WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND?

Thoughts from Fellow Students

Welcome to campus. When we first started college, it felt kind of overwhelming. We didn’t know anyone on campus and had no idea what was expected of us. Truthfully, we just wanted to survive until the end of term. We had all sorts of questions racing through our minds, just as we imagine you have. Here are some of our original concerns and where they are addressed in this book:

• What’s a safe way to meet people with interests similar to mine? (chapter 1)
• Will I be able to keep up with all the reading assigned in my courses? (chapter 4)
• My family expects so much from me. How can I deal with this stress? (chapter 4)
• What can I do if I fall behind in class? (chapter 6)
• What should I expect on my tests? Will they be harder than tests I’ve had before? (chapter 8)
• I don’t know anyone at my school—will I make friends? What if I don’t get along with my roommate and floor mates? (chapter 10)
• Am I going to have enough money to carry me through the term and have a little fun too? (chapter 11)
• I don’t have a clue about what to major in. How do I try different things without wasting time and money? (chapter 12)

Just like you, we were anxious when we stepped on campus—but just like you will, we did survive. Probably the best advice we can offer is to give yourself time. Avoid the temptation to address all your concerns in the first week of school. Be yourself and don’t be afraid to take chances—everyone is in the same stressful boat as you. Take it one step at a time and enjoy your college experience!
This book starts by asking you to reflect on key issues that face all students. It does not matter how long ago you were in high school, or if you had a previous try at college classes. Whether you feel panicky, apprehensive, or totally at home on campus, there is much to do and learn. In fact, before you can focus on long-term goals such as “earning a degree” or “career training,” other more personal issues must be addressed—although this does not minimize your course work. After all, academic rigor will be expected of you by your professors.

College presents fresh challenges, but please understand that you do “bring something to the table.” You have skills and strengths and resources that you have been drawing on all of your life. Make them work for you in college. Sure, there will be challenges—plenty of them. *But do not discount the talents you have.*

With that in mind, let’s take a quick look at what you will find in this part of *Rhythms of College Success: A Journey of Discovery, Change, and Mastery.*

- **Chapter 1: Transitions and Adjustments.** College life presents many challenging opportunities. You have new freedoms, accompanied by new responsibilities. You have to negotiate a new campus environment. You have to establish connections with classmates and professors. Keep this question in mind as you read the chapter: *What knowledge, skills, and strategies do you bring to college that will help you be a successful student?*

- **Chapter 2: Motivation and Goal Setting.** Motivation provides the power to achieve goals. When you establish goals, you are actually putting together a strategy to obtain what you desire. Whether or not you achieve your goals depends in great part upon how effectively that strategy was planned and carried out. Properly motivated, you can accomplish remarkable feats. Keep this question in mind as you read the chapter: *How will you benefit from staying motivated and setting appropriate goals?*

- **Chapter 3: Open-Minded Observations of the World Around You.** Whether you participate in a classroom discussion, attend a forum on international events, or befriend a recent arrival from another nation, college presents many opportunities to challenge and/or reinforce your beliefs. Students can benefit from each other’s knowledge and uniqueness—but such understanding requires a willingness to explore new ideas and diverse cultures. Keep this question in mind as you read the chapter: *How do open-minded observations of the world around you connect with college success?*

- **Chapter 4: Organizing Time and Space.** Although college does require considerable work, you also have more *unstructured* time than you have ever had. You will have to organize your schedule to include studies, family responsibilities, recreation, and the like, and also organize your study space so it will work efficiently. Keep this question in mind as you read the chapter: *How will you organize your time and space to help you effectively adjust to the college schedule and environment with minimal stress?*

When you walked on campus you were not a blank slate. You brought experiences, beliefs, and talents—but may also have brought some self-doubts. Research studies have found that the first few weeks of school are the most critical for students. The time has come to take some quality time and reflect on why you are here, what you want from college, and how you can grow from the experience.
REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

Keeping the following questions in mind will make this chapter more meaningful:

- What knowledge, skills, and strategies do you bring to college that will help you be a successful student?

- What is important to you about attending college now?

- What do you expect to gain from your college experience?

- What challenges (weaknesses) do you bring to college?

- How will you balance your academic demands and your personal responsibilities?

- How will you maintain a healthy lifestyle that will help you meet the challenges of college?
Welcome to campus and all of the marvelous opportunities waiting for you. Like most students, you probably have a number of questions about college life. Find your school’s Student Services office as soon as possible. In this area of the college you will find the resources to make your college experience a successful one. But you must seize the opportunity to utilize these resources. The assistance provided by the Student Services area is not just for students experiencing academic difficulty; even those who are excelling will benefit.

My top three suggestions to successfully adjust to college:

1. Learn what resources are available to you from the onset. Make a list and keep it handy for times of need.
2. Each term, make a calendar that lists all important dates—payment deadlines, class start dates, assignment due dates—and adhere to them.
3. Seek assistance early in selecting a degree choice. With federal and state requirements constantly changing, knowing your degree path will save you time and money.
INTRODUCTION

You have made it! You have purchased your books and hold the class schedule in your hand. With confidence and past experiences—and, yes, perhaps a bit of anxiety—you have arrived for the first week of classes. Your road to this point may have been short, leading directly from high school graduation to the college campus. Or perhaps the road first carried you through significant life events such as marriage, children, military service, or a stint in the workforce. Whatever the route, you are here and ready to begin a fascinating and challenging new stage of life.

Regardless of your personal history, you carry with you the most valuable resource of all—you. Remember this truth: You have a lifetime of skills and strategies that can serve you well in college—if you know how to tap into them.

Honestly reflect, and draw upon those skills as you tackle the new challenges in front of you and discover that you have a lot to offer to yourself. Rather than a time to sing the blues, college life provides the opportunity for students to find their own rhythm and harmony.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

• What is your reason for attending college? The college environment offers a large number of helpful resources. But before you can identify the correct resources, it will be helpful to understand why you decided to continue your schooling at this point in your life. Is your main motivation to earn lots of money—or did you enroll in college because you wish to pursue a particular passion? Or perhaps a combination of reasons fuels your motivation.

• How does this benefit you? Once you understand your reason for being here, ask yourself the following questions:

  “So what? How does knowing why I am here help me? Isn’t it enough to be attending classes and exploring options? I’ll figure out why I’m here as time goes by.”

  In fact, it might be a wise idea to ask the “So what?” question throughout your entire college experience. When confronted with new information or options, understand why and how a particular path is beneficial. The college experience provides a range of choices and opportunities for growth; having a clear understanding of your direction will help you handle the various transitional issues that all first-year students must address.

• How will you know if you have chosen the correct road to travel? Even if you’re driving with a road map beside you, it can be helpful every so often to pull into a rest area and reflect on your journey. Are you traveling a route that interests you? Do you still want to move toward the destination circled on your map? Although it is important to be focused, it is sensible to stop, reflect on your progress, and then make any adjustments necessary to bring the proper destination into focus.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

Students enroll in college for various reasons. They come to campus with different abilities, desires, and unique challenges. You will meet these differences in the student center, the residential hall, and in the classrooms. In some situations you will casually converse with this diverse mix of people. In other instances you will need to work closely with these students. For that reason, it would be beneficial to take a generalized look at your prospective partners on a class assignment, a student government project, or a service learning activity.

Some students come to college with a very detailed and specific career goal in mind. They know exactly what they want and how to get it. These students will tell you exactly what they will be doing in two years, four years, and ten years down the road.
Others come to campus simply because they just got out of high school and college seems to be the next logical step in life. Other than that, they don’t know why they are here. They just “know” that this is where they need to be. Not surprisingly, these students have only a vague idea, or none at all, about their life ambitions.

You will meet students who see the college experience as one continuous party. Socializing, sporting events, late-night clubbing, and road trips are their courses of study. Typically, students who follow this “curriculum” will receive personalized letters from the dean marked with either “Academic Probation” or “Academically Suspended.”

Single parents who come to college must balance the needs of family and work. Unlike the partygoers who see college as an opportunity to escape responsibility, these students view campus as an important stop on their way to an improved life.

There may be a former member of the military sitting next to you in class. Having fulfilled a national commitment, this person now wishes to gain skills and knowledge that will help in a post-military life.

You will encounter students of all ages. Recent high school graduates—young and restless—will try to make meaning of their setting. Sitting next to them can very well be nontraditional students, such as the older student who has decided to return to school after many years away from the classroom, or the person with a full-time job who is taking just one course in order to secure a job promotion.

International students will be part of the classroom mix as well. These new arrivals experience the typical college transitional issues—but in a new culture while learning a new language. (Wow—talk about transitions!) You will also have a chance to meet and know students from different ethnic groups and socioeconomic backgrounds.

The diverse tapestry of your class fabric may include students with disabilities—hearing impaired students with signers, visually impaired students with guide dogs, physically impaired students in wheelchairs, and learning disabled students with note-takers.

Whatever your reasons for being here today, your fellow classmates have their own. Each of you will face both emotional and social challenges that will need to be addressed. Before you can successfully address these challenges, however, first reflect on why you are here by completing Activities 1.1 and 1.2.

The opportunity costs and the value of attending college

A college education represents a huge investment of time, money, and emotion.* For whatever reasons (see Activities 1.1 and 1.2) you made the choice to enroll in school rather than do something else with your precious resources. To be here, you have given up the opportunity to do something else.

Economists frequently refer to the concept of opportunity costs. When a choice is made, another option is eliminated, or at the very least, postponed. For instance, if a student decides to drop out of high school so that he can get a job, earn money, and buy a car, the opportunity cost of buying the car is the loss (or postponement) of his high school graduation.

Likewise, if a student decides to skip an evening with her friends so that she can study for a test, the opportunity cost of studying for the test is the lost time with her friends.

*Innumerable sources tout “the value of a college education.” A recent Google search found more than six thousand sites. A few have been referenced in this section for your continued research.
WHY HAVE YOU DECIDED TO CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION?

Why did you decide to come to college? Not the *actual* school you are currently attending, but why did you decide to continue your education at *any school*? Rate the following reasons for attending college on a scale from 0 (not at all) to 5 (a huge factor for attending college). Circle the numbers that most closely apply to you. Reflect on each item and honestly respond.

**Reasons I am attending college now**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>0 (not at all) to 5 (huge reason)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I need career training.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I plan on earning a lot of money.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I want to explore different areas of interest.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I want to find a life partner.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I want to participate in college-level athletics.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>My parents want me to attend.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>My friends are going to college.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I want a better life for myself.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I want to make a better life for my family.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I want to be the first one in my family to attend.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I am divorced and need to support myself.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I want to party.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I need to experience life away from home.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>All my children have left home—now it's my turn!</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>It has been my lifetime dream to earn a degree.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I need college courses for my current job.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>It beats getting a “real” job.</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Other: ___________</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Other: ___________</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Other: ___________</td>
<td>0—1—2—3—4—5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. Review the numbers you circled. Now put a check mark on the line in front of each reason that you rated either “4” or “5.” These represent your major reasons for enrolling in college.

22. Reflect for a moment and then write your thoughts about your answers. In what ways do these rankings surprise you?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

23. Based on your rankings above, write one or two sentences as to why you are attending college classes.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
For everything we do, there is a cost of some sort. It is not, as the foregoing examples indicate, always directly related to dollars and cents—but something is gained and something is lost.

The same analogy holds true for a college education. Students sitting in class or completing a homework assignment have chosen not to do something else. Instead of attending college, they could be earning money in the workforce. The amount of money that they are not making because they are in school is an opportunity cost. If, instead of college, a student could be earning $20,000 a year, and he stays in college for four years, his opportunity cost equates to $80,000—the amount of money he could have earned in that same period of time.

When you add in the direct expenses of education—tuition, books, transportation, room and board, and fees—the cost to attend college increases considerably.\(^1\)

With those kinds of numbers to consider, why do people decide to attend college? One explanation is because the value of a college education is greater in the long term. Whenever you feel emotionally drained, or maybe thinking of giving up on college, consider that the opportunity cost of a college education is an investment in your future.

And you may wish to consider the opportunity costs of not pursuing a college degree. According to the U.S. Census Bureau News:

Workers 18 and over with a bachelor’s degree earn an average of $51,206 a year, while those with a high school diploma earn $27,915. Workers with an advanced degree make an average of $74,602, and those without a high school diploma average $18,734.\(^2\)

See Table 1.1 for a chart of this income comparison.

Another study reports that a community college education “more than doubles the full-time annual earnings potential of community college graduates” compared to those without a community college degree.\(^3\)

Do the math (see Table 1.2). If the “accumulated earnings” (the amount that would be earned over the career span of a worker) are considered, the numbers are staggering. A person with a college
Table 1.1

Comparing income according to years of schooling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of schooling</th>
<th>Less than a high school education</th>
<th>High school diploma</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree</th>
<th>Graduate degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$18,734</td>
<td>$27,915</td>
<td>$51,206</td>
<td>$74,602</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.2

Income differential according to level of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount of schooling</th>
<th>No high school diploma</th>
<th>High school diploma</th>
<th>Bachelor’s degree</th>
<th>Graduate degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income Earned per Year*</td>
<td>$18,734</td>
<td>$27,915</td>
<td>$51,206</td>
<td>$74,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Income Earned in 30 Years</td>
<td>$562,020</td>
<td>$837,450</td>
<td>$1,536,180</td>
<td>$2,238,060</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Does not calculate inflation.


degree can expect to earn approximately $1 million to $2 million more than someone with no degree. Calculate the additional value of graduate degrees, and the money differential continues to widen.†

A college education has value beyond your savings account. A liberal arts education, for example, provides a broad base of knowledge to prepare you for many types of jobs. It exposes you to differing viewpoints, and it helps you to critically analyze material. Higher education provides advanced knowledge of history, politics, and culture. You discuss issues with like-minded individuals as well as debate issues with those who hold opposing beliefs. A college education allows you to broaden your knowledge base, reaffirm your beliefs and, at times, change your positions.

The value of a college education is dollars and cents—but it is so much more.

KEY TRANSITIONAL ISSUES FACING STUDENTS

This section presents quick overviews of some of the more common adjustment issues for college students. Think of these as “snapshots.” The entire “photo” will come into focus over the course of this book.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION?

This activity is different from most activities you will be asked to complete in this book, as it asks you to include feedback from a significant person in your life.* The idea is for you to reflect not only on your own views, but also on the views of a respected family member or friend—somebody in your home neighborhood. If that is not possible, then identify someone who has been a mentor or role model for you in the past—someone who has provided guidance over the course of your life. It does not matter whether the person attended college, or even if the person finished high school. The only requirement is that this person has been a part of your social and emotional network.

1. First, your thoughts. What is the value of a college education for you? That is, what will a college degree provide for you? How do you think it will be worth the opportunity costs?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Once you have reflected and written your thoughts, please forward the same questions to your identified significant person. What does this person think the value of a college education is in today’s society? Call, write, e-mail, or sit down with the person. Write the person’s responses on the lines provided.

The name and relationship of your significant person: ______________________________
________________________________________________________________________
That person’s response: _____________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Once you have received that input from your significant person, reflect on the two responses. Are there similarities? What surprised you? Based on this new knowledge, what revisions, if any, would you make to your earlier thoughts about the value of a college education?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

* I’d like to thank Eileen Crawford. After reading her book, Mom’s College Handbook (2004), I was inspired to develop this particular idea.
Change: What do you bring to the table?

As described in the introduction to this book, the first stage in the change cycle is when people need or want to begin something new in their lives. You were at this stage when you decided to attend college.

In stage 2, you began planning for the day you would start college. You chose a college, filed an application, made financial arrangements, and enrolled in courses.

You are now at stage 3—execution of your plan. It is time to go to class and become a member of the student body at your college or university. You will experience many successes and also your share of setbacks. When you stumble, keep the following strategies—the 4 R's—in mind:

- **Reflect** on the reasons for the momentary disappointment. Do your best to understand what happened and why it happened.
- **Respect** the skills that you have to address the challenge. You have confronted obstacles before in your life. What did you do in past situations to solve problems?
- **Take responsibility** for any changes you will need to make—and move toward that change.
- **Remember** to develop and maintain renewal strategies that foster balance, wellness, and growth in your life.

College will present new challenges, but you have valuable past experiences to draw from. Consider the following facts:

- **Fact:** College is different from high school, and it is different from the world of work.
- **Fact:** College courses will require you to work with large volumes of material.
- **Fact:** College-level work will require you to reevaluate the study skills and relational skills you bring with you to campus.
- **Fact:** You already possess skills, knowledge, and strategies that will help you be successful in college.

Where you are now is different from where you were at this time last year. Whether you are a full-time student fresh from high school or a part-timer taking classes during your lunch hour from work, your new surroundings—the campus, the classrooms, the diverse mix of students and professors—look and feel different. Some students are energized by all the new sights, sounds, and smells of a college campus; others are overwhelmed. Activity 1.4 asks you to examine what you bring to the table—what you already know that can help you during this first term of change.

There are two points worth reflecting on from the preceding activity. First, there is no doubt that you will need to refine some of your old skills and even learn new strategies in your college classes. That is simply part of the educational process. As you ascend the educational ladder each term, you will be expected to grapple with ideas, issues, and skills that are foreign to you.

Second, as you face new challenges, it is understandable to be anxious about stepping outside of your comfort zone. At those times, think back to the activity. You have a larger and more developed skill base than you may give yourself credit for. Be willing to try your old skills in new situations—adjust and change as needed—but never forget that you have a great deal of experience on which to draw.

Emotional transition: Managing the freedom and responsibility of the first-year experience

College life demands a considerable amount of time. You must attend classes, read extensive assignments, complete research projects, involve yourself in lab work, and, possibly, engage in community service activities. Additionally, you may have to balance family, work, and/ or cocurricular priorities. At times it may seem as though there are not enough hours in the day. Chapter 4 will suggest strategies for organizing time commitments, but for now let's take a look at the responsibility you signed on for when you walked on campus.

Even though rules and procedures vary from college to college and from instructor to instructor, the responsibility for getting to class and completing assignments rests squarely on the student's shoulders. If you miss an 8:00 a.m. psychology class every Monday, there is a better than
WHAT DO YOU BRING TO THE TABLE?

Your past experiences have already provided a knowledge base that will help you be successful. Read the items that follow and place a check mark in front of each skill you already possess (or have, at least, practiced in the past).

1. Right now, I can:

- Read and understand instructions (such as a recipe for a meal or directions for downloading a computer program).
- Read a newspaper article and summarize what it reported.
- Watch a television program and explain what I saw to a friend.
- Hear a song and later be able to remember the lyrics.
- Prepare a reasoned argument as to why I deserve a pay raise.
- Speak in front of more than 10 people (such as a group of friends, church group, or community organization).
- Organize my day so that I can accomplish four or five tasks.
- Meet a deadline (such as filing taxes, completing a college application, or registering for classes).
- Persevere in the face of great odds to accomplish a desired goal (such as standing in line to get tickets for a sporting event or concert).
- Prioritize a series of tasks so that I address important issues in my life.
- Test successfully to achieve a goal (such as obtaining a driver’s license).
- Study to pass a test (such as a high school math exam).
- Get along with diverse types of people.
- Sit for long periods of time and listen to a person speak (such as at a business meeting or religious service).
- Volunteer my opinion when a question is asked.
- Assist group members to accomplish an assigned task.
- Sleep an appropriate number of hours so that I am rested in the morning.
- Focus my energies so that I can accomplish goals (such as participating on an athletic team, playing in a band, or getting accepted to college).
- Others: What other skills do I have that will help me in college? List them here.

2. Now carefully examine the boxes that you checked. Maybe you checked more items than you thought you would. What does this inventory tell you about what you bring to the college table?
average chance that no one on the campus will come looking for you. You will have to make it to the class or scramble to get the notes and instructions you may have missed.

Perhaps you are taking only one course, slipping away during your lunch break at work to take an English class. If your boss requires you to take a different lunch shift and it interferes with your schooling, it will be your responsibility—not your instructor’s—to handle the conflict. There will not be a counselor or parent to intervene on your behalf.* And when it comes to absences, many instructors will not make a distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Their view holds that a missed day of class participation is a missed day—there is no way to make that up. The class discussion occurred and cannot be repeated. Also, remember that the dynamics of the class will change without your presence. Your input in class discussions is important.

College life provides a great deal of personal independence but also requires a corresponding level of responsibility. Because no one will constantly be watching over you, you will need the self-discipline and emotional maturity to fulfill your obligations. Every so often it may be a good idea to reflect on why you are attending college (review Activity 1.2).

Many factors affect the manner in which students handle the freedom and responsibilities of campus life. For instance, family life will have an impact on how a student adjusts in college, as follows:

• Some students come from families where rigidly enforced rules were the order of the day. These students can go in a couple of directions. On the one hand, always having had the rules explicitly stated and enforced, they may not know what to do because no one is directing their every move; they are not used to making their own decisions. On the other hand, once away from the strict family rules, these students might “go wild” with their newfound independence.

• Other students have enjoyed more freedom, but perhaps with somebody always available to help in times of difficulty. For instance, parents may have been constantly on the phone to the guidance counselor, seeking assignment extensions for these students. It comes as quite a shock when they enter college and must live with the consequences of actions that cannot be “fixed” by someone calling the school.

• Still another group has had a great deal of responsibility placed upon them to raise siblings, care for an elderly relative, or work to help support the family. Such responsibilities may continue during college. These students will still be accountable for their home-based duties while trying to find time to tackle the expectations of college. Sometimes these overly responsible students may have a stressful time balancing everything they must do.

Emotional transition: Working through the change cycle

Life brings change—transitions from one place to another. Change can also bring life. Change is invigorating and passion producing. Each stage of the change cycle (see Figure I.2 in the book’s introduction) can enhance renewal. And at times we may be undergoing a couple of different changes at the same time. For instance, there is the change of having to deal with the rigors of college academic expectations, while at the same time trying to adjust to a new roommate or determine where you will get day care for your child.

Social transition: The time crunch of balancing school, work, and cocurricular activities

Time-management skills—or the lack of them—will quickly become evident as you try to survive during the first term on campus. You might be one of those students who is actively involved in cocurricular activities like student government or intramural sports. Or you may only be on campus a short time each day, leaving campus immediately after class in order to go to

*In fact, due to confidentiality laws, schools are not allowed to release information to parents without student permission, if the student is older than 18 years of age. Although exceptions may apply, for further information see the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), available on the Web site of the U.S. Department of Education, http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html.
WHERE ARE YOU IN THE CHANGE CYCLE?

Pause and reflect for a moment. For each stage listed here, identify one area of your life that finds you in that particular stage. Then answer the questions that follow.

1. *Stage 1: Recognize the need for a change.* This is the point when you recognize that life as you know it is about to change, or already has changed. For example, graduating from high school represents the end of one phase of your schooling and the beginning of the next (college). Or the loss of a job might force you to recognize the need for new job training. The end of a relationship may also signal the end of one phase of life. What aspect of your life is in this particular stage of change? It could involve academic expectations, new relationships, or financial obligations. What has recently occurred that has caused you to recognize the need to establish a new goal or adjust a current direction in which you are traveling?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. *Stage 2: Plan for the change.* What are you doing in your life right now that indicates you are planning for a change in your life? Once again, it can involve any area of your life. For instance, perhaps you are changing where or with whom you live. Maybe the beginning of the school term means a new schedule for you and your family. Whatever the situation may be, you have established a goal and are making plans to reach it. What are you doing that will move you toward making this goal a reality?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. *Stage 3: Execute the plan.* On the way to your destination there will probably be unforeseen detours. What kind of obstacles have you encountered (or do you anticipate) on your way to your destination? Have you had to adjust your course? What do you do to keep a positive attitude and forward progress?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4. *Stage 4: Enjoy the achieved goal.* How do you enjoy the accomplishment of a goal in your life? Maybe you have been accepted into a campus club or have received an A on your first college exam. What are you doing to savor the moment? That is, how are you enjoying the thrill of the achievement?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. *Connections to college transitions.* How can knowing about the change cycle help you deal with college transition issues? Why is it important to be able to recognize when there is a time for change, plan for the change, execute the change and, finally, enjoy the change that you have made?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
work. Whatever the situation, time—finding enough of it to do everything you need and want to do—will present a new set of challenges. It is one area that can seem overwhelming. Specific strategies will be introduced in chapter 4, but you might find the following general strategies helpful now:

- On average, budget two hours of study time for each hour spent in a class.
- Commit to work and cocurricular activities once you know you have scheduled appropriate time for class, study, and sleep.
- Be sure to schedule time for physical, emotional, and social renewal.
- How you use time is your choice. Make the decision a wise one.

Social and emotional transitions: Key people to know—The C.A.P. principle

To name all of the key people on campus would require its own chapter. And a key person to one student might not be a key person to another student. For instance, a student needing financial assistance (grants, scholarships, or an on-campus job) may find the financial aid office initially to be the most important stop on campus. An athlete might find his coach to be the key contact. Generally speaking, educators often mention the same “top three people to know” for a student to have an increased chance of college success. Make sure, as soon as possible, that you begin a working and trusted relationship with at least:

- One classmate
- One advisor or counselor
- One of your professors

Note that the first letter of each name forms the acronym C.A.P. When you follow the C.A.P. principle, these three key people can help you connect with the physical campus, adjust to the college experience, and persist to graduation. In fact, don’t settle for knowing just one of each; get to know as many as you possibly can. Make it a goal, for instance, to personally visit the office of each of your professors.

MAINTAINING A HEALTHY BALANCE

How do you develop and practice a healthy lifestyle in your new environment?

Yours is a busy world. You are pulled in a variety of directions. You have to choose appropriate classes, navigate the emotional roller coaster that sometimes accompanies relationships, eventually declare a major, and (down the road) graduate and find your place in the work-a-day world.

Do you take the time to “recharge your batteries” along the way? A battery-operated piece of equipment after extended use will steadily lose power and eventually stop working. Some batteries are renewable—that is, they can be recharged for extended life. Yet they, too, will eventually lose juice and, unless plugged into the charger, become useless as well.
If you consistently operate on too little sleep, eat less than nutritious food, or depend on the “help” of drugs and alcohol to cope with life’s challenges, your “batteries” will eventually quit working, too. One result is fatigue, which can weaken your immune system, making you more susceptible to illness—and missed days from class.

The introduction to this book described how a balanced life will help renew the six dimensions of your life. Let’s examine those dimensions on a deeper level.

Dr. Bill Hettler, cofounder of the National Wellness Institute (NWI), is credited with developing the Six Dimensional Wellness Model. This very simple yet powerful model reminds us that a balanced life needs more than three good meals and a restful night’s sleep. Each of the six dimensions has an impact on the other five. According to the NWI, no single category operates as a renegade; all six—social, occupational, spiritual, physical, intellectual, and emotional—work together for a balanced life. If ignored, any one of the dimensions can have a detrimental effect on the others. As you review each category below, think how your daily practices and overall lifestyle measure up to each description. The six dimensions of wellness are depicted in Table 1.3.

### Table 1.3
Dimensions of wellness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description of a “well person”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>You maintain positive relationships with people around you and encourage a support network of family, friends, classmates, and coworkers. You have an awareness of your impact on society and the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational</td>
<td>You are involved in a profession (or course of study) that is personally satisfying. You learn new skills and develop career-oriented goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>You stress the importance of finding your life’s purpose by reflecting (meditating, praying) on the purpose of life, and then you act on your beliefs and values to reinforce your discovered purpose. You acknowledge and understand that “you are connected to the universe ... [and] woven into the fabric of this universe.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>You maintain a healthy lifestyle (diet, rest, exercise, strength, flexibility). You are able to recognize and appropriately respond to warning signs of ill health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>You actively seek to expand your knowledge base and skill base, and to develop your creativity and critical thinking skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>You have the ability to manage and express emotions appropriately and handle stress effectively.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another way to think of this model is to visualize a six-string guitar. The guitar will be able to make sweet music with properly tuned strings. If one of the six strings falls out of tune or breaks, the guitar can still be played but the song will not be as pleasing. As more strings weaken or break from undue stress, the guitar loses its ability to play music.

Apply the guitar analogy to your life. The six dimensions (“strings”) represent the six critical areas of your personality. You might be able to keep making music if one or two of the strings weaken or break. Eventually, though, the remaining strings will not be able to carry the tune, possibly leading to the total collapse of the song (mind, body, spirit).

We all need to tune our life-strings. After all, this instrument—our mind, body, and spirit—enables us to create the sounds and rhythms we choose.

Too often, people break down under the weight of life’s daily stresses simply because they have not tended to one or another aspect of their lives. The same holds true for students. During the first year of the college experience, students can experience any number of stressors that will weaken one or more of the life-strings. You already possess healthy ways to strengthen each dimension in your life. You may have helped a friend weather a difficult time when his life was becoming dangerously imbalanced. Maybe someone has done the same for you.

Care for your life-strings, and the instrument will continue to play rich music.

**SUMMARY**

IT’S A NEW AND WONDERFULLY EXCITING LIFE ON CAMPUS

This chapter has introduced a number of issues. Your head could very well be swimming with ideas on how to embrace the rest of the term. On the other hand, you may be entertaining thoughts of leaving school and returning to more familiar and comfortable surroundings. Regardless of your direction, take a slow and deep breath, and review the following key points from this chapter:

- Understand your reasons for attending college at this time in your life. This will help you concentrate on beneficial activities.
- Take time to reflect on your decisions. Spontaneity can be a blessing, but deliberation has its advantages as well.
- Acknowledge the experiences and skills you bring to the classroom. Use and build on this reservoir of personal talent.
- Know the resources that will help you cope and thrive with change. Your school has a lot to offer.
- Take time to keep your life-strings in tune. Treat your body, mind, and spirit with respect.

The last three activities of this chapter will allow you to reflect on the three levels of student success as presented in the book’s introduction:

Level I: The 4 Rs
Level II: The Change Cycle
Level III: Tuning Your Life-Strings
The 4 Rs

Describe a personal example as to how you used each of the 4 Rs to effectively handle a transitional issue thus far in your college term.

1. Reflection  (Example: Perhaps you gave careful consideration before deciding to join a club or study group.)
   ----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   ----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

2. Respect  (Example: To calm your anxiety about meeting new people, you reminded yourself that you have always had a talent for making friends easily.)
   ----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   ----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

3. Responsibility  (Example: You realized your writing skills need improvement so you took action and went to the campus writing lab to work with a peer tutor.)
   ----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   ----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

4. Renewal  (Example: To increase your energy level, you have started exercising three days per week.)
   ----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
   ----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Each activity will give you an opportunity to reflect and apply the chapter concepts in a way that is meaningful to you during this transitional phase of your life. For your convenience and reflection, similar activities will be placed at the end of each chapter so that you can apply newly acquired information and also keep an ongoing journal of growth in the various facets of your life.
The Change Cycle

Thus far in the term, what has been the biggest change you have had to make as you adjusted to college life? Has it been an academic change, like revising your study habits? Or has it involved relationship issues (roommates, classmates, teammates)? Maybe the change was financial. Perhaps college life has inspired change in your family life.

1. What change have you identified as the biggest? __________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. What led you to recognize that this change needed to be made? ____________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________

3. What was (or will be) your plan to make the change a reality? ____________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________

4. If you have put the plan into action (executed it), how are you progressing? ________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________

5. Once the change has become a reality, how do you plan to enjoy this achievement? ________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________________________________
Tuning Your Life-Strings

Fill in the last two columns of the table that follows. With this activity you can regularly check the strength of each life-string, apply any needed repair work, and enjoy a more balanced and harmonious life. For instance, if you have been feeling unusually stressed during the first week of classes, you may decide that an appointment with a student services advisor will help you more effectively handle the emotional pressures you feel. It's worth a try, wouldn't you say?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life-string</th>
<th>Questions to consider</th>
<th>What possible activities could help you tune this string?</th>
<th>Who can help you tune this string?*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Social      | • Do you have a support network in place?  
• What is your place in the school community?  
• Who is the person with whom you can share most any concern? | | |
| Occupational| • Earlier in this chapter you reflected on your reasons for coming to college. How does your reason (or reasons) for being in college bring you joy? | | |
| Spiritual   | • Have you recently explored or reexamined the deeper meanings of life—and your purpose in this life?  
• Do you have peace of mind? | | |
| Physical    | • How nutritious was your diet for this past week?  
• What kind of exercise schedule do you maintain?  
• What do you do for healthy relaxation?  
• Do you feel rested each morning when you awaken? | | |

(continued)
### Life-string

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life-string</th>
<th>Questions to consider</th>
<th>What possible activities could help you tune this string?</th>
<th>Who can help you tune this string?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Intellectual** | • What did you do this week that involved critical thinking?  
• How did this expand your knowledge and/or skill base? | | |
| **Emotional** | • What strategies have you used to effectively deal with your college stressors?  
• On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your self-esteem? | | |

*Many colleges and universities provide wellness strategies, programs, or models for students and employees. For an example, refer to the Web site of Clark State Community College, [http://www.clark.cc.oh.us/clinic_well.html](http://www.clark.cc.oh.us/clinic_well.html). What kind of a model does your school have?*
Rhythms of Reflection

Because sound decisions require reflective consideration of all factors involved, this chapter will end with one last reflective activity.

Carefully read the following poem. Its words were penned more than eight hundred years ago but the thoughts are as pertinent as if the poet had just put them to paper this morning. Find a quiet place and read these few lines:

You were born with goodness and trust.
You were born with ideals and dreams.
You were born with greatness.
You were born with wings.
You are not meant for crawling, so don’t.
You have wings.
Learn to use them and fly.

—Rumi

Using Rumi’s words for inspiration, explain how you will take the knowledge you have gained from this chapter’s reflective activities and apply it to your life so that you will appreciate your “wings” and use them to fly.

To further respond online, please go to the Rhythms of Reflection module in chapter 1 of the Companion Website.

ENDNOTES

6. Rumi was a thirteenth century poet. This poem can be found on a number of Internet sites with inspirational messages. It can also be found in Wayne Dyer, The Power of Intention: Learning to Co-Create Your World Your Way (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2004), 120.