

College
TRANSFER
STUDENT

A Guide for Success

by Alan Farber, Ph.D.



Dear Student,

Congratulations on making the decision to further your education and take on a new challenge! You are embarking on an adventure that is sure to benefit your future.

Being a transfer student means new surroundings, new classmates, new responsibilities, and new requirements. It's exciting—and perhaps a little stressful. But it's nothing you can't handle if you've gotten this far.

This book will help you learn the ropes, set your priorities, and be successful at your new college. This is an exciting time for you...so turn the page and let's get started!

Alan Farber, PhD

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

John F. Kennedy

College Transfer Student

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PART I

The Transfer Experience

As the “new kids on the block,” transfer students face unique challenges. The following tips will help ensure that you make a successful adjustment to your new college.

Participate in transfer student programs

Take full advantage of the services and resources specifically designed for transfer students, including Transfer Orientation programs, “University 101” courses, residence hall communities for transfer students, and Second Year Experience programs for sophomores.

Get to know the campus

Take the time to thoroughly familiarize yourself with your new surroundings. Drop by or make an appointment at any department or office that provides a service you might use. Take a walking tour of the campus and stroll through as many buildings as possible. You may run across a study area, computer lab, theater, gallery, café, workout facility, or other amenity that you otherwise would never have known about.

When you are out and about on campus, strike up conversations, ask for directions and advice, and generally make yourself at home. This is as much your school as anybody’s.

Take advantage of new opportunities

Although colleges can be quite different in terms of academic requirements, physical surroundings, and cultural climate, your adjustment will primarily be a function of your willingness to make the most of every resource and opportunity your new college has to offer.

Your goal is to take advantage of the campus experience by fully immersing yourself in as many residence hall, departmental, and campus activities as possible. Once you’ve gotten the lay of the land, identify activities and organizations of interest and plunge in.

Make your new college your home

If you are living on campus and this is your first time away from home, it's only natural for you to miss your family, friends, and the comforts of home. Life is a series of transitions and this is a major one.

Of course you will want to stay in touch with family and friends via phone, texts, social networking, email, and visits home. Most established students, however, suggest that new students avoid the temptation to text or call home too often, or to go home every weekend. Staying on campus over the weekends speeds up the transition process. It also gives you the opportunity to socialize, study, and find out what else your college has to offer.

Learn the rules and regulations

Enrollment at a new college requires learning a new set of policies, rules, and procedures regarding pretty much everything—classes, course registration, meal plans, parking, wireless and email access, etc.

Confusing? Yes. Rocket science? No. You just need to spend some time gathering information and learning the ropes. If you thoroughly familiarize yourself with your new school's regulations and deadlines, you will be at a distinct advantage. Many students make poor decisions or miss out on valuable opportunities because they don't take the time to go through their college's website and review their school's academic policies.

Expect courses to be tougher

Whether it's because your new college is more academically rigorous, or because you're enrolled in upper division courses, you likely now have more reading, more challenging assignments, and tougher exams. But major and upper division courses should be tough. If you ask alumni which classes they derived the most benefit from, they'll generally report that they were the ones in which the professors were the most demanding.

While the courses may be tougher, most students find their grades improve during their junior and senior years. This is because students generally find the topics in upper level courses more interesting, and smaller classes make for a more dynamic and personalized learning environment.



Work hard

As a transfer student, you most likely understand the importance of good grades and career preparation. The consequences of mediocrity or failure are also likely to be more real now than they were when you started college.



Many employers, and all graduate and professional schools, will consider your GPA in the hiring or admission process. Your upper division and major course grades are particularly important because they speak to your performance in coursework directly relevant to your career goals. So, buckle down and embrace the challenge to excel. Get your priorities in order, improve your study habits, and do what it takes to succeed.

Expect to be busy

In addition to taking classes and studying, upperclass students often work at a part-time job, participate in one or more student organizations, conduct research, and/or volunteer in the community. Upperclass students are often very busy.

You can and should be involved in a variety of activities, but academics and career preparation must be your top priorities. Successful students generally have one thing in common—they *have learned how to manage their time effectively*.

Be prepared to make decisions quickly

First-year students have plenty of time to acclimate to campus, select a major, weigh their career options, apply for campus jobs and summer internships, join clubs, and plan to study abroad. As a transfer student, you simply don't have the same luxury of time.

In order for you to get the most out of your college experience and graduate in a reasonable amount of time, you need to be able to make decisions quickly. If you follow the recommendations in this booklet, thoroughly gather information, and seek the guidance you need, you will be prepared to make the best choices for you, and for your future.

PART II

Get Involved

To achieve success in your new environment, get involved in student activities and organizations, meet new people, and take full advantage of the services your new college has to offer.

Reach Out to People



Your relationships with students, faculty, and staff are critical to your adjustment to college life. Make a special effort to meet people on campus.

Participate in activities for transfer students

If your school has a Transfer Student office, check their website, visit their office, and read their text and email messages to see what they have planned for you. Attend all events that are specifically designed to help transfer students acclimate to campus.

Live on campus

Living on campus is a sure-fire way to meet fellow students and get involved in campus life. Residence halls provide more than dorm rooms; they are “living and learning communities” that provide social activities, athletics, educational programs, entertainment, and much more.

Befriend your Resident Assistant

If you live in a residence hall, get to know your resident assistant. RAs enforce the rules, provide assistance, and work to see that everything runs smoothly on their floor. They know their way around campus and can provide useful information about courses, professors, and campus life. They’re also there for support when the going gets tough.

Participate in study groups

Check to see if your classes offer study groups. If not, make a classroom announcement that you're organizing a study group for anyone who's interested. Study groups are a great way to learn course material while meeting classmates.

Get an on-campus job

You may be eligible for work study, based on your family's income. If you're not eligible, there are still likely to be many student employment positions available. Colleges typically have students working in libraries, recreation centers, bookstores, dining halls, computer labs, and elsewhere on campus. Working on campus is a great way to meet people while earning some cash.

Participate in alumni programs

Visit your college's alumni office and ask what they offer current students. They may have an Alumni-Student Mentoring Program that pairs students with alumni.

Become a campus guide or ambassador

With the training you'll receive to become a campus guide or ambassador, you'll learn almost everything about your new school—and prospective employers and graduate schools love seeing public speaking experience.

Talk to people in the know

Your college employs hundreds of people in an array of positions—not just professors, but administrators and staff members. Never hesitate to seek out university personnel for guidance, support, and assistance.



Participate in student organizations

Explore and get involved in any organization that looks interesting. The following section provides a list of the kinds of organizations available on most college campuses.

Get Involved in Student Activities



The best way to meet people and feel like you belong at your new college is to participate in student organizations. This is especially true if you live off-campus.

Whether your interest is yoga, reggae music, or chess, student organizations are a great way to get involved in activities you enjoy. Future employers and graduate schools also look favorably upon students who actively participate and assume leadership roles in organizations.

Seek out organizations that seem interesting, regularly engage in activities, and take their topic or cause seriously. It's the best way to meet new people who share your interests.

Below are some examples of the activities and organizations typically found on college campuses. Check your college's website for a list of the organizations on your campus.

"It's really important to be part of a group or involved in an activity. Being in the Bike Club has been my most rewarding college experience."

John, senior business major

Community Service

Through community service organizations, students contribute their time and energy to serve the needs of the neighboring community.

Honor Societies

These associations recognize and encourage superior scholarship and leadership. Members of Mortar Board, Phi Beta Kappa, and other such organizations make important career contacts. Members often continue to participate in these organizations long after their college years.

Political Groups

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

Professional Organizations

These organizations are directly related to your major or career. Examples include Pre-Law, Pre-Dentistry, ROTC, Student Engineering Council, and Accounting Society.

Religious/Spiritual Organizations

Campus religious organizations often sponsor events, films, and fairs to acquaint students with their religion's customs and teaching. They also provide social activities and community service opportunities.

Social Groups

Fraternities, sororities, and other organizations sponsor and organize concerts, speaker series, mixers, and other social activities.



Special Interest Groups

These organizations cover a wide range of topics. Examples include Chess Club, Entrepreneur's Club, and Campus Spirit Club.

Sports and Recreation

Almost any sport may be offered: softball, volleyball, yoga, rock climbing, and more. Many colleges also have Outdoor Adventure programs that arrange ski trips, camping excursions, canoeing, and more.

Student Government

Here students have the opportunity to work with faculty and administrators to impact the quality of education and campus life.

"One of the best things I did in college was joining clubs. I always felt like I was accomplishing something important—or just having a few laughs. And there was always pizza." Katie, senior English major

Use Campus Services



Every college offers dozens of valuable services. They are voluntary, so it is up to you to visit them.

Check your college's website for a full list of student services. Here are some of the most common services.

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.

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

If you have a physical or learning disability, contact the disability services office. They will help you get the assistance and accommodations you need.

Financial Aid/Financial Services

The Financial Aid office provides funds in the form of scholarships, grants, loans, and on-campus jobs. The Bursar does the billing and collection of tuition, fees, and other college charges.

"When I started here, I didn't know what was available besides the library and rec center. Once I made the effort, I found that there are all kinds of services—now I use almost all of them." Sophia, junior biology major

Health Services

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



Information Technology Help Desk

Assistance is provided for online, software, and hardware concerns.

Learning/Writing Centers

These centers provide academic support programs, and they conduct workshops on study skills and test preparation. They also assist students with writing assignments, notetaking, and more.

Library

College libraries have it all (books, journals, newspapers, magazines, reference materials, online databases). Libraries can be great places to study. Take advantage of your school's reference librarians—they're experts at locating hard-to-find resources and materials.

Parent and Alumni Services

Many colleges encourage students to network with alumni and/or the parents of current students. Alumni and parents working in your field of interest can provide valuable advice and information regarding your major and career.

Peer Mentoring

To provide new students with information, guidance, and support, many schools have programs that match new students with juniors and seniors. Meeting with a mentor is a good way to learn the ropes on campus.

Recreation Center/Intramural Office

Be healthy, get in shape, have fun, reduce stress, and meet people. Join an intramural team, go swimming, lift weights, or take a yoga, Zumba, or aerobics class.

Registration and Records

The registration and records office provides and maintains student records. See them to change your contact information, transfer credits, and/or request a transcript. They may also be able to help with course registration, graduation information, and schedule changes.

Service Learning

Many schools have programs dedicated to integrating community service with course instruction. Volunteer opportunities may include assisting the elderly or homeless, protecting the environment, tutoring local school children, campaigning for a political candidate, and staffing crisis lines. Volunteers typically derive as much value from their service as those they help. *Service should be a part of every student's college experience.*

Student Services/Student Affairs

Many of the aforementioned offices and departments fall under the umbrella of Student Services or Student Affairs. If you have a concern or question and don't know who to ask or where to go, the Student Services office is a good place to start.



Study Abroad

International or Global Education offices help arrange study abroad programs for a semester, school year, summer, or during brief "intersessions." Gather information as soon as possible.

To ensure that your overseas coursework will apply to your major, minor, general education and/or elective course requirements, coordinate all plans with your academic advisor.

Your college may provide additional services according to its size and student make-up. These may include services for African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American students, as well as services for international students, commuter students, and military veterans.

PART III

Succeed Academically

Academic success involves sound academic planning, knowing how to succeed in the classroom, being organized, and studying “smart.”

Make Wise Academic Decisions



Academic planning will help you navigate your academic world wisely and effectively. As soon as you arrive on campus, create a comprehensive academic plan.

Your choice of courses has important academic and professional ramifications. You must, therefore, determine with certainty that you are enrolled in the right courses. Your academic curriculum should be based on accurate, up-to-date information provided by qualified university personnel. This is where your academic advisor (or academic counselor) comes in.

Well-meaning people, whether friends, family, professors, or other university personnel, often provide academic advice. This advice, however, may be inaccurate or obsolete. In some cases, transfer students discover that the guidance provided at their first school was inaccurate or no longer applies in their new academic situation. While it's fine to get input from many sources, it's best to run everything by your academic advisor before finalizing decisions and enrolling in courses.

Upon admission to your new college, you should have been assigned to an advisor based on your major or “undeclared” status. If you don't have an advisor, go to the Admissions Office or to the department of your declared major and ask to be scheduled with an advisor.

Schedule appointments with your advisor early and often

Meet with your advisor early in each semester. Your advisor may be booked for several weeks, so schedule appointments well in advance. Some advisors have open office hours rather than scheduled appointments. If this is the case, you want to arrive at the beginning of office hours.

Prior to your appointment, review the academic requirements in the online undergraduate catalog. Familiarize yourself with the general education requirements, the required and elective courses for your major, and the prerequisites for those courses. Check the departmental website for a typical “four year plan” that plots out all of the required and elective coursework.

On the day of your appointment, arrive on time. Bring along transcripts from previous schools and a list of questions to clarify and confirm what you read in the catalog. These questions may include:

- ▶ “How do I access my degree audit?” Your advisor will likely walk you through your audit. Understanding and properly using your degree audit report is absolutely critical to your academic success.

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), BANNER, or CAPS.

- ▶ “I was told that one of my courses won’t transfer. Can I appeal this?”
- ▶ “When do I need to register for next semester’s courses? What’s the best way to ensure that I get in the classes I need?”
- ▶ “How can I get into the major I want? Are there admission requirements?”
- ▶ “When should I be taking my required courses? Are there any prerequisite courses, or courses that must be taken in a certain order?”
- ▶ “What is a reasonable course load?” While you don’t want to schedule too many difficult and time-consuming classes in a single semester, taking too few classes may require an overload in future semesters, or a pricey additional semester.
- ▶ “Does my GPA make me eligible for the Honors Program? If so, how do I apply? What does it involve?”

- ▶ *"I'm not that 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?"*
- ▶ *"If I can't get into a required class, is there a local college that offers a comparable and transferable class?"*
- ▶ *"I'm thinking of taking a course at a college near my home this summer. Will this course transfer?"* If you already know the course you're considering, have the college catalog or a printed description of the course with you.
- ▶ *"Is pass/fail grading an option in any of my courses? Is this something you would recommend?"*
- ▶ *"Can I see a list of minors and their required courses?"* Note: in some cases you can "double dip" by taking major courses that also apply to one or more minors.
- ▶ *"I'm planning on attending graduate or professional school. Are there any courses that are required or recommended for admission?"* Many colleges have designated "Pre-Health" and "Pre-Law" advisors. You definitely want to meet with these advisors if you're considering post-graduate enrollment in law, medicine, dentistry, physical therapy, pharmacy, or veterinary medicine.



If you are confused when you leave an appointment with an academic advisor, schedule a return visit. If you would like a second opinion, ask to speak to the Director of Academic Advising (Counseling) or the Department Chair of your academic program.

Tip: Introduce yourself and always be courteous to the departmental administrative assistant in your area of study. These folks know everything that goes on in a department. They can often help you cut through red tape, while keeping you abreast of departmental events and upcoming revisions to the curriculum.

Maintain accurate records

Create an academic file, and in this file, keep a hard copy of all transcripts and course descriptions from previous colleges, along with contact information for your professors and instructors (just in case you need to contact them regarding courses they taught).

Don't rely strictly on course information contained on your previous college's website. Courses can change or be discontinued.

Understand registration procedures

Your new college's registration procedures may be very different from those at your previous school. It is, therefore, important that you understand the registration process well in advance of the registration period.

You will most likely be assigned a registration eligibility date and time based on your student status, or the number of credit hours you've completed. Talk to your academic advisor and to upperclass students (including your RA if you live in a dorm) about the ins and outs of course registration.

Know course withdrawal procedures and ramifications

In most cases, course withdrawal should be a last resort. It is, however, always wise to have a sound "exit strategy," just in case.

Reasons to withdraw from a class:

- ▶ You realize you've taken too heavy a course load.
- ▶ Despite your best efforts, you're getting poor grades or failing.
- ▶ You have a legitimate medical or personal reason for lightening your course load.
- ▶ You learn that you've registered for the wrong class, or that you don't need the class to fulfill your program's requirements.

Withdrawing from a course can be a major hassle. If you're anticipating having to withdraw from a class, be sure to speak to your academic advisor and your professor. Policies and procedures often vary from department to department. *Don't wait until the last minute to drop a class. You may not get the paperwork completed in time.*

Before withdrawing from a class, consider the following:

- ▶ Are there limits to how many classes you can withdraw from over the course of your college career?
- ▶ What are the withdrawal procedures and deadlines? Is written permission from the professor or other paperwork required?
- ▶ How will a withdrawal be reflected on your transcript? (A string of Ws on a transcript is not impressive.)
- ▶ If you need to retake the class, when is it scheduled next? What's the likelihood that you'll get in? Can you retake the class during the summer or at another school?
- ▶ Is the class a prerequisite for another class you'd planned to take the following semester? Does this class fall within a sequence of courses? If so, how will this affect your academic and graduation plans?
- ▶ If you withdraw, will you get a full or partial tuition reimbursement?
- ▶ What effect will withdrawing have on your student status? If you drop below full-time status, will this affect your eligibility for financial aid, scholarships, meal plans, or living in a residence hall?

Avoid withdrawing from a class unless it's necessary. If you do need to withdraw, be sure that you understand the possible ramifications for your academic course sequence and plan.

Learn your Learning Management System

Whether your school uses Blackboard, Moodle, Collaborate, or another Learning Management System, its proper use is critical to your academic success.



Carefully review the systems' many features, mobile tools, and third party applications. Set "announcements" or "messages" so they're received immediately (rather than once a day or week). Read every message right away to ensure that you don't miss new assignments, exam dates, or deadlines. If you find your school's system confusing, speak with your professor or teaching assistant.

Know Your Professors



Developing positive relationships with faculty is one way you can directly influence the quality of your education.

College faculty go by many titles: full professor, associate professor, assistant professor, adjunct faculty, instructor, and lecturer. Some may have taught for decades, whereas others may be straight out of graduate school. Regardless, these are the people who will impact the quality of your education.

Many transfer students told us how important it is to get to know your professors. We think this is great advice. Your professors can and should be more than highly educated strangers who lecture, give exams, and assign grades. Professors can be mentors, advisors, and role models. The really good professors will not simply teach and test you, they will challenge, motivate, and inspire you.

Get acquainted with your professors

Sit up front, ask questions, and visit professors during office hours. Most professors enjoy sharing their wisdom and knowledge with motivated students. They may provide academic guidance, share valuable career information, and serve as references for graduate school.

Professors do more than teach. They conduct research, write journal articles and books, participate in professional organizations, and do consulting. Do an online search and visit the departmental website for a link describing each of your professor's research and professional interests. If you share a professor's interests, volunteer to assist with his/her research. You'll get to know the professor, increase your understanding of the topic, and gain research skills that will impress prospective employers and graduate schools alike.

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 are gaining, let your professor know.

Learn about the classes you're considering

If there's a class you're thinking of taking, get a copy of the course syllabus and talk to students who have taken the course. Review the course description and requirements, and learn how grades are assigned. Go to the college bookstore and leaf through the required textbook(s).

To get an idea of a professor's temperament and teaching style, visit him or her during office hours and ask about the course, the assignments, and the availability of extra help. Note whether the professor is approachable and willing to discuss the course. Better yet, ask to sit in on a class you're considering taking. Before or after class, ask a few students what they think of the course and the professor.

Don't put too much stock in the evaluations posted by students online. These comments and ratings vary widely among students, and those who underperform often blame professors for their academic shortcomings.

Communicate in a respectful manner

When first addressing a professor, use a term of respect: Dr., Mr., Ms., or Mrs. If they prefer to be addressed by their first names, they'll let you know. Similarly, when emailing professors, avoid the informal writing style typical of email and text communication to family and friends. Remind the professor what class and section you're in. Be polite, write in full sentences, and use correct spelling and grammar.

Remember that your professors went into teaching because of their passion for their subject, and for the satisfaction they derive from sharing it with students. Many professors report that there's nothing more professionally satisfying and enjoyable than mentoring their most highly motivated students. Be one of those students!



"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

Be Organized



Successful college students typically have two things in common: they are organized and they manage their time effectively.

Use an Academic Planner or homework app

To help you stay organized, purchase 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, study sessions
- ▶ Course registration dates and withdrawal deadlines
- ▶ Deadlines for payments (tuition, housing, meal plans)
- ▶ Deadlines for applications (student employment, grants, loans, scholarships, internships)

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

Make efficient use of your time

- ▶ Create To Do lists. Determine which tasks are the most pressing and which can be put off until later.
- ▶ Look for ways to streamline and combine tasks. Study while you're doing laundry or riding the bus. Look for chunks of time that are wasted and figure out how to use these times more effectively.
- ▶ Use the time you have between classes to study, read, do research, and complete assignments.
- ▶ Learn to say no. In college, there's so much to do and so much going on that it's easy to get sidetracked. Know what you need to do, and don't let anything get in the way of your academic success.

Register as early as possible

Colleges publish their registration schedule, and all students are given a registration date (or range of dates). Some classes fill up quickly, so always register at the earliest possible date and time.

Keep records and archive important messages

Keep documentation of all important school-related information in a file that won't get lost or destroyed. Maintain an additional file of non-academic records for receipts, prescriptions, car insurance, etc. Don't rely strictly on online statements. You want a "paper trail" in the event that online records become unavailable.

Similarly, save all messages you receive regarding academic issues, either in your school's Learning Management System, or in email subfolders by category (e.g., Financial Aid, Career Services, Chemistry Club).

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 or Dropbox, or purchase an online backup system such as 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.



Succeed in the Classroom



During one year of full-time college you will occupy a classroom, lab, or lecture hall for approximately 500 hours. Here are some recommendations to help you get the most out of those hours.

Attend every class

When you miss or arrive late for a class, you miss lectures, discussions, assignments, and information about upcoming exams. Grades may also be partially based on attendance. Don't expect a professor to cut you any slack on your grade if you regularly miss class.

Sit up front to avoid distractions

Arrive early on the first day of class and sit in one of the first three rows. That may become your permanent seat. When you sit in the front, you're able to see what is written, hear what's 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 and participate

When you come to class prepared, the material makes sense and you are able to answer questions. In contrast to just passively being there, active participation will make the material more interesting, time will pass more quickly, and your professors will get to know you.

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 to learn if any new assignments were made. If an assignment is due on a day you can't attend class, check to see if it can be emailed to the professor or delivered by a classmate.

Study Smart



Success in the classroom requires excellent study skills, studying “smart,” and navigating your classes wisely.

Study in a “quiet place”

Locate an isolated, well-lit space where all you can do is study. Avoid friends, cell phones, social media, music, etc. By eliminating all distractions, you force yourself to do one thing only—study.

Find a quiet section of the library, a residence hall study lounge, or an unoccupied classroom. Also consider off-campus locations such as bookstores, coffee shops, or public libraries. The worst place to study is in your dorm room.

Complete assignments early

By completing assignments several days prior to the due date, you allow time for editing and improvements. If you are uncertain whether you did an assignment correctly, there’s time to discuss it with your professor. If asked, a professor may also be willing to review a first draft.

If you are required to make a classroom presentation, volunteer to make your presentation as early as possible. You’ll get it out of the way and you won’t stress out watching the presentations that precede yours.

Space your studying

A good rule is 30-45 minutes of study followed by a 5-10 minute break. During your study sessions, don’t do anything else. If you can stay focused, you will be able to get a great deal accomplished.

Study between classes

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

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.

Study the "worst first"

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

Schedule classes wisely

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



Back-to-back classes have advantages and disadvantages. Scheduling 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, you decide which works best for you—back-to-back classes or classes that are more spread out.

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.

Study according to your body clock

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

Temporarily disconnect

Turn off the TV and the music. Silence your phone and don't check social media, texts, or phone messages until you're finished studying.

Don't wait until the last minute to study

Cramming doesn't work. You're much better off spacing six hours of studying over the course of three days than jamming it all into a single, exhausting six-hour study marathon the day before the exam.

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 some insight as to the way questions are asked, and the subject matter of interest to the instructor.

Seek tutoring and visit the Writing/Study Center

Many colleges have centers that help with written assignments. They also teach skills in notetaking, essay writing, exam strategies, and more. And don't be shy about seeking tutoring. Check with the Center or ask your academic department about tutoring services.



PART IV

Stay Healthy

To succeed in college, you need to take care of both mind and body.

Eat sensibly

Most schools offer healthy alternatives to junk food. Eat a balanced diet including lots of fruits and vegetables. Drink plenty of water, and avoid caffeine, nicotine, and artificial stimulants.

Get enough sleep

For many students, fatigue is directly responsible for failure or poor performance at college. You simply will not be able to concentrate in class or perform at your best if you are sleep deprived.

Get regular exercise

Develop an exercise regimen that you enjoy and that will help keep you fit. Check out your college's recreation centers for exercise classes and equipment. Participate in aerobics, swimming, and intramural sports.

Learn to relax

Check with your college's counseling, health, and recreation centers about relaxation training, Pilates, tai chi, yoga, or meditation classes.

Don't use drugs or alcohol to "self-medicate" or improve your mood. Find healthy solutions to alleviate stress.



Seek help if you're having problems or feel stressed out

There is no need to go it alone. Talk to friends and family members. Also drop in or schedule an appointment at the Counseling Center. Everything you discuss will be held in strict confidence.

PART V

Prepare for a Career

Career planning will help ensure that your decisions and actions put you on the right path—a path that will lead to a lifetime of career success and personal fulfillment.

One of the first things you should do when you arrive on your new campus is to schedule an appointment at Career Services. A career counselor can help you confirm your major, finalize your career plans, and learn about internship opportunities. A career counselor can also help you improve your resume writing, networking, and job search skills.

“Without goals and plans to reach them, you are like a ship that has set sail with no destination.” Fitzhugh Dodson

Obtain Relevant Work Experience



There is no better way to prepare for your career than by engaging in relevant work experience while you are still enrolled in college.

Consider working while in college

Many college students work while attending college. For some it is a financial necessity. Other students work for extra spending money or to accrue real-world work experience.

There are two types of work experience you can acquire while in college—work that demonstrates certain qualities about you as a person, and work that is directly relevant to your future career. Both are important.

Use work to demonstrate your personal qualities

Working while in college sends a message to recruiters about your work ethic, your ability to multi-task, and your time management skills. The greater your responsibilities on the job, the greater the indication that you can solve problems, interact with the public, and work as part of a team.

Longevity and promotions drive home the message that you are a valued contributor. Working as a life guard for three summers looks good. Working as a life guard for two summers and then being promoted to Life Guard Supervisor in your third summer looks even better.

Get relevant work experience if possible

Review job postings and you'll see that they often state "1-2 years of work experience preferred (or required)." When you enter the job market, you will be competing with many new college graduates, as well as people already in the work force.

As you enter your junior and senior years, actively seek positions in your field of interest. Relevant work is a means of confirming your career choice, and it demonstrates to employers that you have the necessary skills to "hit the ground running." A position during college in the industry you plan on entering is the "gold standard" of career preparation.

Obtain an internship

Internships come in many shapes and sizes. They range from a few hours a week to full-time. They may occur during the academic year, or during the summer. They may be paid or unpaid. Some internship programs require that you receive academic credit—so check with your Academic Counselor about internship courses offered in your department.

Be aware that all internships are not created equal. Some organizations offer what they loosely call "internships" as a way to get mundane tasks completed for low or no pay. In order to obtain a valuable work experience, you need to be a wise consumer when searching, applying, and interviewing for internships. Your Career Services office can provide information about reputable internships in your area of interest.

Many organizations use their internship programs as a way to screen and prepare students for full-time positions upon graduation. It is common for organizations to offer full-time positions to their most successful interns.

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 degree.

Get involved in community service

Nothing says more about the content of your character than active involvement in community service. 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. 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 an activity, take on a leadership role. 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.

Improve computer skills

While you may not aspire to be a programmer, you will almost certainly be using computer applications in your work. It is, therefore, important that you gain as much experience as possible in computer applications.

Expand your network

Networking is undoubtedly one of the most important, yet most neglected aspects of career planning by college students. People are your most valuable resource in preparing for a career, obtaining information about occupations, getting into graduate school, and getting a job.

Learn how to job search and interview

The best credentials in the world are worthless if you don't know how to find jobs and apply for positions. The same applies to identifying and applying to graduate or professional schools. Long before your graduation date arrives, you should meet with a Career Counselor to polish your resume, practice interviewing, and learn how to best market yourself to an employer or graduate school.



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.

College
TRANSFER
STUDENT

A Guide for Success

by Alan Farber, Ph.D.

Valuable information
and advice for
transfer students



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