

SECTION THREE

Achieving Success

How to Succeed in College

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When I started college, I changed my name. I decided I didn't feel like an "Agnes" and that "Tracy," my middle name, suited me much better. Voila! I morphed into a "Tracy."

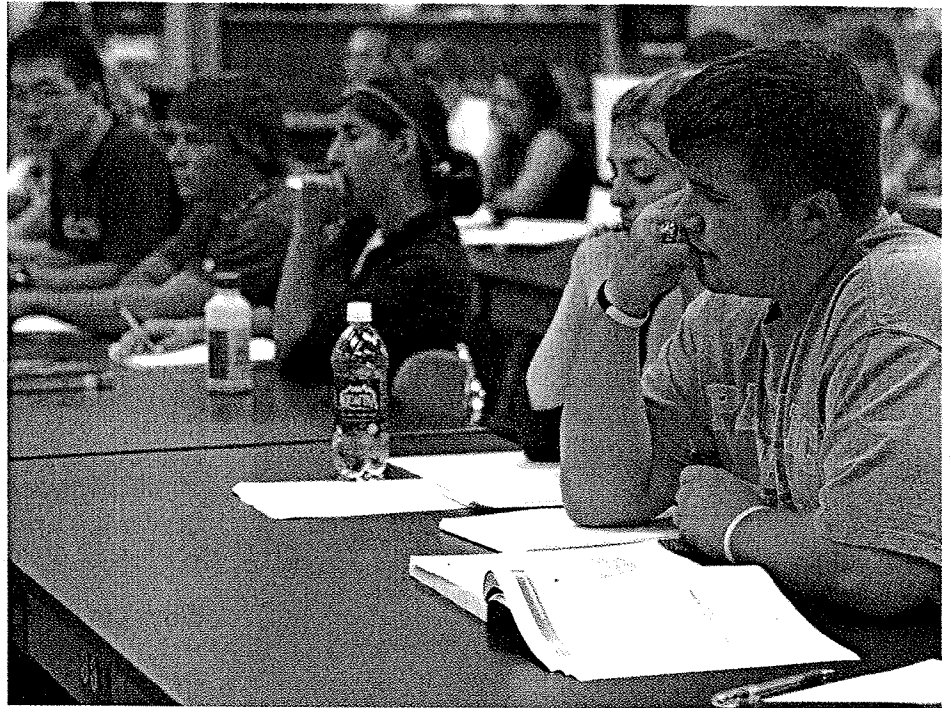
This is the ultimate beauty of college. It is the only time in your life where you can completely transform yourself into the person you want to become. Nobody from your past lurks in the background to give you away. They are somewhere else.

As you prepare for college, spend time reflecting on who it is you want to be and plan for your metamorphosis. How can you transform from a procrastinating goof-off into an organized, successful student? All it takes is a little knowledge and a lot of planning.

Here are 19 things I tell our Seton Hall students they need to do to be successful:

19. Stop multi-tasking. You may think you can do lots of things at the same time, but the simple truth is that you can not. If you slow down and start trying to do only one thing at a time, you will discover just how accomplished you really are. In other words, turn off your computer and unplug your iPod. Concentrating on one task at a time improves retention and quality.

18. Read. Students think they can fake it, but professors are not stupid. I always know when a student has read the material and when a student has simply read a summary or watched the movie. It really is a form of cheating - you are trying to trick your professor into believing you have done the work. Just do it.



Pacific Lutheran University

17. Use the library. A college library is much different from a high school library. At college, you will have access to sophisticated databases and in-depth texts that can enhance your knowledge. Make sure you take advantage of the tutorials and tours the college offers.

16. Learn the lingo. Terms like core curriculum, pass/fail, add/drop, bursar, registrar, and provost sound pretty foreign right now, but in a year, you will be an expert on this new language. To be a knowledgeable member of your new community, learn who the people are on campus and what the university's policies dictate.

15. Learn how to study. Most high school students are lousy studiers. Thirteen years of bad study habits have taught you how to slide by. Students come to college thinking they can fake it here, too. It is not easy. Work piles up

quickly when you do not have anyone nagging you to get it done. Professors expect a level of critical thinking to which high school students are not accustomed. Many "B" students in high school have no idea how to read efficiently and have virtually no note-taking skills. Many colleges offer study skill courses and workshops that can hone these rusty skills - *take advantage of them.*

14. Learn your professors' names and titles and use them. I always shake my head when I ask a student a professor's name and they do not know it. It shows a lack of engagement. If I ask you to tell me the name of your kindergarten teacher, you remember that name even though you learned it 12 years ago. Learn your professors' names and rank. Professors who have a doctorate are called "Doctor" on campus. Instructors without a doctorate are called "Professor." Use these titles. It shows respect.

13. Hand your assignments in

on time. Sounds simple, right? Somehow when deadlines loom, students get distracted. Make this a priority. Always meet your deadlines.

12. Be prepared for class. Do not be a faker. Get the work done before class and you will not panic if you are called on to respond to a question.

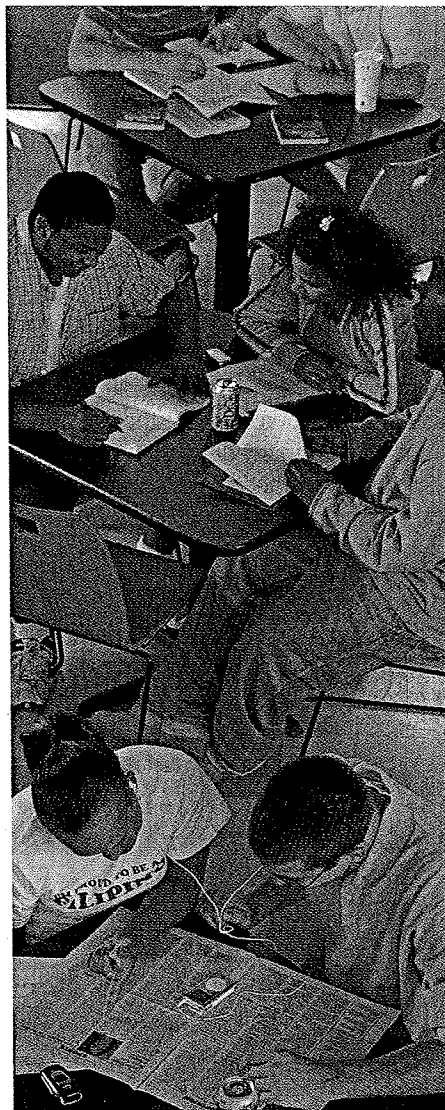
11. Be on time for class and appointments. Your professors' time is more valuable than you may think. Respect class times and appointments. I know a professor who locks the door when she walks in the class. If you come after her, you can not get in. She is trying to teach her students that it is incredibly distracting and disruptive to arrive late. In high school, you got detention for being late. In college, you irritate the person who is ultimately going to give you a grade.

10. Observe appropriate classroom etiquette. Do not bring food to class. Turn off your cell phone. Do not blurt out answers. You know the drill. Behave yourself and adhere to any special rules the professor lays down on the first day.

9. Leave mom out of it! If you think you are being treated unfairly or received the wrong grade, by all means speak to your professor. Under NO circumstances, involve your mom, your dad or another grown-up. You are an adult now and need to learn how to fight your own battles. There is not a professor in the country who wants to negotiate with a parent.

8. Speaking of mom, call her. Your mother wants to know you are safe and happy. With so many ways to communicate, there are no excuses not to keep in touch. Be nice. Phone calls and email are easy. Send her a text message every other day so she knows you are doing well.

7. Seek help and ask questions. You have never gone to college before so no one expects you to know the answers. We do expect you to speak up. Colleges have tutors, advisers, counselors, nurses, and others who are trained to help. Be pro-active and seek help when you need it.



North Carolina Wesleyan College

6. Plan for your future. Students with a plan thrive. The students without a plan are perplexed when they are booted out with a degree and no idea of what they want to do. Use your college years to explore interesting disciplines, intern at different jobs, learn new things, and craft a game plan that helps launch your career.

5. Be active outside the classroom. Students involved in extracurricular activities are happier during their time in college and more likely to get a job upon graduation in their chosen field.

4. Sleep, but only at the appropriate time. Students with eyes rolling up in the top of their heads while their professors lecture are suffering from sleep deprivation. Be smart and get a decent night's sleep.

3. Always do the extra credit.

I get annoyed with students who do not answer the extra credit question or ignore the extra credit opportunity I offer, but ask if there is anything they can do to raise their dismal grade at the end of the semester. By then it is too late. Why is it that the A students are the ones who do the extra credit? Or is it that doing the extra credit makes them A students?

2. Remember that college is not high school with lots of recess.

What do I mean? You have always been taught by people who love to teach. So, for the last 13 years, you have been taught by active teachers. Now, in college, you are about to be taught by people who have never learned how to be teachers, but by people who love learning. They have never taken a course in how to be a professor, but they know more about the subject matter at hand than most of the world. It is your job to jump from an atmosphere of active teaching to the college method of active learning. You must learn how to take advantage of the great mind that stands in front of the classroom. When students complain that they have a lousy teacher, I quickly respond, "No, no, you've got it all wrong. He's not supposed to be a great teacher, you are supposed to be a great learner." You need to shift the burden of learning on to your shoulders. That's where it belongs in college.

1. As Woody Allen said, "Ninety percent of life is merely showing up." If I can give you only one piece of advice, it is this: Go to class. Forget excuses, forget the fact that you are tired, forget that you did not do your homework, forget that the teacher is so boring. The difference between passing and failing is simple - it is all about showing up!

With vigilance and a commitment to these steps you will be well on the way to becoming a successful college student.