your safety.

PART IV

Prepare for the Future

One of the primary reasons you attend college is to have a rewarding career and comfortable lifestyle in the future. Getting some “real world” work experience is a great way to benefit today while preparing for your future.

Working While in College



If possible, don't work during your freshman year. You'll be busy studying and adjusting to college life. But if you must earn money, you have several options: on-campus jobs, off-campus jobs, internships.

On-campus employment

One advantage of on-campus employment is convenience. Hours are flexible and jobs are available all over campus. Students typically work between 5-15 hours per week.

Depending on your parents' income level, you may qualify for a work-study position. Check with the Financial Aid office regarding your eligibility.

Tip: Apply early and apply everywhere—campus jobs are often hard to come by. Some schools have a one-stop application process for all jobs, typically through the Financial Aid office. Others require that you apply department by department.

Off-campus employment

Off-campus jobs are most often in the service sector at restaurants, retail stores, business offices, or park districts. Getting to and from the job may be a hassle and the hours may not be as flexible as on-campus jobs. The pay, however, may be higher.

Internships

Internships are available in the summer and during the school year. Students typically do not pursue internships until their sophomore year. Below are the answers to some common questions about internships.

I keep hearing that I should get an internship. What's the deal?

An internship is a part-time or full-time position offered exclusively to college students. It is the ideal way to test drive a tentative career and derive real-world work experience.

Businesses and organizations are looking for bright, motivated individuals to help them complete time-limited projects. Organizations also provide internships as a means of identifying talented students prior to college graduation. Not all internships are created equal, however. Some organizations use internships as a way to get mundane tasks completed. Avoid these. Look for organizations that have a well-developed internship program, and for organizations that provide training, supervision, and challenging work.

Are paid internships more valuable than paid jobs or unpaid internships?

No. The value of an internship lies in the responsibilities you are given, the quality of the work you do, and the skills you derive from the experience. It's all about the quality of the experience, not whether it's called a job, internship, or volunteer experience.

Can I get academic credit for an internship?

Maybe. Check with your academic department to determine if they offer an internship course and/or grant academic credit.

How can I get an internship?

Career Services may conduct an Internship Fair and post internships on their online job site. Career counselors can help you create a resume, instruct you on how to interview, show you where internships are posted, and offer suggestions for locating additional summer opportunities. But no one will get an internship for you—it's entirely up to you.

When should I apply?

Talk to a counselor at Career Services. Some organizations and industries recruit in the fall; others wait until the spring. Since some organizations take the first good candidate who comes along, apply as early as possible.



Develop Work-Related Skills



In a competitive job market, it is important that you gain and demonstrate out-of-classroom skills to complement your college education.

Get involved in community service

Nothing says more about the content of your character than active involvement in community service. Some colleges have community service programs, and many student organizations offer their time and energy to local causes and philanthropies. Select activities that speak to your heart.

Strengthen communication skills

When recruiters are surveyed about the qualities they seek in graduating college students, the results are always the same: communication skills top the list. We live in an information age, and it is crucial to demonstrate your ability to convey verbal and written information effectively. Your college years are the ideal time to hone your writing, listening, and public speaking skills.



Develop leadership skills

As you become increasingly involved in on- and off-campus activities, it is important to take the next step—assume leadership roles. Recruiters will be impressed, and you'll gain confidence in your ability to organize events, delegate tasks, and supervise others.

Develop foreign language skills and cultural competence

An increasing number of organizations and industries are becoming internationalized through expansion into new worldwide marketplaces. We live in an increasingly diverse society, and you are at a distinct advantage when you speak another language and/or can demonstrate your knowledge of and sensitivity to diverse people, cultures, and values.

How to Spend Your Summer



You will likely have at least three summers prior to graduation. Plan ahead and make the most of your summers.

Take one or more summer courses

It may be wise to take a particularly difficult course over the summer. If you plan to enroll in a course at another college, meet with your academic advisor well in advance to ensure that the credits will transfer.

Travel/Study abroad

If you're interested in overseas study, visit your school's Study Abroad office to determine if there is a summer program that fits your schedule, major, career interests, and budget.

Volunteer/Participate in community service

Community service activities look good on resumes and graduate school applications, and they are likely to provide you with a great sense of personal satisfaction and enjoyment.

Get a job or an internship

If you work over the summer, find a position that relates to your field of study if at all possible.

Closing Words

Your college years are among the most formative and challenging years of your life. College offers many opportunities for personal, intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth. It is a period of self-discovery, and a time for taking charge of your life. You will assume new responsibilities and overcome new obstacles. And you will develop lifelong friendships and many, many fond memories. Enjoy the journey.

Getting the
MOST
Out of
COLLEGE

by Alan Farber, Ph.D.

A blueprint for
achieving personal and
academic success



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