The Community College EXPERIENCE

Brief Edition
The Community College Experience

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I believe everyone has a story worth telling. My story is that I am a mother, a teacher, and a student. These three roles have been a part of who I am since my earliest memories. While other little girls played house, I played school, giving homework and telling my “students” (either agreeable neighbors or silent stuffed animals) to be quiet and pay attention. When my older sister went off to her first day of school, I begged to follow, and I gathered my “school supplies” and stuffed them into a bag. Although I was the youngest child, I mothered the neighborhood kids as early as 10 years old when I started babysitting. My teaching career started a little earlier—in 3rd grade—when I was asked to help my friend Jennifer master fractions. I continued my career throughout junior high and high school by tutoring in English, giving swimming lessons, and teaching art.

Nothing, though, prepared me for teaching at the community college. The first class I ever taught was both frightening and exhilarating. It was the first time in my life that I realized what I was doing was exactly what I should be doing with my life, but it was also the first time that I felt completely and utterly out of my league, ignorant, even downright dumb. I am sure my students have felt the same way—eager and excited to start a new chapter in their lives, but also concerned about the unknown. Speaking of unknown, I felt I knew nothing about how to be an effective teacher with community college students, and it was obvious that I needed to use what I knew about being a student to learn who my students were and what they really needed. Along the way, I discovered that being a nurturer for the abilities and talents that graced my classroom was a fitting role for me as well. How proud I am of the very ones who started their college career unsure of their abilities and who grew in confidence as they marked success after success.

Because I always love learning new things, I have now come full circle and am a student in a doctoral program. I am experiencing similar situations as my students—balancing a full-time job, a family, and college classes and worrying whether or not I can do it all. It’s sometimes a struggle to get everything done, but I have used my experience to learn more about how my students feel and what they need in terms of content and support. I have a greater appreciation of their previous experience, their time, and even their levels of frustration when they find themselves stressed out!

It is because of these experiences that I continue to provide what I believe is the best information in the most concise way to community college students who fill a variety of roles themselves and who have to make it all work while they are pursuing a degree. I hope you find this book helps make your journey a little easier—at the very least, know that you are not alone in your experiences and that you can do it!
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## PART ONE

### Transitions

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**Understanding College Culture and Your Campus**

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- **Go for the Gold by Remembering Silver**
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People make a difference. As community college educators, we know that we would not be in business if people did not come to us in search of a better life through education. We also know that without the people on our campuses, those same students would not likely make it to graduation nor realize the better life they dream about. It is with this in mind that the third edition of *The Community College Experience*, Brief Edition, has been revised—to expand the opportunities for students to learn more about the people they are becoming and the people who can help them along the way. For example, is the “buzz boxes” that begin each chapter with questions that students, faculty, and staff have about the community college experience show the variety of reactions by different people. Also, within the chapter, more buzz boxes appear that provide additional information about being successful. Think of this new feature as a way for people to help students achieve their goals in college and in life.

In addition to the questions and advice provided throughout the chapters, another new feature helps students relate to other people more effectively. Emotional intelligence, or the ability to recognize and manage emotions productively, plays an important part in student success. Part of what makes emotional intelligence an important aspect of student success is its focus on self-awareness and self-management (Goleman, 1995). With this in mind, the Emotional Intelligence Check-Up was developed and included in each chapter to allow students to explore a real-life scenario and work through three important steps to self-awareness and self-management: feeling, thinking, and acting. The more self-aware a student becomes, the more likely she can manage herself in tough situations and take a positive action to resolve the situation.

These new features have reinforced, rather than shifted, the original focus of *The Community College Experience* books. The first and second editions were written from a burning need to find a practical, easy-to-use text for my students, and that fundamental purpose has not changed in the third edition. In fact, new and revised material has been included to make sure that students are getting precisely the information they need for “just in time” learning. Community college students are busy with college, work, and family, and they deserve to get the essential information they need to help them as they achieve their dreams of graduating from college. This book provides them with only what they need to make that successful transition into college and (back) into the workforce.

To that end, each chapter contains the following features with the focus on basic information or the “what, when, and where” for being successful in college:

“Get to know the librarians at your college. They can provide lots of help when you have a research project.”
—Will, 24, student
“WHAT” will support students

**Emotional Intelligence Check-Up.** This new feature introduces the emotional intelligence concept to students by providing a real-life student scenario and asking the reader to answer three questions that range from recognizing emotional reactions to creating a positive action plan. The Emotional Intelligence Check-Up focuses on four of the emotional intelligences that make the most difference in student success: optimism, self-regard, problem-solving, and impulse control.

**Buzz Boxes.** New students are often “abuzz” with questions and concerns as they start college. To meet those students where they are, each chapter begins with dialogue (buzz) boxes with student, faculty, and staff questions that relate directly to the chapter objectives. Within the chapter, these questions are answered in additional dialogue boxes—advice by other students, faculty, and staff. Want to know what the “buzz” is? Read the opening boxes and then look for answers within the text.

**Your Terms of Success.** Because many community college students are unfamiliar with the terms that are unique to the college setting, this new feature provides a handy overview of common vocabulary they will encounter as well as their definitions.

**Integrity Matters.** In this updated feature in each chapter, students have the opportunity to explore how integrity—both academic and personal—relates to their own lives and to reflect on how they can act with integrity in all aspects of the college experience.

**Tech Tactics.** This new feature provides information about the immediate technological support that colleges offer as well as current technology that can assist students in their educational goals; it then goes a step further to provide recommended websites for students.

“WHEN” will students relate to the material

**Avoiding Plagiarism.** Appendix B provides much-needed information explaining plagiarism and how to avoid it in a variety of college settings. This is an essential read for students who are unfamiliar with college writing and research expectations.

**Collaboration Exercises.** The collaboration exercises enable students to see the connection between relating to their classmates through the exercises and relating to others in general.

**Reflection and Critical Thinking Exercises.** These two exercises remain the same throughout this edition.
Transfer Tips: From College to University and From College to Career. With the increasing number of students who are transferring between colleges or to work environments, it is becoming more important to help them make transitions smoothly. Each chapter ends with two sections called “From College to University” and “From College to Career,” in which the chapter’s topic is applied to the world beyond the community college. Students will be able to see how the essential keys to college success are building blocks for life fulfillment.

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REFERENCE

For Students!

Why is this course important?
This course will help you transition to college, introduce you to campus resources, and prepare you for success in all aspects of college, career, and life. You will:

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