4. Success in College: Navigating & Thriving

What is the commitment of a college student?

SUCCESS: GETTING TO THE GOAL

DID YOU KNOW…? For every hour spent in class, college students should spend 1-2 hours studying outside of class. Example: 15 credit hours = 15 hours/week spent in class + 15-30 hours/week spent studying outside of class = up to 45 hours/week!

Most students spend additional time on academic clubs, honor societies, campus organizations, athletics/intramurals, part-time jobs, internships, and more. Being a college student is more than a full-time job! And, the expectation from families is success!

Families can assist their student’s academic success by supporting the time commitment needed to be a successful and well-rounded student. Students may not have as much free time or time to devote to family activities as they have in the past. Take advantage of winter, spring and summer breaks for family time.

STUDENTS: TIPS FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

- Enroll in a First Year Experience course offered at your college/university to help you learn all of the opportunities and services on your campus.
- Work closely with your professors. Utilize office hours to ask questions and discuss material.
- Take classes in a variety of disciplines, including those outside of your major or minor. Use degree requirements to explore new areas and expand your knowledge base. College is a time to expose your mind to new ideas and perspectives.
- Fine-tune your time management skills. Use a planner or calendar system that helps you keep track of meetings, assignments and tests, and schedule regular times for studying, exercise and relaxation. Use gaps between classes to review notes and/or readings.
- Utilize summer school when possible to get ahead.
- Sleep! Getting enough sleep is crucial to your health and ability to focus and learn.
- Be prepared for more independent studying and reading time and dedicating more time to your studies than in the past. Your study habits from high school will not likely translate to success in college.
- Ask for help! If you are struggling to understand material see your professor, find the campus tutoring/learning center, and talk with your academic advisor.
Who you should get to know on campus:

Your Academic Advisor – Meet with the advisor regularly and use the advisor as a resource for questions, advice, troubleshooting.

Tutoring Center/Learning Center/Writing Center – Ask your advisor or academic advising office to help you identify academic success resources on campus.

Academic Advising office – Ask for support and questions about your academic pursuits.

Career Services office – Get assistance with choosing a major, planning for graduate or professional school, and identifying internships.

Study Abroad/International Programs – Find out about academic opportunities across the U.S. and world.

GOAL: GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Sample, Meredith College

In addition to the above requirements:

- A minimum of 31 hours of credit, including 50% of the major or minor, must be completed at the home institution.
- 24 out of a student’s last 30 hours must be in coursework at the home institution (unless she is approved to study abroad, then 15 out of the last 30 hours will suffice).
- A minimum of 60 hours must be completed at a four-year institution.
- A minimum GPA of 2.0 is required in all coursework as well as in the major.

CHOOSING A MAJOR

Although choosing a major is often the biggest decision a college student has ever faced, it does not need to be a permanent one. There are two important points to remember about choosing majors:

- You can change your mind.
- Your major does not have to indicate your career path.
NAVIGATING: FROM FRESHMAN TO SENIOR — THE 4-YEAR PLAN

FRESHMAN: ADJUSTING TO COLLEGE WORK & LIFE
- Make an appointment to meet with a career counselor for individualized career planning.
- Access websites with career information to learn what you can do with particular majors.
- Take a career assessment and explore careers consistent with your interests.
- Take a variety of academic courses and stay open-minded about the selection of a major.
- Get acquainted with your professors, academic advisors and counselors who can help with your career plans.
- Identify your interests, skills and values and learn how they relate to the choice of a major.
- Join a campus organization to gain leadership and communication skills.
- Establish effective study habits, which may differ significantly from high school.
- Attend study skills workshops, or make an individual appointment with the Academic Advising Office to discuss your study skills, time management, and learning style.

Summer After Freshman Year
- Secure a job or internship that relates to your college major or career interest.
- Gain work experience and start developing a strong business and work ethic.

SOPHOMORE: SELECTING A MAJOR
- Explore majors and careers by talking with current students, faculty, alumni, and family.
- Take a career-planning course if one is available on your campus.
- Use the Occupational Outlook Handbook (a resource found in your career center) to research various occupations.
- Develop a resume and apply for internships and summer jobs.
- Join clubs and organizations on your campus and take a leadership role in an organization of your interest.
- Declare major(s) and minor(s), if not already done so, by submitting the appropriate forms to the Office of the Registrar.
- Develop a strong relationship with your academic advisor in your major.

Summer After Sophomore Year
- Get a summer job or internship relating to your field and develop your skills.
- Strengthen your resume by developing references and a good reputation.
JUNIOR: TRANSLATING ACADEMIC & PERSONAL EXPERIENCES INTO ACADEMIC & CAREER PLANNING GOALS

- Attend workshops on writing resumes and interviewing skills. Take advantage of career fairs that are offered at your college.
- Have your resume and cover letter critiqued by a career counselor.
- Secure a co-op or internship in the area of your interest/major. This is crucial junior year.
- Get involved in a professional organization related to your career field to expand your network.
- Seek information about graduate schools, take the appropriate entrance examinations and begin the application process.
- Deepen conversation and relationships with professors, faculty advisor, and college staff, especially in major coursework, research projects, seminars, and student organizations.

Summer after Junior Year

- Excel in your summer internship.
- Further develop job-related skills.
- Compile an inventory of interests and qualifications and how they relate to your objective.
- Attend networking events to meet professionals within your field.
- Gather items for a portfolio, depending on your field of interest

SENIOR: IMPLEMENTING YOUR GOALS

- Use the career center on your campus, interview with companies who visit campus, and apply for jobs.
- Frequently update and refine your resume. When applying to different jobs, you may have to create multiple resumes to tailor each to the specific job description.
- Map out your job search strategies: target and contact potential employers and follow-up with employers you have previously contacted.
- Attend Career Fairs and networking events.
- Evaluate job offers.
- Report job offers and acceptance to your career center.
- If planning to attend graduate school, follow up on applications and keep a record of the status of each.
- Review your graduation audit to determine that you will meet degree requirements and complete your application for diploma.
THRIVING: SUPPORTING STUDENT’S EMOTIONAL HEALTH DURING COLLEGE

College should be challenging but not overwhelming…

Common Stressors and the Questions College Students Ask:

**Forming new social connections:** Will I fit in? Will I like my roommate? How will I make new friends? Will my professors like me?

**New levels of academic pressures and demands:** Will I be able to keep up with all the work? How will I figure out what I will major in? How will I compare to other students in my classes?

**Time management:** How will I do all my work and have time for fun?

**Family Expectations:** Will I live up to my family’s’ expectations?

**Financial worries:** What if we don’t have enough money? How will I manage to pay for everything I want to do?

**Managing emotions:** Will I get homesick? What if I get too stressed or feel overwhelmed? Who will I turn to for support or guidance?

**RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS & PARENTS:**

- Jed Foundation: www.jedfoundation.org
- ULifeLine: www.ulifeline.org
- Transition Year: www.transitionyear.org
- National Suicide Hotline: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
  1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- NIMH – National Institute of Mental Health: www.nimh.nih.gov
How Can Families Support Students in College:

- Keep the communication open but don’t hover
- Know the signs of stress and ask how your student is doing
- Send care packages from home
- Encourage your student to solve problems without the family solving the problem for the student
- Don’t make assumptions
- Listen carefully
- Know the campus resources and encourage the student to use resources

When additional support is needed:

Many campuses have a counseling center available to students. Below are questions students and families can ask to learn more about the campus counseling service:

- What services are provided by the counseling center?
- Are there fees associated with using the counseling center?
- Are there a maximum number of sessions allowed per year?
- Does the counseling center offer off campus referrals?
- Is there a psychiatrist on staff?
- If I need services the counseling center doesn’t provide, will my insurance cover services? What if I don’t have insurance or money to pay for counseling?
- Is there a counselor available on call 24 hours a day? If not, what happens if there is an emergency after counseling center hours?
- Under what circumstances would the college contact the family about the student’s mental health?
- What kinds of workshops or talks are provided to students about mental health and wellness?
- How is a student referred to the college counseling center?
- If needed, how would my student make an appointment for counseling?

It is important for families to understand that counseling is a confidential service. Families can support students by encouraging them to use the college counseling center and by understanding that the students will need to ask for counseling independently. Counseling is most effective when the family and the student understand that the information shared in counseling will be kept confidential. Information from counseling, even information regarding whether a student is attending counseling sessions, cannot be shared with anyone except in cases of imminent danger or with written permission from the student.

THRIVING: STAYING HEALTHY IN COLLEGE

During time away from home, it is possible that students will become sick and need the care of a health care provider. There are many things families can help students prepare in order to stay healthy while in college.
A family discussion regarding the information provided here will help both parents and students feel more comfortable.

- A health form including immunization records will need to be completed for your student. Sometimes this will include a current physical exam from the student’s health care provider.
- Most colleges have a health center on campus or health care facilities that are close by. Sometimes the cost of the on-campus health center is included in the college’s tuition and fees, or the center is available to students for a specific fee.
- Some exams, laboratory services and prescription medications may be free or some may have a cost associated with it.
- All medical records at the college health center are confidential. If the student is 18, they must sign a release before any information can be given to parents about his/her care.
- Many colleges require students to have health insurance. Check with the Admissions Office to see if the college requires health insurance. There is usually a cost associated with the health insurance requirement if purchased through the institution. If you have comparable health insurance to the plan the college offers, you may be able to opt out of the college plan. If a student has a chronic illness, have him/her stop by the health center soon after arriving to check in with the health center staff.

**THRIVING: ON CAMPUS LIVING – AN INVALUABLE EXPERIENCE!**

Living on campus during college is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity! Students may never have the opportunity again to live among their friends, have easy access to academic buildings and be close to campus resources when they need them.

There are many reasons to live on campus such as living in a secure campus community, not worrying about traffic and a commute to campus. Also, having the opportunity to live among classmates where lasting friendships are made.

Living on campus gives students easier access to class meetings, organization functions, a variety of campus events and the campus information about upcoming events. An added bonus is that room and board (meal plan) or apartment rent is paid at the beginning of each semester so there won’t be additional monthly rent or utility bills.

**BENEFITS OF LIVING ON CAMPUS INCLUDE:**

- Complete social immersion with peers from various cultures
- Peer-to-peer study sessions and class support
- Eating meals together in the dining hall
- Interacting with faculty and staff outside of the classroom
- Having a caring and supportive staff such as student staff on each floor of the residence hall, and a professional staff member who oversees a residence hall or area, to assist with academic, personal, and social concerns
Each college or university housing and residence life office has slightly different requirements. While considering an institution, make it a point to find out the following:

- Is there a residency requirement for students? Are students required to live on campus for one or two years?
- Are there exceptions (living with relative, married student, etc.)?
- What is covered in the room fees?
- What do the board fees (meal plan) cover? Is there more than one meal plan option?
- Can resident students have a car on campus?
- What is the institution’s guest policy for friends? For family?
- What can be brought to campus for the room? Are there items that are not allowed?
- How are roommates paired and room assignments made?
- Are there kitchens, laundry rooms, study lounges, etc. in the residence halls?
- What is the room change policy?

**THRIVING: TRANSITIONING FROM LIVING AT HOME TO LIVING ON CAMPUS**

Students believe that some of the biggest unfounded fears about college relate to having a roommate. It is true that it is rare for roommates to agree on everything, but when roommates take the time to learn about each other and to talk about each other’s likes and dislikes, they quickly pave the way for positive living experiences. It helps to begin thinking about how to be a good roommate to someone else.

If concerns do come up about living with someone or if there is a conflict among residents, it is appropriate to seek help from either the student staff on the floor or the professional staff member who supervises the student staff. Other options are to talk with the director of the department or the dean of students. Help is always available.

Other transition issues may come up regarding time management, social habits, choice of friends and study habits. Communicating about these issues up front and at the beginning of the semester can be helpful. Many institutions have first-year students complete a Roommate

**TIPS ON BEING A GOOD ROOMMATE:**

- Communicate
- Be open and friendly
- Set boundaries
- Be understanding
- Ask before borrowing items
- Resolve conflicts
- Respect privacy
Agreement form which covers topics such as those mentioned and can also include having discussions about guests in the room, sharing common items and study time preferences. Whatever concerns or questions a student has, they can get the assistance needed through residence hall staff or other staff at the institution. As a family, encourage students to reach out themselves for assistance – it is one step in the right direction of their independence!

THRIVING: THE COMMUTER LIFE

If living on campus is not an option, there are several things a student and his/her family can do to ensure that students remain engaged and successful in college.

- Attend orientation activities for parents at your student’s college of choice. This gives you the opportunity to ask questions that you may have. Additionally, it shows your child that you value and are invested in his/her college experience.
- Acknowledge the commute. Recognize the time your student spends waiting for a bus, riding to school, driving through rush hour traffic, or hunting for a parking spot.
- Acknowledge your student’s commitment to academics. By talking about changes in family chores and granting more flexibility for household responsibilities, you will let your student know that you understand and respect the fact that college is more demanding than high school, and that you want them to be successful.
- Be alert to stressful times. Midterms and exams are particularly difficult times for students, but quizzes and project deadlines also pile up throughout the semester.
- Encourage your student to stay on campus between classes and to attend athletic events, concerts, and other student activities.
- Be aware of campus news and events. Ask your student to explain the things you don’t understand. If you acknowledge the importance of what’s happening at the college or university, your student will, too.
FOUR WAYS STUDENTS CAN BE SUCCESSFUL IN COLLEGE AS A COMMUTER STUDENT

1. Get to Class on Time
   - Determine the time it takes for you to get to campus (carpooling, driving, or riding the bus) and allow for travel time (in good or inclement weather conditions).
   - Have a back up plan to get to campus in case something happens and your usual means of transportation is not an option.
   - Faculty really appreciate your readiness for time, but not your tardiness.

2. Figure out what to do between classes
   - Schedule time to eat (purchase a meal plan that suits your needs or bring lunch from home).
   - Complete homework assignments and/or projects, make appointments with professors or the tutoring center, and participate in study groups in subject areas that you may need additional help or want to stay ahead.
   - Attend student organization meetings of interest to you.

3. Staying Connected to Campus
   - Join academic or social clubs/organizations of interest to you and attend their regularly scheduled meetings early on in your academic career.
   - Participate in campus events (i.e. guest lectures/speakers, campus traditions, athletics games, concerts, plays and other arts and entertainment programs) whenever your schedule permits.
   - Obtain a job on campus whenever possible.

4. Living Off Campus
   - If living at home is not an option, choose a place of residence that is not far from campus whenever possible. Keep in mind the things that are important for you (i.e., the type of neighborhood you want to live in).
   - Select a residence that is within your means taking into consideration your financial obligations and commitments.
   - Consider on-campus apartments and other options.
THRIVING: CAMPUS INVOLVEMENT AND STUDENT LIFE

A student’s college education occurs both inside and outside of the classroom. It is important to think of a variety of ways to become involved in campus life in order to get a well-rounded experience.

College years can be enriched in so many ways through involvement in such areas as athletics, volunteer service, and student clubs/organizations. Students can consider becoming members of intramural and athletic teams in a variety of sports. They can decide to volunteer in local community agencies or perhaps participate in an alternative spring break trip to help individuals in other communities, including foreign countries.

All of these areas of involvement provide students with opportunities to gain skills needed for employment.

WHY SHOULD STUDENTS GET INVOLVED? (JUST TO NAME A FEW)

- To gain actual career related experience
- To learn and practice leadership and teamwork skills
- To develop interpersonal and communication skills
- To make a difference in the community
- To develop new relationships
- To have fun and make friends

Students can join clubs and organizations that typically include the following types of groups: performing arts, academic/major clubs, honor societies, student government, Greek Life (sororities and fraternities), special interest, multicultural, recreation, entertainment, religious, and service. Employers typically look for interpersonal skills, initiative, teamwork skills, and communication skills when they seek out new employees.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN SELECTING AREAS OF INVOLVEMENT:

- What am I looking for in an organization/group? Am I looking for fellowship, making new friends, working for a cause, being physically active, planning events or gaining more information related to my major? All of the above?
- Do I want to make things happen and make an impact on my community?
- How much time do I have for co-curricular involvement and how will I manage my time?
- Are there financial considerations for involvement?
- What kinds of skills do I want to gain from my involvement?

FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

- Talk with staff members and visit web sites in areas such as Student Activities, Student Leadership, Volunteer Services, Campus Ministry, the Arts, Multicultural Services, and Athletics.
- Find lists of student organizations and clubs at the institution.
- Attend information fairs with resources about the many areas of involvement on a college campus.

For more information about Meredith College, visit www.meredith.edu/admissions or call us at 1-800-MEREDITH.