**Getting The Most Out Of College**

College offers many opportunities for personal, intellectual, physical and spiritual growth. It is a time for taking charge of your life. You will have new responsibilities and meet many challenges. Perhaps for the first time in your life, you are totally responsible for managing your time and affairs. In order to get the most out of college, you must be aware of the various aspects of college life and understand how best to succeed in each area.

* Academics
* College Living
* Stay Healthy and Safe

**ACADEMICS**

Succeed in the Classroom

***Attend every class***. When you miss or arrive late for your classes, you miss lectures, discussion, assignments, and information about the content of upcoming exams and assignments. In some classes, grades may be partially based on attendance.

***Sit in the front of the class***. 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 or displayed, hear what is said, and you send a positive message to your professor.

***Come prepared for class***. Turn in your assignments on time. Make sure to do reading assignments prior to class. You will get more out of the lecture and you will be able to answer questions.

***Participate in class***. Get involved by asking and answering questions. The material will be more interesting, time will pass more quickly, and your professor will get to know you better.

***Make presentations early***. If you are assigned a classroom presentation, volunteer to present as early as possible. You will get it out of the way, which will reduce your stress.

***Turn off your cell phone***. Don’t just switch it to vibrate – turn it off! There is no better way to alienate a professor than to use your cell phone in class. This includes texting. Show respect to your professor by giving full attention.

***Get contact information for at least two people in each class***. If you miss a class, you will need to contact a classmate to find out what you missed. If an assignment is due on a day you can’t attend, check to see if it can be emailed to the professor or delivered by a classmate.

Be Organized

***Use an academic planner***. To help you stay organized, buy an academic planner and use it regularly. A PDA is fine, as long as you use it! Don’t’ rely on your memory. Write everything down: class times, professors’ office hours, assignment dates, test schedules, course withdrawal deadlines, course registration deadlines, deadlines for payments, etc.

***Make task lists***. Make a daily list of the things you need to do and rank them in order of importance. You must focus on the tasks each day and not get behind. College curriculum is very demanding and you won’t be able to “catch up” if you get behind.

Know Your Professors

***Develop relationships with your professors***. Sit in the front of the class, ask questions and get to know your professors. Let them get to know you. This will create a positive relationship and then if you are struggling in class, it will make it much easier to for you to talk with your professor. If you do need to meet with your professor, meet during office hours rather than trying to catch your professor before or after class.

Academic Planning

***Register early***. Some classes fill up quickly, so always register at the earliest possible date. If a class is closed, talk with the professor and request to be added or placed on a waiting list. Some students actually attend the first class of a closed class in hopes that the professor will allow them in the class.

***Avoid back-to-back classes***. College courses are usually scheduled MWF for 50 minutes and TTH for 75 minutes. Back-to-back classes give you little time to get to your next class – especially on larger campuses. They also make it impossible to arrive early or stay after class for questions. Only schedule back-to-back classes if they are located in the same building or very nearby.

***Avoid 8:00 a.m. classes***. Unless there are no other available sections, or you are a morning person, avoid 8:00 a.m. classes. With nighttime residence hall/roommate noise, homework and social life, it’s very rare for college students to get to sleep before midnight.

***Know the course withdrawal policies and deadlines***. At some point you may find the need to withdraw from a course during the semester. Make sure you know the withdrawal deadline. If you plan to withdraw from a course, don’t wait until the last minute. You might not be able to get the paperwork completed in time and then you will be stuck in the class.

***Meet with your advisor early and often***. It is very important that you make regular appointments with your advisor to ensure you are meeting all graduation requirements for you major. Don’t rely on advice from friends or family. Keep a written record of everything you discuss with your academic advisor.

Study Smart

***Find a quiet place to study***. Avoid friends, cell phones, music, beds, email, etc. By eliminating all distractions, you force yourself to do one thing only – study. Locate a quiet section of the library, residence hall or even an unoccupied classroom. The worst place to study is in your dorm room.

***Complete all assignments early***. When you complete your assignments several days prior to the due date, you have time for editing and improvements. This in turn means better grades and less stress.

***Study the most difficult first***. Study your least favorite topic when you are most alert.

***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.

***Back-up computer files and save often***. Avoid every student’s nightmare of lost or corrupted assignments, papers, and projects. Create a back-up system on an external hard drive or online back-up system like Mozy or Carbonite. You can lose flash drives and memory sticks, so it is not advisable to us them for important assignments.

**COLLEGE LIVING**

Living in a Residence Hall (Dorm)

***Roommates*** – The first and most challenging transition from living at home is sharing a room with a friend from home, or more often, a total stranger. In order to get along, you will need to make compromises and set ground rules from the very start. Everything – bed times, chores, noise levels, visiting hours, etc. – should be addressed in order to prevent conflict between you and your roommate.

***Resident Assistants (RAs)*** – Resident Assistants are upper level students who live among dorm residents. Their job is to enforce rules, provide assistance, and generally ensure that everything operates smoothly on their floor. Get to know your RA, and make a good impression. They can provide support and guidance if things get tough.

***Dorm Rules*** – Be sure to read and abide by the dorm rules. These 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 weren’t aware of it won’t matter during a disciplinary hearing. Therefore, it is important to get a written copy of the rules and follow them.

***Dorm Activities and Services*** – 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, and more. Take full advantage of all your dorm has to offer.

Living At Home

**Lifestyle Adjustments** – If you live at home and commute, you will still have to make lifestyle adjustments. Your schedule will be more varied than it has in the past, which means you will be coming and going at odd hours. Discuss with you family how you can accomplish your new routine without disturbing other family members.

**Make New Friends** – It’s important for students who commute to make friends and get involved in campus activities. You will 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 Organizations and Services

**Get Involved** – 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.

**Typical Student Organizations** – Here are some examples of the activities and organizations typically found on college campuses: Community Service, Honor Societies, Fraternities, Sororities, International, Political, Professional, Religious, Social, Special Interest, Sports/Recreation, and Student Government.

**Typical Student Services** – Every college offers many valuable services for students. It is up to you to contact or visit these offices. Here are examples of typical student services: Academic Advising, Career Services, Computer Lab, Counseling Center, Disability Services, Financial Aid, Health Services, Learning Centers, Libraries, Recreation Center, Registration and Records, Campus Ministries, Student Services, and Study Abroad.

Money and Finances

**Banking** – Get a free bank or checking account that does not incur ATM fees and withdraw cash in small amounts. Using cash is a good idea because you usually spend less when using cash versus a credit or debit card. Do not keep large sums of money in your room, wallet or purse.

**Budget** – Establish a weekly budget and stick to it. This is extremely important! Many students run up outrageous credit card bills on non-educational spending during college. Your goal should be to avoid incurring unreasonable debt by living frugally during college. Be especially cautious of your spending when you go out with your 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. Think about this, if your daily routine involves buying a $1.50 bottle of soft drink and a $2.00 cup of coffee, that’s $280 per semester for items that are probably available free in your meal plan. That’s almost $2,300 during your college career.

**Credit Cards** – While it is ok to have a credit card for emergencies, you must limit using it. If you do make an occasional credit card purchase, always pay off the monthly balance in full and on time.

**Entertainment** – Instead of paying $15 for a movie ticket and a bag of popcorn, check out free campus events. Most colleges offer free or inexpensive sporting events, concerts, films, theater productions and speakers. If you do pay for entertainment, make sure you follow your established budget.

**Textbooks** – College textbooks are extremely expensive. Get a list of required books as early as possible and try to buy used books online, from other students, or at the college bookstore. Some college bookstores also offer textbook rentals. Know your college 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 vehicle to college. There are upkeep, insurance, parking, and gas costs. You will become everybody’s favorite chauffeur and designated driver. Everyone will also want to borrow it. It’s not worth the cost or hassle, especially since most of your friends will be walking or taking buses or shuttles to get around.

Rules, Regulations, Policies and Laws

**College Rules and Policies** – Colleges have rules regarding academic integrity, sexual harassment, protests/demonstrations, alcohol and drug use, etc. Dorms also have rules that students must abide by, as do rec centers, computer labs, libraries and other facilities. Students who violate campus policies may face disciplinary action, usually through the school’s Judicial Affairs Office. Sanctions might include warnings, fines, expulsion from your dorm or expulsion from school.

**Community Laws** – Students are subject to city, state and federal laws when violations occur on campus. The most common off-campus violation involves public intoxication and displaying open alcohol containers. Students walking from a bar, fraternity/sorority house or apartment are often stopped by police for appearing drunk or carrying open containers. If you break the law on campus, you can end up in a city or county jail cell. Students who have experienced this say it is one of the most regrettable experiences of their lives.

**Stay Healthy and Safe**

Health Tips

**Eat Sensibly and Exercise** – Eat a balanced diet that includes lots of fruits and vegetables. Avoid caffeine and nicotine. Develop an exercise regimen that you enjoy and that will help keep you fit.

**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.

**Utilize Campus Health Center** – If you have any health related issues, go to the campus Health Center. Generally, the campus Health Center also provides immunizations free of charge for students.

Manage Stress

**What To Do When Feeling Stressed** – When you are feeling stressed, talk to friends, family, RA, pastor, professor or anyone else you can trust. You can also make an appointment at the campus Counseling Center. There is no need to go through it alone.

**What NOT To Do When Feeling Stressed** – Don’t fall behind academically. It’s very important that you keep on top of your coursework. If you are struggling with a course, get extra help, join a study group, seek tutoring or see your professor during office hours. Don’t use drugs or alcohol to improve your mood. Drinking and using drugs will make your problems worse.

**Make Changes If Necessary** – If you are feeling overwhelmed or think that you have taken on too much, make a list of everything going on in your life and determine what can be dropped, delayed or modified. Make sure to schedule time to relax. If you don’t have time for rest and relaxation, you won’t have the energy you need to perform well in your classes.

**Dealing With Homesickness** – Living away from home presents special challenges. You may feel a little lost at times and perhaps even question your decision to attend college away from home. This is common. Major life changes take time and patience. Give yourself time to acclimate to your new surroundings. While it is healthy to keep in touch with family, don’t overdo it. Make sure to devote time to make new relationships while in college. 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. This is a time when most colleges offer programs and activities specifically to introduce new students to campus. This is the time to meet new people and become acquainted with campus activities, programs and organizations.

Crime and Safety

**In Your Dorm** – Always lock your door when you are out of the room. Don’t lend your key or entry card to anyone. Lock windows and never leave valuables in an unlocked room.

**On Campus** – When you arrive on campus, take a daytime walk to learn the campus and nearby neighborhood. Make note of the locations of emergency phones, campus security and police station. Always travel in groups at night and avoid poorly lit areas. Program your cell phone with the Campus Security number.

**At Parties** – Most rapes and sexual assaults involve alcohol or drugs and are perpetrated by known assailants. Remain among groups of friends whenever possible. Avoid open containers or cups that might contain the date rape drugs. Never drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs and never get in a car with a driver who is under the influence.

*Information for this hand-out was drawn from “Getting the Most Out of College”, by Alan Farber, Woodburn Press, 2012.*