

Your First Year In College

There's no magic bullet to guarantee success in your first year. But there are many ideas and actions that can get you closer to achieving your goal and the following points should help you both academically and personally.

Skills and Preparation

- **Be resourceful.** Communicate with your counselor about the many degree options available to you.
- **Learn everything you can** about the degree/certification application process: prepping for entrance exams, gathering recommendations, selecting a degree that's right for you, etc.
- **Familiarize yourself with the campus.** Locate the campus library. Walk your route to and from classes before the semester begins. Explore unlikely places where you can relax, study or spend time with friends.
- **Learn to use the library.** Attend a library orientation at the beginning of the semester. Walk through the library at least once to your bearings, when you're not feeling pressured to get an assignment done. Rely on reference librarians for help finding materials.
- **Make use of resources.** Familiarize yourself with and use the many resource centers on campus. Good examples are the Counseling Center, Math Learning Lab and in January 2010, the Student Success Center.
- **Manage the bureaucracy.** Keep written records of administrative dealings, including names and phone numbers of people you talk to, in case you have to follow-up later. Get to know the electronic copies of everything you submit for class assignments, in case they get lost.

Academics

- **Recognize that you'll be expected to meet high academic standards.**
- **Write down the deadlines for adding and dropping classes;** consult the online calendar or the course catalog for these essential dates. If you feel you need to drop a class, first evaluate your performance with your professor, and discuss your options with your advisor well in advance of the deadline.
- **Talk with at least 3 other people in each of your classes.** Be outgoing, especially in the first weeks of class. Coming to class is always more enjoyable if you look forward to seeing someone!
- **Prepare yourself for comprehensive exams from the start of the semester.** Keep current with all your reading, review your notes frequently, and make sure you understand each concept as you move through the semester.
- **Never miss a review, tutoring or SI session.** They are excellent resources you shouldn't ignore.
- **Use peer tutors and mentors to boost your academic performance.** These services, many of which are available through the Peer Tutoring Program, are great for getting that extra academic edge. You can get help with a wide variety of topics ranging from working statistics problem sets to improving time management skills, finishing your government essay to studying for your economics exam.
- **Check bulletin boards in your department.** Find out about lectures, seminars, special classes and programs as well as jobs and internships.

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Professors

- **Make sure you understand the grading system for each class you take.** Just because one professor grades on a scale of 100 doesn't mean they all do. How do tests break down? For example, how much of the test will be based on in-class information?
- **Go to office hours.** Most professors really enjoy interacting with their students on a personal level. So there's a good chance they'll be glad you visited! Plus, spending time with your professor is one of the best ways to establish a meaningful personal connection with the course and the material in the course. Finally, being a known quantity never hurts come grade time.
- **Good relationships with professor are valuable outside the classroom.** Professors who know you personally will be far better equipped to write recommendations for scholarships, jobs and internships.
- **Don't wait until after your first exam in class to see how you're doing.** Sometimes it's too late to make an A after a bad grade on your first exam, so seeing your professor before an exam is sometimes more valuable than seeing him or her afterwards.

Frame of Mind

- **Use your academic advisors** in your department to assist you in navigating course selections and settling on a degree plan. Make sure each class you register for meets degree plan requirements. If you encounter difficulties, arrange to meet with another advisor.
- **Get to know experienced students** in your major who know the ropes; they've already taken the classes you're in and know the professors.

Social Life

- **Join a student organization you're interested in.** There are several on campus with a large range of possibilities, so seek out something that you care about.
- Cultivate support from your family and friends, especially if you're feeling isolated or anonymous on campus.
- **Be selective of your extracurricular activities.** Figure out if these activities make sense for you. Do they accurately represent your beliefs, your personality, and your preferences? Are they a good use of your time?
- **Learn effective ways to deal with stress.** Counseling Centers have professionals who can help you overcome anxiety and personal problems.