

Life During Community College

Your Guide to Success

First Edition



By Tawnya Beermann, Terry Arndt & Kirrin Coleman



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Jump Start Your College Experience

Right Now ✓

- Locate key resources such as the Tutoring Center, Career Center, Library, Counseling Services, and any others that fit your specific needs. (Campus Resources Chapter)
- Manage your time wisely. Check out the latest apps listed in Chapter (Time Management Chapter) to stay on top of your daily, weekly, and semester schedule
- Ensure you are off to a strong start! Read “Pitfalls to Watch Out For” in Chapter 1

Your First Week ✓

- Get connected! Attend new student activities, introduce yourself to classmates and instructors, and look for student clubs to join (Developing Relationships Chapter)
- Know what to expect this term by reviewing the course syllabi for each class
- Attend class regularly and on time
- Create a study plan and stick to it (Chapter 18, Communication, Note Taking, and Study Skills)
- Set some goals! 3 goals for today, 3 goals for this week, and 3 goals for this month. Post the goals where you can see them. Read Five Steps to Setting Goals in Chapter 7
- Make your health a priority. Review “Healthy Living Exercises” in Chapter 8, Health Insurance and Healthy Living



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The Community College Experience

CHAPTER 1

Congratulations! You've made a smart choice. The fact that you're reading this book means you're at a point in your life where you've decided you're ready to begin the work of earning a college-level credential (certificate, diploma, or degree) in preparation to enter the workforce or transfer on to a four-year college or university. More importantly, you've decided to challenge yourself and expand your horizons. This book will be your guide to making the most of your community college experience.

Your choice to attend a community college may have been driven by cost, location, career field, schedule needs, or any number of factors. Community colleges are known for their versatility and can meet the needs of nearly every student, which is great news for you! Regardless of the reasons you're here, what you gain along this journey is entirely up to you.

This chapter will discuss the following topics:

- **Envisioning your future**
- **Getting involved**
- **Leveraging your experiences**
- **Pitfalls to look out for**

Envisioning Your Future

In order to successfully navigate your journey, it's best if you have a pretty good idea of where you are headed. Where do you see yourself in the next 2-5 years? How do you want to spend your time? What is your ultimate career goal? The quicker you can figure that out, the quicker you can get down to business of building your skills and checking off the list of requirements toward meeting your goal. Switching majors multiple times can be costly and really add to the time it takes to graduate. If you haven't already set your sights on a specific career goal, you'll want to find out what career services are offered on your campus.

Visit the career center

Your campus career center is much more than a place to research post-graduation job opportunities, build resumes, and prepare for interviews. In fact, it's a great idea to visit the career center early in your first year to let them help

you confirm your academic program choice, and make plans for your future career. It's also typically the go-to place to find out about internships, events, workshops, and employer information sessions.

Take a career interest inventory

Visit www.mynextmove.org and take the O*NET Interest Profiler. This tool can help you identify your interests and explore related careers. You can also search for careers based on the amount of preparation needed.

Research high demand careers

Visit www.ONETonline.org to explore new and emerging career fields and also to see a list of in-demand occupations. When you earn a credential in a high demand field, you'll be in demand—and will have great job prospects upon graduation.

Look for job shadowing opportunities

Job shadowing is invaluable for learning how people in your prospective profession spend their days. For example, if you are considering a career as a Physical Therapy Assistant, you might want to visit a few physical therapy centers and inquire about job shadowing opportunities. You might find the career of your dreams—or realize that the career you were interested in is not, in fact, very interesting. It's better to find out early on, so that you can focus your energy on a major that will lead to a job that truly fits your interests.

Note: The Career Center can help you coordinate a job shadow.

Decide on a major (career pathway)

Career Pathways is a nationwide initiative to support developing pathways to in-demand jobs. Community colleges, regional employers, and state and federal organizations work together to map out a way for individuals to get the training and education they need to succeed in the jobs employers need to fill.

Career Pathways



“A series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to get jobs in specific industries, and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and work in that industry. Each step on a career pathway is designed to prepare the participant for the next level of work and education.”

Workforce Strategy Center

The community college offers a variety of career pathway credentials or majors you can work toward completing. Many times the credentials are “stackable,” meaning you might earn several types of credentials that build upon the final credential awarded. Knowing your career goal will help you to determine which credential(s) you'll want to earn. The following description of credentials is a good overview, but you'll also want to check with your college for its official requirements.

Certificate

This is a short-term credential that can be earned by successfully completing a relatively small number of credits. Some certificates are considered non-credit, continuing education, and may not apply toward the requirements of other credentials. Most certificates are not eligible for federal financial aid. So, having a plan to pay for the coursework is very important. Some certificates are “stackable” and can be applied toward the requirements of a degree.

Diploma

A diploma is typically two or more full-time semesters of credit courses. Diplomas are typically eligible for federal financial aid. Some diplomas are “stackable” and can be applied toward the requirements of an Associate degree.

Associate degree

There are several types of associate degrees, and they typically take two years to complete, if you attend school full time. Some are designed to transfer to four-year college or university, and others are designed to allow you to hit the ground running and land a job in your chosen occupational field.

Associate of Arts degree is typically the credential of choice if you are planning to transfer to a four-year college or university to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree. Most courses in this degree plan will readily transfer to a four-year college, and be counted toward bachelor’s degree requirements.

Associate of Science degree is typically the credential of choice if you are planning to transfer to a four-year college or university to earn a Bachelor of Science degree. Most courses in this degree plan will readily transfer to a four-year college, and count toward the bachelor’s degree requirements.

Associate of Applied Science degree is typically the credential of choice for a student who is interested in learning a technical trade without the intention of going on to a four-year college or university. This degree is designed specifically to allow the graduate to begin working in the associated career field immediately upon completion of the degree. Courses in this degree plan generally do not transfer to a four-year college or university. However, depending upon the career field, there are some colleges that may apply these courses toward the requirements of a bachelor’s degree. Not every career field requires a bachelor’s degree, and some Associate of Applied Science graduates have higher earning potential than those who earn a bachelor’s degree. It all depends on the industry you’ll be working in.

What if I just don’t know

Still having a tough time deciding on a career goal? Make regular appointments with an academic advisor, who can help you sort out all of the fine print and narrow your focus. As a community college student, you have a wide variety of academic programs to choose from that could open doors to a career that fits you. Your academic advisor can provide detailed information about academic programs, set up tours, and connect you with program faculty who can answer

questions about specific programs and share insight on future employment opportunities for their specific programs. Make it a top priority to select a program that fits you. Doing so will help to ensure you are taking the proper courses, and are on the most efficient path toward completion of your goals.

Get Involved

It is important to get involved both in and out of the classroom. In class, you'll want to be an active learner by listening, joining in on discussions, sharing your experiences, and participating in group learning opportunities. Outside the classroom, it is a great idea to attend events, join a club, volunteer, and use campus resources. While you're doing all of these things, you'll be amazed by the value of the connections you make. No matter what your background is, you'll find people who have something valuable to share. Others will also benefit from what you have to share. You might even find opportunities to be a leader or a mentor to other students.

College is much more than going to class and doing homework. Seek out opportunities to get involved and pursue your interests. Studies show that students who get involved in campus activities outside of class are more likely to persist and graduate. Consider volunteering, participating in clubs, serving as a tutor, applying for a work-study position, or participating in study groups. Find other students who share similar interests. Making these connections will help you settle in and feel at home with your surroundings. In the process, you'll learn more about yourself and contribute to a greater campus community.

Leverage Your Experiences

Community college students are diverse. Whether you are sitting in class, attending an event, or walking down the halls, you'll likely notice the diverse company you're in. You will have opportunities to connect with and learn from this diverse group of peers during the journey ahead. Take pride in your background and the experiences you bring to the table. Perhaps you embrace innovative ideas or visions for the future, have a unique hobby, come from a different culture, or have years of career experience under your belt. No matter the combination of experiences you bring with you, you'll benefit from discussions with others who have an entirely different set of experiences to share. This is valuable experience that cannot be replicated by reading a chapter in a book.

Pitfalls to Look Out For

Unfortunately, not all students who begin working toward a college credential will persist and continue their studies through to graduation. Life happens and obstacles arise, regardless of how prepared students may be. How you respond to challenges and barriers highly impacts your chances for success. Here are some common pitfalls that can get in the way of community college success.

Not asking questions

Starting a new chapter in life and embarking on the community college journey can be a little scary and overwhelming. It is important to take a deep breath and realize that you're not alone. Each semester a new group of students starts on the very same journey. They have many of the same questions and concerns that might be running through your mind. No question is a dumb question. So, don't be afraid to seek out help in answering the questions you may have. Make it a practice to ask questions on a regular basis. It can be catching. Once others see that you have similar questions, they'll open up and ask questions too. You'll be learning together and opening lines of communication with other new students. It is also important that you make it a priority to review information from orientations, the student portal, college catalog, and student handbook. Chances are, you'll find much of the information you are wondering about. You'll also discover helpful information you may have been unaware of.

Too much too soon

As a new college student, you'll find your focus and energy pulled in many directions by competing areas of interest. Keeping your academic success high on your priority list can be a challenge. Community college students often juggle busy lives off campus in addition to their academics and on-campus activities. It is important to start your college journey at a pace that reasonably fits for you. You want to carefully balance your time and focus to ensure that you get the most out of your classes while successfully balancing other areas of your life. You might consider scaling back on your course load if you are working a full-time job, raising a family, or have other responsibilities vying for your time. You'll need to weigh your priorities and determine how your time is best invested. Pay special attention to time management tips offered later in this book.

Missing class or arriving late

Research has shown that attendance is the most important factor related to successful course completion. In fact, one study calculated the cost of each missed class leads to a .06 reduction in G.P.A. If you're not present in class, you can't possibly benefit from all the learning and interactions taking place between the instructor and students. This learning experience cannot be replicated by reviewing a power point or borrowed class notes.

Doing only the minimum

If you put forth only the minimum effort, you'll get only minimal results. Be sure to challenge yourself to do your very best. Don't operate from the mindset that you just want to pass the courses you take. Challenge yourself to excel in your courses. When you attend all of your classes, spend adequate time studying, turn in quality work, and seek out assistance when necessary, your chances of achieving success will be excellent. Remember the phrase, "If it is to be, it's up to me." The grades you earn will reflect your efforts.

Not using the resources that are available to you

Community colleges are known for providing excellent student support services. It's not enough to just know about these services. You need to take the initiative to reach out for help and use the services that you have access to. It is your responsibility to make your needs known and communicate with the student support staff. Some common services available are tutoring, a campus counseling center, disability services, and veteran services. These are just a few. Check your campus website, student handbook, or inquire with your advisor to find out more specifics about what's available to you.

Not reading or responding to your email

Communication is key to your success. Reading and responding to emails will be essential to your success as a student. Starting from the time you apply to be a student, through your graduation, key information will be shared with you via email. Instructors, student affairs offices, instructors, and others will be communicating with you via email. Missing out on this important information can put you at a great disadvantage.

Not budgeting your money

Financial struggles are very often a major barrier to college completion. Be careful how you spend your money. You need to stretch your budget to last the entire school year. This means that you need to ensure you have enough money to cover your tuition, fees, books, and living expenses. Later in this book you'll learn more on how to determine what your spending priorities should be, and how to stick to them. It can be very easy to let down your guard and order a few pizzas, buy the latest frivolous technology, or splurge on other items that you think you need, quickly putting you into debt. Use budgeting strategies early on to avoid difficult situations that can arise due to lack of money management.

You're Ready

It's time to put all of this advice into practice. You have what it takes to make your goals reality. To get the most out of your journey ahead, stay focused, reflect on your career goals, and make connections with your peers, faculty, future employers, or that four-year college if you're planning to transfer on. Be sure to investigate and make use of all of the campus resources available to you. Keep your workload manageable by developing a routine and schedule that is manageable for you. Leverage your experiences and learn from others around you. Do all of these things and not only will you reach your goal, you'll enjoy the process of getting there.

Attention Readers

The remaining chapters of this book have been condensed. To receive a full version of the book, or to place your order, please contact us today.



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College Resources

CHAPTER 2

You've applied and been granted admission to the community college of your choosing. Now the faculty and staff is open arms and smiling, inviting you to attend this or that event, suggesting you check out this or that opportunity, and even—in some smaller colleges—telling you to “Stop by my office any time!”

College is a fully supported adventure that goes beyond just academics. You now have a team to help you learn, succeed, stay healthy, meet new people, and even figure out how to pay for the whole experience. The resources available to you are astounding and this chapter will introduce you to some of them.

Note that available resources vary from college to college, and your school might have different names for some of the resources highlighted below.

General Support

Dean of Students/Student Services/Office of Student Life

The Dean of Students Office serves as the liaison between students and the faculty and administration of the college. Its purpose is to provide a variety of programs and services that support the campus community. The Dean of Students usually coordinates or oversees student activities, student government, and campus safety. This office—or its website—is a great starting place for learning more about campus life. It's also the go-to resource if you have a question and you're not sure where to direct it.

Disability Support Services

This office offers academic and other important support to students with disabilities. Disability Services staff can help determine eligibility, facilitate academic accommodations, and work with other campus entities to ensure accessibility for students with disabilities, as well as provide education about disability issues.

International Student Services

This office provides orientation services, advising and counseling, employment aid, health insurance programs, banking and financial services, immigration support, and resources for families of international students.

Want to read more? Visit: www.CollegeTransitionPublishing.com



Campus Activities

CHAPTER 3

A worthwhile college experience goes beyond the lecture halls and late nights at the library. Your time on campus offers you many ways to be active and engaged in the broader world around you. Campus activities play a vital part in your experience outside of the classroom.

The variety of organizations, sports groups, and other social clubs available to you is endless and appeals to every interest imaginable, from niche groups (Bocce Ball Club) to broad, nationally-based organizations (Amnesty International). Take advantage of the opportunities and don't be afraid to let your curiosity get the best of you; after all, there's no better time than now to try new things.

This chapter will discuss the following:

- Types of campus activities
- How to choose activities to participate in
- How and why to commit to your chosen activities

Types of Campus Activities

There are as many on-campus activities as there are student interests. Some are one-time or seasonal events that anybody can participate in. Check your schools event calendar or the multicultural center's event calendar to find out what's going on around campus. You'll find plays, lectures, poetry readings, film screenings, debates, celebrations, and outings that are open to anyone. Whenever possible, get out and take advantage of the opportunity to experience something new and different.

You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.

Plato, Greek philosopher

Some activities are ongoing and entail a bigger commitment. Here's an overview to get you thinking about what might interest you most:

Academic Clubs and Societies

Some Academic Clubs and Societies are highly selective or invitation-only. Most simply require that you be interested in the subject. Examples include Astronomy Club, Spanish Conversation Club, and literary societies.

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Campus Safety and Security

CHAPTER 4

The college brochure features glossy photos of ivy-covered buildings and groups of diverse students chatting in autumnal sunlight. There are photos of young people sitting attentively in a lecture hall, or cheerfully handling pipettes, or engaging in an intense discussion with a professor. You probably won't see images of security guards and campus police. It's unlikely that the brochure will include a table of statistics of crimes committed on campus. But all the scenes of comfort and learning are made possible by your college's careful attention to security and safety.

People are fond of making a distinction between college and the "real world." However, college *is* the real world; it is your real world for the next four years or more. And while your real world includes exciting lectures and maybe even sun-dappled conversations in the quad, it also contains some dangers and requires your awareness.

Your school's role in keeping you safe is to provide campus police, well-lit walkways, education on potential risks and prevention, emergency training and drills, and to coordinate with state and local agencies to stay abreast of best practices in campus security. Your role is to use these resources and education to guide your behavior.

This chapter will provide a overview of campus safety issues, including

- drinking and drugs
- sexual assault
- burglary and robbery
- identity theft
- stalking and harrasment
- cyber safety
- general safety tips

Drinking and Drugs

Your health and safety are directly affected by your use (or non-use) of alcohol and drugs. The lower your inhibitions and more clouded your judgment the more likely you are to put yourself at risk or to put others at risk. We don't intend to be preachy in this chapter, but we must be real: the college years, especially the early college years, are a time when many people experiment with alcohol and drugs. Binge drinking, while not an exclusively college behavior, is very closely associated with the college experience.

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Developing Relationships

CHAPTER 5

College is prime time for meeting people and making connections. You are surrounded by people from a variety of backgrounds and interests. You have instructors from all over the world, instructors with experience and research in fascinating and sometimes obscure fields. The student body and faculty are diverse, but everybody has one thing in common. Your fellow students and you have chosen to attend this college and your instructors have chosen to teach at this college. You share a campus, a town, and at least some values—you all believe in the importance of education, for example. This kernel of shared interest is what makes college an *experience* instead of simply a series of classes one takes.

Your relationships with instructors and other students will in many ways define your college experience. This chapter covers the following topics:

- developing relationships with your instructors
- getting to know your instructor outside the classroom
- emailing and meeting with your instructors
- difficulties with instructors
- developing relationships with your classmates

Developing Relationships with Your Instructors

College instructors include professors, associate or assistant professors, lecturers, adjuncts, and teaching assistants. Some may have extensive experience in their field and also in teaching, others may have little teacher training. Some may be quite casual and welcoming to students, others may be more formal. Inevitably you will have instructors who don't teach according to your learning style. Also, you will find yourself in a variety of classroom environments. You might be in a class of 8 students or in a lecture hall with 500 students.

Keep an open mind—you might think you need hands-on experiential learning, but find that a passionate lecturer is your favorite professor. You might feel lost in a cavernous lecture hall until you make a connection with the teaching



Academic Integrity

CHAPTER 6

Cheating is tempting, easy, and costly. It's also on the rise, perhaps because certain websites and networks of students portray academic dishonesty as an inevitable part of college life, just another tool to use. Some students who have misgivings about cheating find themselves in situations where it seems like the only option. The costs depend on the situation, but could include zero credit in a course or expulsion from school. Of course there are other, unquantifiable consequences, such as an uneasy conscience.

In this chapter we will:

- define academic integrity and academic dishonesty
- discuss the pressures or attitudes that encourage academic dishonesty and how to handle them
- outline some of the possible consequences of academic misconduct

What is Academic Integrity?

The core value of higher education is academic integrity. The Center for Academic Integrity, a consortium of institutions based at Clemson University, defines academic integrity as “a commitment, even in the face of adversity, to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.”

Students need to trust professors to teach and evaluate honorably and fairly, and professors need to trust their students to behave and act honorably and responsibly. A college without such standards would have no purpose: The interactions between students and professors would be pointless and a degree from such an institution would be meaningless.

Administrators, instructors, and students all have a responsibility for promoting and supporting academic integrity.



Keys to Success

CHAPTER 7

Intelligence, ambition, and hard work can carry you far, but true success depends on other factors that aren't so measurable. Your life in general and your college experience, in particular, will be richer if you

- Maintain a positive attitude
- Develop high self-esteem and self-efficacy
- Set goals and make plans for attaining them
- Know how to contribute to and get the most out of teamwork
- Explore and celebrate the diversity around you

And, coincidentally, this chapter will cover all those topics!

Attitude

What is credited with delaying aging and has (practically) its own section in the book store? That's right: A positive attitude. It's not measured on any report card, but it's one of the most important attributes a college student can possess. Your attitude towards your classes, living situation, peers, and yourself may be even more influential to your success and happiness than your skills, talents, and knowledge. And if you don't already tend to have a positive attitude there's good news: You can learn to develop a habit of positive thinking. In this section, we'll:

- define a positive attitude
- share how to create and maintain a positive attitude

What is a Positive Attitude?

It's difficult to pinpoint just what separates those with positive attitudes from those without, but there are some traits closely associated with positive attitudes:

Optimism - Positive people tend to have hope and to see the good in a situation.

Persistence - Positive people believe problems can be resolved and puzzles can be solved. Their hope leads them to persist, to not give up.

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Health Insurance and Healthy Living

CHAPTER 8

We know this chapter would be voted “Most Likely to be Skipped Over” if a contest were held. We considered titling it Human Sexuality or How to Guarantee a 4.0 just to get your attention, but ultimately decided to go for a more subtle (and honest) opening:

HEALTH INSURANCE IS REALLY IMPORTANT, even if you’re young and feel like injury and illness is something for another generation, like baldness, a preference for comfortable shoes, and the desire to eat dinner at 4:30 p.m. You’re not alone if you feel that way. But the truth is that health insurance should be a priority. After all, a catastrophic illness or injury could sideline you physically and financially for years.

This chapter will cover:

- the importance of health insurance
- health insurance options

Yes, You Need Health Insurance

1 in 6 young adults has a chronic illness, such as diabetes or asthma.

Over 23% of young adults had at least one emergency room visit in 2011.

Source: US Dept. of Health and Human Services; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Importance of Health Insurance

Health insurance is a must. Even if you are young and healthy, it is an enormous risk to go without health coverage. Taking such a risk—even for a few months—could have devastating consequences. The out-of-pocket cost of a broken ankle is over \$1,500. Going to the ER for a sore throat, getting tested, and being told to go home and get some rest will run you about \$500. (Of course, avoiding the ER when you do have a serious illness can cost even more.) And these examples are small potatoes next to catastrophic illnesses, which can easily rack up tens and even hundreds of thousands of dollars. Note: *Under the Affordable Care Act, often called Obamacare, health insurance is mandatory for the vast majority of the population. Individuals who don’t carry coverage will be fined. Exemptions to the mandate include members of some Indian tribes and individuals making less than \$10,000 per year.*



Housing Options

CHAPTER 9

Unless you already have a place to call home during this transition into college life, you'll need to figure out your housing situation. Some community colleges offer on-campus housing, but most do not. This chapter will walk you through housing options and related issues, including:

- choosing housing: on- vs. off-campus housing
- finding the right apartment
- understanding your lease
- tips for moving in and out

On-Campus Housing

If you attend a school with on-campus housing available, that housing is maintained, operated, and subsidized by your college. While most on-campus housing is located on the campus, some colleges—especially those in urban areas—maintain housing facilities on properties that aren't actually part of the campus. Common types of on-campus housing include:

Residence Halls

Residence halls are usually multi-story buildings featuring rooms that are shared by two, possibly three, roommates. Each residence hall floor usually has a kitchen and living area as well as a suite of bathrooms that is shared by all the residents of a floor.

Suites

Some dorms are divided into suites—apartment-like sections of a building. A suite may consist of two to four bedrooms connected by a common living area with a kitchen and shared bathroom.

Student Apartments or Townhouses

These are living situations modeled after off-campus housing. They are just like an apartment or townhouse and are usually very popular. (Hmm, perhaps because you don't have to share a bathroom with forty other people?)



Roommates

CHAPTER 10

If you're like most college students, your roommates up to this point have been family members. There were probably power struggles, breaches of privacy ("Oh! Dad! I didn't know you were still in there!"), and miscommunications. There was also probably love and affection. And squabbling siblings. Moving out on your own can be so difficult and such a relief—and then you realize you aren't really on your own at all. You have a roommate (or two or three) and life is about to get very interesting.

You might end up being best friends with your first-year roommate, but don't even consider it yet. The first thing to do is simply to establish a friendly relationship that includes both freedoms and responsibilities for both people. This chapter will include:

- a description of a good roommate
- recommendations for developing a good relationship with your roommate
- strategies for dealing with difficult roommate situations

The Good Roommate

Chances are you didn't have to worry about being a good roommate back home. If you weren't one, Mom or Dad or a sibling was right there to remind you of your duties and check your attitude. You knew the rules of the house and everybody's boundaries. Living with a roommate is different because 1) you haven't grown up with him/her, 2) you won't have the usual cues to remind you of your household rights and responsibilities. Good roommates...

Show consideration. Good roommates are considerate and think about their impact on the people around them. They respect their roommate's rights, property, and independence. They appreciate their roommate's individuality—including culture, religion, political beliefs, values, musical taste, and appearance. Good roommates show gratitude and appreciation.



Homesickness

CHAPTER 11

The high school student afflicted with so-called “senioritis” likely interprets the term “homesick” as “sick of home.” By spring of senior year, many students think of home as a place to change clothes, grab some food, and engage in the occasional argument with their parents. But things change. And in the fall those same students who couldn’t wait to leave often become the college freshmen who ache to be home again, and who write long and despairing Facebook posts about it.

The symptoms of homesickness vary and may appear before you even hang up the first poster in your dorm room. You may feel uneasy, dissatisfied, annoyed, unsure of yourself, sad and lonely. And the fact that you’re feeling these things now, when you’ve finally made the much-anticipated transition may make you even more uneasy, dissatisfied, annoyed, etc. Sure, you knew you’d miss the good things—the dog, free cable, and other perks. But who knew you could also miss your dad’s corny jokes or that strange sinister voice your mom uses when she wakes you up to do chores on a Saturday morning? How can something be so annoying in May and so poignant the following September?

Starting college is a lot like moving to another country. Whether you’re a three-hour drive or a cross-country flight away from home, you have to figure out new customs and a new language. It’s dizzying: a whole new set of friends, a new town to explore, and the ability to sleep in as late as you want (provided you schedule your classes right). The freedoms of college life are overwhelming. And then there are the real stressors: Challenging classes, roommate issues, and figuring out how to finance the whole experience. So much is unfamiliar that, naturally, you long for that most familiar place: home.

The only sure cure for homesickness is to move back home. However, there are other less-extreme remedies that will allay the symptoms. This chapter will

- explain why students get homesick
- give you ideas for coping with homesickness



Social Media and You

CHAPTER 12

What is power? Consider the whistleblowers who can, with a few anonymous posts, leak information that shakes up a huge corporation or a government. Or the community that, after being devastated by a natural disaster, rallies and organizes assistance through tweets and Facebook posts. Or the college student who can, with a green screen and a cheap camera, transform himself into a popular movie critic. Thank social media for all of that.

As with all forms of great power, there's a flip side. Social media makes it possible to connect with loved ones, acquaintances, and strangers who share your interests; it also makes it possible for other people to paint a one-sided picture of you that's hard to control. It allows information to spread quickly, but that information might be incorrect or damaging. Social media is also quite deceptive: the "little guy" can turn him or herself into a powerful voice for his or her cause; the bully can be a jerk 24/7 to a huge audience. And, of course, social media can be addictive and a waste of time. But you already know this, right?

In this chapter, we'll discuss:

- Connecting with friends and family via social media
- Building a good online presence—now and into your future
- Risks of social media
- Ways to improve privacy and security online

Connecting via Social Media

As a 21st century college student, you have broad reach. You can connect easily with all sorts of people and groups and maintain those connections. It can also give you a platform for building connections with other students, instructors, and even alumni.

Incidentally, one challenge you'll have as a first-year student might be connecting to your new environment with the people right next to you. You know, the *physical* ones. Social media also makes it simple to stay in touch with everyone at home.

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Military Veterans and Service Members

CHAPTER 13

If you're a veteran you're no stranger to transition and the ability to adapt and overcome. Throughout your military career, you not only received training and developed expertise, you may have also endured deployments, separation from loved ones, and a move every couple of years. As a veteran, you value taking risks and having a mission, which makes you an ideal candidate for this new task of succeeding in higher education. This chapter will discuss the following topics that relate specifically to veterans in college:

- Military culture and college culture
- What it means to attend college as a veteran
- Student veteran strengths, as well as pitfalls to watch out for
- Resources on campus
- Education benefits
- State and federal resources
- Career resources

Military Culture and College Culture

Generally speaking, core aspects of military culture include

- Discipline
- Organized hierarchy and rank system
- Communication that is direct and to the point
- Irregular work hours and a possibility of hazardous conditions
- An emphasis on teamwork, not individualism
- Not talking about your problems (“Suck it up and drive on...”)

Veterans arrive at college after having spent a good portion of time living and working within a unique culture. Military culture, after all, is highly structured, with its own customs and policies—not to mention its own alphabet and a

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Academic Planning

CHAPTER 14

In college, you should customize your academic plan to best suit your individual interests. When you joined the military you selected a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS); most likely, you did so after researching your options, taking the ASVAB, and speaking with your recruiter about all of the different career fields available. Similarly, crafting your academic plan requires a good bit of self-reflection as well as forecasting what you see yourself doing in the future. In other words, it is a process of exploration that involves asking questions, setting goals and taking action while constantly assessing your progress along the way.

To get started, consider the following questions: What kind of job would I enjoy going to each day? What types of subjects hold my interest? Is my area of interest best suited as a hobby or a career? How can I match my education to my long-term goals?

This chapter will discuss the following:

- Your academic advisor and you
- Selecting a major and minor
- Changing your major
- Developing a graduation plan
- Selecting and registering for classes

Your Academic Advisor

Your academic advisor is an invaluable resource to keep you on course when you're navigating the college landscape. Ideally, your academic advisor is an approachable, caring, knowledgeable mentor who will inform you about options and requirements and help guide you in your decision making. Usually, your advisor is assigned to you. He or she might be a full-time professional advisor or a professor in your chosen field of study who also advises students. At this early stage your "chosen field" is whatever box you checked when you sent in your initial paperwork. You have the option to change advisors.

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Learning Styles

CHAPTER 15

Hollywood's vision of learning includes agonizingly dull lectures (think *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*: the economics teacher intones, "The Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act, which...anyone?...Raised or lowered?Did it work?...anyone?") as well as inspiring classrooms where passionate teachers shout, "Stand up! Stand on your desks!" The teacher either numbs or transforms. The students are either stunned by boredom or awestruck. What's missing from many of these fictional versions of school is the students' active role in their own self-transformations.

You will have inspiring, passionate instructors, but don't wait for someone to leap onto a desk and recite poetry. You are your most important teacher. A successful student knows that and knows how to learn. He or she is open to new ideas, engages with and reflects on her experiences, and seeks challenges. In this chapter we'll:

- provide a brief overview of the learning process
- give examples of individual learning styles and complementary study strategies
- discuss the importance of being an active learner and a critical thinker

*When the
student is ready,
the master will
appear.*

Buddhist Proverb

The Learning Process

What is learning? Definitions of learning abound and sometimes contradict each other. There are theories, charts, seemingly paradoxical explanations ("learning is the act of unlearning"), models and wikis.

We'll keep it simple here and focus on one widely used and referenced definition, and suggest resources if you'd like information about others. Learning is, according to David Kolb, a professor at Case Western Reserve University and an influential educational theorist, "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience." Kolb's model of experiential learning involves action and reflection, experience and abstraction. Students may process



Memory Skills and Multitasking

CHAPTER 16

Now for a test: In what year did Columbus sail the ocean blue? How many days hath September? What percentage of our brains do we actually use?

The answers are 1492, 30, and 100%.

How did you do? Many people would get the first two correct and the last one wrong. When something is stored in the brain and we can retrieve it easily—through a rhyme or because we have a strong association, for instance—it is an indelible memory. If you answered 10% to the last question you remembered correctly, but remembered a myth. The 10% myth is often repeated in our culture in ads and everyday conversations, and it's usually attributed to an authority, such as Albert Einstein. It's also believable: I must be using only 10% of my brain; otherwise, I would have remembered to turn off the stove/mail the check/make that appointment. No wonder so many of us have locked it away as a memory. In order to remember that it's a myth we'll have to make a concerted effort to re-learn or “un-learn” our prior knowledge.

Memory is not the same thing as learning. A person who remembers all sorts of facts, dates, and information but does not understand their context, is not knowledgeable. A wise person understands concepts, analyzes and synthesizes ideas, and thinks critically—and knows that learning is not simply accruing bits of information. However, strengthening your memory will help you do well at college, so in this chapter, we will

- define short-term and long-term memory
- discuss the factors that support building memory
- provide memorization tips and tricks
- discuss multitasking and how it inhibits concentration

Short-term and Long-term Memory

Learning literally changes your brain: It changes the internal structure of neurons and increases the number of synapses between neurons. Memory is the record of the learning process.

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Time Management

CHAPTER 17

“Time is what we want most, but what we use worst,” declared William Penn, who managed to make time to found a colony. We can only speculate what he might have gotten accomplished if he had had a smartphone. (Maybe he’d have been even more efficient? Or maybe he’d have spent his hours browsing reddit?)

As a first-year college student you probably have more free time—that is, time you can plan and define for yourself—than ever. On the other hand, with a challenging class load, work demands (possibly), and social distractions (certainly), it’s easy to feel like there aren’t enough hours to do what you want to do.

This chapter aims to challenge Penn’s statement. Time *is* what we want most—and what we *can* use well. In the following pages, we’ll:

- show you how to create a time log
- recommend time management strategies that will help you take control of your time
- reveal common time zappers—and how to avoid them

Your Personal Time Log

In order to manage your time well, you need to know how you currently spend it. Keep track of how you use time for three days—from how long you spend in the shower each day to how many hours you watch television to how many

Example of one student’s time log:

Time	Activity
8:00 – 8:15 a.m.	Wake up, shower
8:15 – 8:30 a.m.	Get dressed
8:30 – 8:45 a.m.	Check email
8:45 – 9:10 a.m.	Eat breakfast
9:10 – 10:15 a.m.	Study

hours you spend sleeping, eating, studying, attending class....You get the picture.

Keep a small notebook with you so you can write things down as you do them. Record your activities accurately. (If you’re supposed to be studying, but you take a break to check your favorite blog, write it down!) It might seem



Communication, Note Taking, and Study Skills

CHAPTER 18

It's not what you know that's important, but how you know it and how well you communicate it to others. Whether you're majoring in Anthrozoology or Japanese, you need to master the same essential skills: How to learn and how to communicate. The best students (and graduates, for that matter) can write and present well. They participate in class, take good notes, and study effectively. This chapter will help you become not just a successful student, but a master student. It will:

- outline the critical reading, writing, and speaking skills
- explain the importance of participation and give you strategies for participating in a meaningful way
- provide essential tips for note taking and studying
- identify resources that will help you master your studies

Writing Skills

Professors have observed a steady decline in college students' basic writing skills. All students—including math and science majors—need to know how to write well in a variety of contexts. If a student hasn't mastered the basics before college, he or she should seek remediation even before he or she unpacks the new mini-fridge. Colleges usually provide entry-level composition classes, workshops and specialized sessions on writing, in addition to well-staffed writing centers. Some schools, like Purdue University, have top-notch online writing resources—which can be particularly helpful if you're working on a paper at 3 a.m., when no tutoring centers are open. You can help yourself by taking advantage of these resources and learning the essentials of good writing.

*I never write Metropolis
for seven cents because I can
get the same price for city.*

*I never write policeman
because I can get the same
money for cop.*

Mark Twain,
American author and humorist



Test Taking Strategies

CHAPTER 19

At some point college exams will be a memory, something to reflect on, and even, in some cases, chuckle about. The anxiety will be just part of the past, as will the stacks of 3 x 5 flash cards, the long study sessions, and the smell of freshly sharpened No. 2 pencils.

While some people might consider exams a nightmare designed to weed out the faint of heart, it's important to remember that they exist for good reason. Namely, to consolidate learning. Exams provide an incentive to learn. They also give you a purpose for synthesizing the information and ideas you've encountered in a unit or semester—if you didn't go through the steps of reviewing, studying, and testing you wouldn't know the course content as deeply. Exams also serve as important indicators of gaps in your knowledge; in this way, both you and your instructor learn from your performance on an exam.

Of course, exams are an imperfect measure of what a person truly knows—a well-prepared student can have a bad day and a well-intentioned professor can write a bad test. Knowing that exams are imperfect should help ease any anxiety; if you have a bad day and do poorly on one, it's just that—a bad day and one test—not a marker of your ultimate success or failure.

This chapter will:

- walk you through exam anxiety
- help prepare you for the days before the exam
- offer unique strategies for taking various types of exams
- provide the hows and whys of reviewing a graded exam

Focus on the value of learning the information you're being tested on.



Grades and Your GPA

CHAPTER 20

Good grades open doors. Four year college admissions officers consider overall grade point average (GPA) as well as grades in specific course work. So, too, do future employers. In fact, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers' Job Outlook 2013 survey, "more than 78 percent [of employers] say that they will screen candidates by GPA." The job market plays a role here: When employers have an abundance of applicants, standards go up. If an employer has a GPA cutoff, it will likely be higher in years of high unemployment.

Good grades aren't the only way to advance. Internship experience and commitment to extracurricular activities are also highly valued. However, it's worth noting how important grades are so that you can take steps now to do well in your classes—and to maintain a solid GPA throughout your college years.

This chapter will:

- provide an overview of grading systems
- outline alternative grading options
- illustrate the value of earning good grades your first year
- recommend strategies to maintain good grades

3.0

Most of the employers who have a GPA cutoff—in other words, who won't consider applicants with less than a certain GPA—report that 3.0 is the magic number. Other criteria include the applicant's college, major, and experience.

Source:

NACE Job Outlook 2013 Survey

Grading Systems

Instructors work hard to grade fairly and accurately, but the methods of grading vary widely and may cause confusion for students. Some instructors assess student performance based on one or two major written assignments; others don't grade written work but calculate students' grades based on a test or two per



Paying for College

CHAPTER 21

Depending on your COA, your FAFSA, your EFC (which will be noted on your SAR), and your enrollment status, you may qualify for a FSEOG or a Pell or your parents may get a PLUS. Now, your FAA can tell you all about how your aid is disbursed, how interest will accrue, and if it is capitalized. For more information, check out the NSLDS.

Sometimes it feels like you need a degree just to figure out how to pay for college. Or two degrees: one in finance and one in acronyms. To make matters more confusing, the rules and amounts seem to change daily.

In this chapter we will explain the most critical terms related to college finance, give you an overview of your options for paying for this investment that is your college education, and provide you with the websites and phone numbers that will be essential for figuring out your personal college financing plan. Here are the sections included in this chapter:

- Work
- FAFSA
- Federal Grants and Work-Study
- Loans
- Other options

Work

While going to school full time and working is a challenge, it is not uncommon. In fact, nearly 39% of full-time college students work (Source: www.bls.gov). The benefits to working while attending school are:

- a reduced debt load when you graduate
- work experience that can help you qualify for future internships and jobs
- experience managing time and balancing priorities

The drawbacks to working while in school are:

- extra stress from trying to budget time and energy
- lack of focus on academics might mean less success in your classes
- little time for social or extracurricular activities

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Budgeting Made Easy

CHAPTER 22

“That’s not in my budget” and “We’re living on a budget.” The word budget might bring to mind restrictions and limitations, a list of shouldn’ts and can’ts. But a budget is simply a plan. Any limitations it involves are actually steps on the way to a goal.

Budgeting when you’re in college might seem unnecessary. After all, when you’re broke, you’re broke, right? What’s to plan? When you’re living on student loans and ramen noodles it may seem like making a budget is a frivolous exercise. But if you’re living on your own you need to budget, whether you make \$1,000 or \$100,000 a year. Don’t sweat: a budget doesn’t have to take days to create. And while it may sound restricting, it can actually be quite freeing. A good budget, combined with savvy spending, will help you survive your college years in good financial shape. This chapter will show you how by

- showing you how to create a budget that works
- outlining strategies for dealing with budget problems
- sharing tips for stretching your money

Create a Budget

A budget empowers you by giving you a true picture of your financial situation as well as a blueprint for making financial decisions. It’s easy to think of things to want: a car, a vacation, graduate school. What’s challenging is figuring out what actions you need to take now to be able to afford those things in the future.

Here’s a simple approach to creating a budget that will work for you:

- 1. Calculate your income.** How much money is coming in? Consider all sources, from scholarships, loans, grants, parents, jobs, investments, and savings.
- 2. Calculate your expenses.** How much money is going out? This step takes a little more time because you don’t want to leave anything out and there are probably all sorts of expenses to consider.



Banking

CHAPTER 23

They come bearing gifts of free t-shirts and water bottles. Sometimes they even offer gift cards or cash. While your piggy bank sat mutely in the corner of your room, these banks send cheerful representatives to campus to sign you up for a new checking account. You need a bank, they need customers. It's a win, win situation, right?

Right. Except that banks are in the business of making money and you'll want to make sure the bank you choose doesn't make too much money off of you. Consider this: the average checking account costs over \$200 annually. Free checking is no exception, as the fees for ATM and teller use, automatic bill payment, check writing, and overdrafts mount up. We know one college student who was shocked when she added up all the fees she had paid over a one year period—and realized it was over \$800!

Avoiding such financial disasters doesn't mean you have to keep your money tucked away in a box under your bed; you just need to choose—and use—your checking account wisely.

This chapter will:

- help you choose a bank that makes sense for you
- discuss how to open a bank account
- teach you how to keep track of your account balance
- offer you money-saving tips for using banking services

Choosing a Bank

You have three main choices: a bank with physical locations, an online bank, or a credit union. Banks and credit unions offer similar services, but differ in whom they serve and how they do business. Banks want to make a profit, and do so by charging service fees and offering low interest rates on deposits. Credit unions, on the other hand, are nonprofit and are owned by the members they serve. Their business model allows them to offer services at a much lower cost and to provide higher rates on deposits. However, credit unions are not open



Your Credit

CHAPTER 24

Somewhere, even as you read this, your life is being summarized as a series of entries about what you owe, what you buy, and how timely you pay your bills. Every time you do something to affect your credit—sign up for a new credit card, make a late payment, complete a loan application—it is recorded in a report that may be read by future lenders, landlords, and even employers.

Why is everyone so interested in your credit report? What does it reveal about you? Think of it as a credit report card that provides a snapshot of your financial responsibility. It's a record of every time you apply for or accept a loan or other form of credit. It also tracks how you use your credit—how much you have available, how much you owe, and how you repay. The people who will be considering granting you a student loan or giving you a new credit card want to know your financial track record.

Do you know what your credit report contains? If not, you should. Even if you haven't used credit much at this point in your life, you need to be watchful to make sure someone else isn't using it for you.

This chapter will tell you what you need to know about credit. We will

- explain what a credit report is
- outline the importance of credit reports
- tell you how to obtain a free copy of your credit report
- describe how to maintain good credit

What is a Credit Report?

A credit report is a detailed history of your borrowing habits for the past seven to ten years. Your credit report is a record of what you owe and to whom, what you've paid, and if you've made any late payments. It also reveals personal information, such as your social security number, current and former addresses and telephone numbers. Any time you order a report or authorize someone else to do so, the inquiry is recorded. Several companies called credit bureaus compile and maintain databases for the purpose of creating such reports.

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Credit Card and Debt Management

CHAPTER 25

The Freshman 15 is nothing. Let's talk about the college graduate 30,000. We're not talking pounds here, of course, but dollars in debt. Debt is money owed to a creditor. According to Sallie Mae and the U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, the average undergraduate college student graduates with over \$26,600 in student loan debt and over \$3,000 in credit card debt. Yikes!

The college years are not just about personal growth, it turns out. They're also about credit, debt, and other financial management topics. And you'll want to get financially savvy now or you could end up graduating with a diploma and a mountain of debt.

You do not have to join the ranks of students who are inordinately burdened by debt. While your circumstances may require you to accumulate some debt during your college years, you can do so wisely. This chapter will show you how by

- helping you understand debt
- recommending strategies to keep your debt in check
- teaching you how to recognize if your debt is out of control
- outlining your options if your debt becomes overwhelming

Understanding Debt

If you have debt, you are not alone in your age group. Recent statistics illustrate the reality of undergraduate student loan and credit card debt:

- In 2012, 70% of college students graduated with student loan debt. (source: projectsonstudentdebt.org)
- From 2008 to 2012, average student loan debt increased 6% per year. (source: projectsonstudentdebt.org)
- 1 in 10 students graduate with over \$40,000 in student loans. (source: projectsonstudentdebt.org)
- Undergraduate students' average monthly credit card balance is over \$3,000. (source: Sallie Mae)

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Your Career

CHAPTER 26

Prepare now for the career of your future, whether that career begins next week or in a few years. In some ways, your transition from community college to the workplace will be smooth. After all, you've likely learned the current best practices in your profession and have been trained in the latest technologies. Also, college students, like most professionals, often work under deadline and sometimes with a team of people. Have confidence that your education and training has prepared you well. This chapter is about what you can do now to get your career off to a great start

Ten Steps to Career Success

Get to the career center NOW

We recommend that students begin visiting their campus career center early in their first year of college. It is an invaluable resource: you'll find a helpful staff and everything you need to map out your major and career plans. It's also the go-to place to find out about internships, events, workshops, career fairs, and employer information sessions. Many career centers also provide mock interviews along with guidance on how to write an effective resume.

Make connections

You've heard the saying "It's all about who you know." However, a more accurate statement is "It's all about who knows you." Developing a group of contacts and mentors—in other words, networking—is one of the most important things you can do in your early career.

Networking keeps you tapped in to the ideas, trends, and information that are relevant to your profession, makes you more visible, and helps you connect with others. However, networking doesn't necessarily come naturally. Like any other skill, it must be developed.

So, how do you build your network? First, determine who you already know, from family and friends to advisors and supervisors. Second, consider additional avenues for networking, including professional groups, educational opportunities, and volunteer work. Third, maintain a professional online presence, especially on



Planning for Continuing Education

CHAPTER 27

Depending on your career goal, transfer to a four-year college may or may not be a part of your immediate plan after graduation. For some community college graduates, immediate transfer to a four-year college is a given. This is especially true for those students earning an Associate of Arts degree, which is designed to be the transfer equivalent of the first two years of a bachelor's degree. For others, transfer to a four-year college may be an option pursued later on, after graduating from an Associate of Applied Science program, spending some time in the workforce, and finding that moving up the career ladder sometimes requires additional education. In either case, you will benefit from being familiar with the information and next steps outlined in this chapter as you plan for your transition to a four-year college.

Ten Steps to Successfully Transition to a Four-Year College

Start planning right away

By selecting your 4-year transfer college early on, you can more efficiently plan for your Bachelor's degree, and select courses that will satisfy requirements at both the community college and the four-year college. Having the correct information early on will help to avoid the disappointment of finding out that half of the courses you completed at the community college don't count toward the requirements of your bachelor's degree. Pinpointing the exact college you'll transfer to early in your community college experience can be a challenge. So, the best move is to select two or three colleges that offer your intended major and fit with your specific needs. Doing so will allow you to research the admission and degree requirements for each school, and make the proper connections with transfer advisors who can help determine which courses will be applied toward your bachelor's degree and any additional requirements you will need to satisfy prior to transfer.

Align your plan with your career goals

Is a Bachelor's degree a necessary component of your career plan? Having a solid handle on your occupational choice and career goals will help you to determine the most commonly required credentials in your chosen field.