“Destination: Degree,” the travel-themed orientation, is winding down after an afternoon of skits, presentations, and door prizes.

“If everyone will score their inventories, we will explain how learning style preference affects your study habits,” says Jason, an orientation leader who is wearing an orange “Ask me!” T-shirt.

“Hey, I am ‘kinesthetic.’ That kind of makes sense. I teach kickboxing and learned how to do it by working out almost every day,” Evan says.

“I thought I would be more of a social learner, but my learning style preference is ‘individual,’” says Michael as he rubs his head. “I spent so much time leading troops when I was in the military.”

“I am definitely ‘aural,’” Laura says to the group. “I got through all my classes in high school by listening to the lectures. I rarely took notes because I liked to listen.”

“Yeah, I can see that. You talked during every presentation!” Evan jokes.

“Will you be able to do that in college, just listen?” Juanita, the youngest of the group, asks. “I mean, I have heard that the professors expect so much more of you when it comes to being in class.”

“I am sure you will,” says Michael. “My girlfriend graduated last year with a degree in nursing. All she did was read for class and then study her notes every night.”

“Yeah, that makes sense. If anyone needs someone to study with, let me know,” Juanita says.

“If you want to learn a few kickboxing moves in exchange for help taking notes, let me know,” Evan says to Juanita.

“Sounds good!” Juanita laughs.

“If anyone wants to exchange a home-cooked meal for some babysitting while I study, let me know,” says Laura.

“I know Laura is the talkative one, but give me a call if you ever need anything. Good luck to everyone!” Michael says.

Just as these four students have been oriented to college life, the purpose of this chapter is to introduce you to this new culture, to reveal the truths about higher education, to debunk the myths, and to prepare you for meeting the challenges that you will inevitably face. At the end of this chapter you will be able to do the following:

- Recognize the transitional issues of going to college
- Anticipate the expectations of college
- Adjust to the rhythm of college
- Locate and utilize resources on campus

MyStudentSuccessLab (www.mystudentsuccesslab.com) is an online solution designed to help you ‘Start strong. Finish stronger’ by building skills for ongoing personal and professional development.
Chapter 1

Colleges is a transition that will transform you

This is an exciting time for you as you transition into college life. The definition of transition is a change or modification, and you will find that going to college will create a change in you—and not just in your schedule and your workload. You will find that your concept of yourself will change, your relationships will change, and your outlook on your future will change. All of these changes will require an investment of your time for reflection to make the transition successfully. At the end of your college experience, you will find yourself transformed into a new person. You will most likely be more thoughtful and more confident about your abilities; most certainly, you will be more aware of what it takes to earn a degree. However, this transformation won’t be easy; the following section on transitioning from where you are now to where you want to be will give you a better understanding of what you need to do to make the transition successfully.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN YOU SEE . . .</th>
<th>IT MEANS . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic integrity</td>
<td>Doing honest work on all assignments and tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core curriculum</td>
<td>Also called general education requirements or basic courses; the common courses that almost all students who earn an associate's degree complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corequisite</td>
<td>A course that can be taken at the same time as another course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course content</td>
<td>The material that will be covered in a course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course objectives</td>
<td>The goals of a course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit hour</td>
<td>The unit of measurement that colleges use that usually equals the amount of time you are in class each week during a 16-week semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree plan</td>
<td>A list of classes that you must successfully complete in order to be awarded a degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability accommodation policy</td>
<td>A policy that states how accommodations for documented disabilities will be handled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FERPA</td>
<td>Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; federal law that regulates the communication and dissemination of your educational records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Grade point average; each grade that is earned is awarded grade points that are multiplied by the number of credit hours taken, resulting in the grade point average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grading criteria</td>
<td>The standards by which an assignment is graded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisite</td>
<td>A course that must be taken before one can take another course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality points</td>
<td>The points determined by a grade point multiplied by the credit hours for a course; e.g., an A (4 grade points) in a writing class (3 credit hours) will equal 12 quality points; used to calculate grade point average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus</td>
<td>The contract between an instructor and a student; provides information about the course content, course objectives, grading criteria, and course schedule</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transitioning from High School or from Work Offers Distinct Challenges

For some students, the move from high school to college seems fairly simple—both require reading, writing, testing, and attending class. Students who are taking the step from work to school may also see some similarities between their jobs and their classroom work—both require working hard, keeping yourself motivated, and following the rules. If the differences between high school or work and college are that minor, then why do so many college students have difficulty making a successful transition?

The answer to that question can be given by the instructors who see smart, competent students have trouble adjusting to the climate and culture of college because they do not understand what is expected of them. In other words, in order to be successful, students must know what is expected of them beyond the questions on the next test. Students need to know how college works and how to navigate through not only their courses, but also the common challenges that they will face as they work toward a degree.

The Biggest Change Involves Personal Responsibility

Exhibit 1.1 illustrates some of the differences and similarities among high school, a full-time job, and college. As you take a look at the column labeled “College” in Exhibit 1.1, you’ll notice that a pattern emerges—compared to their high school or full-time job, college students experience a dramatic increase in the amount of personal responsibility they must handle. In high school, teachers, counselors, and coaches provide significant oversight and direction to students, and carefully manage everything from school lunches to study hall. In the workplace, employers oversee their employees using timesheets, employee policy manuals, and supervisors. High school teachers and job supervisors provide clear guidance, both about expectations and how to achieve them. In college, however, the student is responsible for understanding the expectations for academic and career success, and developing a strategy for meeting those expectations.

There have probably been some times during your high school or work experience when you wished that you had more freedom to make your own decisions and pursue your own interests. As you step into college, these wishes indeed come true. The range of opportunities and alternatives that lie before you is so broad and diverse that you’ll find yourself making important decisions every day. Which general education (GE) courses will you take next semester? Do you want to take classes primarily in the morning or later in the day? Where do you want to live and with whom? Do you want to join a student club or organization? Would you be able to participate in a study-abroad program? What kind of career advice and support will there be? The list of questions, decisions, and responsibilities that you face affords you tremendous freedom to chart your own course in college and your future career. This broad range of personal responsibility is exciting, but it can also become overwhelming at times, and you can find yourself suffering significant consequences for poor decisions along the way. It’s important, then, to develop a personal approach that you can use as you step into an experience that offers so much personal responsibility and autonomy.
EXHIBIT 1.1 Differences among High School, Full-Time Work, and College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Full-Time Work</th>
<th>College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance is mandatory in order to meet requirements</td>
<td>Attendance is mandatory in order to stay employed</td>
<td>Attendance may not be mandatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 6 continuous hours spent in class each day</td>
<td>At least 8 continuous hours spent at work each day</td>
<td>Different amounts of time spent in class and between classes each day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very little choice in what classes you take and when you take them</td>
<td>May have little choice in work assignments and when the work is to be completed</td>
<td>More flexibility in when you work on assignments and how soon you complete them before the due date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate to no outside work necessary to be successful</td>
<td>Moderate to no overtime work necessary to complete job duties</td>
<td>Substantial amount of outside work to complete assignments and to be successful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers check homework and keep you up-to-date on progress; they will inform you if you are not completing assignments and progressing well</td>
<td>Supervisors check completion and quality of work at regular intervals; they will inform you if you are not meeting the standards for the position</td>
<td>Professors may not check all homework or provide feedback on progress at regular intervals; they may not inform you if you are not meeting the standards of the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers go over material and expect you to remember facts and information</td>
<td>Employers provide basic information, expect you to use it to complete the job effectively</td>
<td>Professors provide concepts and theories and expect you to evaluate the ideas, synthesize the ideas with other concepts you have learned, and develop new theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent tests over small amounts of material allow for grades to be raised if needed</td>
<td>Supervisors create employee improvement plans to allow you to improve your ratings if needed</td>
<td>Professors provide the standards and grading criteria but often allow only a few chances (through infrequent testing/assignments) to meet them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Make a Plan for Exercising Your New Freedom

Before you start making a lot of important decisions that affect your academics, social life, and physical and psychological health, take some time to consider how you want to approach these decisions so that you exercise good judgment. One consideration is with whom you will consult when you encounter important decisions and
Given the circumstances of your own life to date, what are some of the most significant changes you expect as you step into college? What’s your plan for handling this transition successfully?

A marathon is a 26.2 mile run, and regardless of whether a participant runs full speed or walks, it’s an event that is challenging for everyone. Similarly, college is a demanding experience—there is no way to avoid that reality. Regardless of the national or international reputation of your college, your college experience will challenge you mentally, physically, and emotionally. We don’t tell you this to intimidate or discourage you, but to help you get into the right mindset for success. New students can fall prey to rumors and suggestions that college is easy, or that one college is easier than another. Don’t fall for these myths! If you start college with the expectation that it will be easy, you’ll run the risk of stumbling during your very first semester in college, and you’ll have to work even harder to recover.
A typical associate’s degree requires 60 semester credit hours, and many students take three, four, or even five years to finish their degrees. Along the way, you’ll be expected to attend four or five classes every semester, study several hours outside of class each week, meet with team members, participate in cocurricular and extracurricular events, and perhaps even work part-time or full-time to pay for school. Even though your professors know that you face all of these responsibilities, all of them will expect you to give your very best effort and quality of work to their classes. Because of their experience in teaching hundreds if not thousands of students over time, professors know that students can succeed and perform extremely well when they are challenged. Here, we offer some tips for getting yourself in shape, so to speak, for a successful and challenging college experience. We build our recommendations around the four Cs: (1) computers and supplies, (2) classroom preparation, attendance, and behavior, (3) constructive criticism, and (4) controversial content.

Computers and Supplies

In high school, books and course materials are provided for each student, but in college, you will be responsible for obtaining and purchasing your own materials—and you will need to do that before or at the very beginning of the semester. Here’s a quick list of “the right stuff” that you will likely need:

- **Access to a computer and a working knowledge of how to use one.** Most colleges provide computer labs, email accounts, and printers for student use, but their hours may be limited, they may be crowded at busy times during the semester, and you may have to pay for the pages that you print. Having the necessary computer skills as well as regular access to a computer will be integral to your success, and if you need some help honing those skills, your college may offer computer classes.

- **Textbooks and course materials.** Usually, an exact list of course materials is included in your syllabus; if not, the bookstore may have this information. If you find yourself unable to acquire or buy your materials, then you will need to talk to your professor immediately to ask about alternative arrangements. For example, some professors put a copy of the textbook “on reserve” in the library, which means that students can borrow the book for limited periods of time.

- **Writing materials.** This includes notebooks (one for each class), computer printer paper, pens, highlighters, and #2 pencils.

- **Scientific calculator.** Depending on the type of math, engineering, or science classes, you will probably need a scientific calculator. Check with your professor first for any requirements or recommendations before purchasing one.

- **A good, sturdy backpack.** Since you will not have a locker or place to store your things between classes, you will have to find a bag that holds up to the task of carrying all your books and notebooks.

- **A portable storage device.** Thumb drives, also known as flash drives and pin drives, are increasingly popular because they hold a large amount of files and because they are easy to carry, allowing you to access your computer files at any computer. Use a permanent marker or tape to put your name on the drive, and save a Word file on the drive labeled “If found, please contact,” and include your contact information. College computer labs have hundreds of these thumb drives that were misplaced by students in just one semester.
In addition to your supplies, knowing and meeting your professor’s expectations in the classroom will make a great foundation for success. One essential expectation that professors have is preparation—yours. You should prepare before you get to class by reading the assigned pages or completing the homework. Professors who assign reading or homework expect students to be prepared—they may even administer quizzes to ensure that students have prepared—and to ask questions about anything they did not understand. Professors assume that if you don’t ask questions or participate in a discussion, you understand the assignment. They may also hold you accountable for the assigned reading on exams even though it was not discussed in class.

Another expectation is that out-of-class assignments must be typed; in fact, unless otherwise stated, assume that all outside assignments should be typed, because they are easier to read and they look more professional. If you don’t know how to create written documents on a computer, now is the time to learn; relying on others to create these documents will put you at a disadvantage. You may not be able to control when the person can complete the work, which can make you miss important due dates.

Professors also expect that college students are able to access technology regularly and use it competently. What this means is that your professors will assume and expect that you have consistent access to a computer and the Internet. They will also believe that you have an email account and can send emails—even messages with attachments—successfully. If these are skills and equipment that you do not have, you will need to find out where you can access a computer on campus or off campus and make sure that you have the ability to use it properly.

Finally, instructors expect you to use their office hours—the time when they are formally available to meet with students—to meet with them if you have any questions or need anything. This is a time not only to address any concerns you may have about your progress, but it is also a wonderful time to get to know your professors better. Professors typically post their office hours in their syllabi, on their course websites, and on the doors of their offices.

Regular attendance in your classes is crucial so that you can obtain information and guidance about assignments, tests, and grading. Especially in courses that build on concepts (such as math, foreign languages, and writing), regular attendance is essential to help you overcome problems with challenging assignments and prepare for tests. If you are receiving financial aid through grants or loans, your attendance may be a requirement for you to continue to receive funds in the future.

If you miss a class or intend to miss a class, you should contact your professor in writing. You may need a doctor’s excuse if you miss an exam or assignment, and if your absence isn’t due to a medical situation, you should be prepared to justify your absence. Most professors, though, may not care why you were absent or may not distinguish between excused or unexcused absences. Instead, they use your attendance as an indication of your effort and contribution to the class. Many professors base a portion of their grades on attendance and/or class participation. Since you can’t participate in a class discussion while absent, your attendance will likely have a direct impact on your grade.

Attending class is just part of the effort you will put forth; you will also need to produce quality work. Writing a paper and turning it in is only part of the requirement. You also have to adhere to the standards of the course. If your professor asks for a 10-page paper that argues a contemporary topic and uses five sources, you must follow those guidelines. In some instances, you may receive no credit for completing an assignment if you have not followed the requirements.
The more time you work to complete an assignment usually translates to better quality, but this is not always the case. For example, someone who types 30 words a minute will need less time to produce the same typographical error–free assignments as someone who “hunts and pecks” at the keyboard. The quality of your work is what you will be graded on, not the number of hours you spend doing it.

No doubt you already juggle numerous responsibilities, and going to class and studying are just more tasks that you must complete each week. Handling your responsibilities skillfully will take a positive attitude, self-respect, and maturity. If you recall Laura from this chapter’s opening dialogue, Laura knows the importance of being responsible for her son and her. She has had many years of relying on herself and a few family members to meet her responsibilities. Obviously, as a student, she has the responsibility to take notes, study for tests, and attend classes regularly. But she also has the responsibility to ask questions when she doesn’t understand to resolve any conflict that may occur.

With responsibility also comes maturity, which is the foundation for many of the other components of college culture. Without a mature attitude and outlook, the other parts are unattainable. There are, however, less obvious actions that can help you present yourself as a dedicated, mature student. The first one is paying attention during lectures, presentations, talks by guest speakers, and videos. Although this sounds obvious, it is sometimes forgotten after the first few weeks of the semester. Work on looking at the front of the room and avoiding distractions. A common barrier to paying attention, besides staring out the window, is doing homework in class. Instructors frown on students who use class time to study for other classes or complete assignments that were due at the beginning of class. Just remember that the instructor sees that you are not paying attention and will make note of it.

Small but equally important actions that convey maturity and readiness to meet college expectations include staying for the duration of the class, limiting off‐topic conversations with classmates, refraining from eating or participating in distracting activities, and getting ready to exit class only after the instructor has dismissed everyone. One small activity that causes big problems in class is the use of cell phones, headsets, and other electronic communication devices. In some classes, such as a chemistry lab, the distraction can be dangerous. Some colleges have strict policies forbidding the use of cell phones in class. There may be exceptions, however. For example, if you work in a field that requires your immediate attention in the event of an emergency or if you have a gravely ill family member, ask if you may leave these electronic devices turned on. If your college does not have a policy, turn off your cell phone in class anyway. Students who answer social calls in class appear immature and unconcerned about their education.

**Constructive Criticism**

Another important way to demonstrate maturity in college is to understand and appreciate constructive criticism from your professors. Your professors will provide feedback on your assignments, exams, projects, and presentations, both in writing and verbally, and sometimes the feedback will be challenging. Because professors are busy, because they work with a lot of students each semester, and because they have high expectations for student work, they may deliver feedback in a way that can be tough to hear. For example, your professor might return your term paper covered in red ink with numerous comments and corrections throughout the document. If you get this kind of feedback, don’t take it personally, and don’t jump to the conclusion that your work was poor. Getting a lot of feedback and response from your professor is actually a really positive opportunity. Your professor’s intention is to help you learn and improve your performance. Read the professor’s feedback carefully, identify the lessons you can
learn from the feedback to improve the quality of future assignments, and, if the feedback triggers an emotional response, give yourself a day or two before you respond to it. Even better, share the professor’s feedback with a trusted classmate or friend and invite that person’s advice about how you can best learn from the feedback and the experience. Some of you may have experienced athletic coaches or high school teachers who were tough on their students in a well-intentioned manner that brought out the best in student performance. Professors who provide challenging feedback are similarly effective at facilitating high performance among students, especially for students who are open to constructive criticism and who view it as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Controversial Content

For the most part, college will be a straightforward experience—you will learn the expectations, and when you meet them, you will be successful. There are, though, other aspects of college culture that may be uncomfortable or even shocking to you. All colleges value diversity, both in the student body population and in the backgrounds of its faculty. Most definitely, you will find diversity in ideas and theories among the subjects that are offered that may challenge your beliefs and values. Still other subjects may contain material that you find disrespectful, offensive, distasteful, or disturbing. Besides the reading and discussing of controversial issues, your college may produce student and faculty work that contains language, images, or situations that you find offensive.

What should you do if you encounter college “culture shock”? First, remember that the purpose of college is to provide you with a wider worldview and understanding of diversity—even if that diversity involves different ideas and theories. Second, remember that you have the right to an opinion and a feeling about what you encounter in college. There is no reason you should hide your feelings or attitudes about what you are learning and encountering. With this said, the third point to remember is that with your right to an opinion, you also have an obligation as a college student to examine your previously held beliefs and evaluate how they are being challenged in your courses or as you participate in college activities. You also have the obligation to appreciate that there is more than one way to view an “offensive” idea or image. Exhibit 1.2 provides a list of possible subjects that could be controversial to you or other students.

You will learn about diversity and relationships in depth in another chapter, but it is worth mentioning here that dealing with diversity, conflict, and controversy takes a certain level of maturity. Effectively meeting any challenge to your belief system or values will demand that you act
with integrity and openness. Because the purpose of getting an education is to stretch your mind and expand your ideas, you will need maturity to help you put all that new information into perspective.

**EXHIBIT 1.2 A Sample of Possible Controversial Subjects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The existence of God, higher being</td>
<td>The theory of extraterrestrial life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism and liberalism</td>
<td>Evolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nudity in art, photography</td>
<td>The beginning of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality, including homosexuality and adultery</td>
<td>Scientific investigation and experimentation (stem cells, cloning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The creation of the universe</td>
<td>Socioeconomic theory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides your grades, what are some practical ways you can monitor yourself to gauge how well you are meeting the high expectations of college?

**THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE HAS A RHYTHM**

Now you know what to expect and what is expected of you in college, but understanding a few other customary practices will help you go from being a “tourist” to a “native.” One of the characteristics of a college environment that you’ll start to notice over time is that there’s a rhythm, or recurring pattern, that drives the pace and intensity of the college experience. In the same way that a 24-hour period in your life tends to have variations in what you’re doing and how intense your schedule is, the college experience has predictable variations that you can expect and anticipate.

**Schedules**

First, it is helpful to note that colleges organize their annual calendar around semesters, terms, or quarters, which can be as short as four weeks during the summer, or as long as 16 weeks. Many colleges have at least four semesters: fall, spring, first summer term, and second summer term, with the summer terms being shorter than the fall and spring terms. Other colleges organize the academic calendar around 10- or 11-week quarters. If you are unsure how many weeks the semester is, count the number of weeks from the first day of class until the last day of finals. You can also find the information in the college catalog or in the course outline of your syllabus.
No matter how many weeks in the term, classes are scheduled at different days during the week. This arrangement may differ significantly from your high school schedule. In college, you may take classes once a week, as is the case in evening or night classes, or you may take them on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, or just Tuesdays and Thursdays. Usually, colleges do not offer classes on Friday nights, so if you take classes in the evening, you will take them either once a week or twice a week, Mondays through Thursdays.

Exceptions to this schedule occur during shortened terms, such as summer semesters or intersession terms, in which you may go every day during the week. Also, you may have a lab or special class that meets only once a week, but is tied to another class such as biology or chemistry. The best advice for new students is to read the schedule of classes carefully before registering, and as always, ask an advisor, counselor, professor, or fellow student if you have trouble reading your schedule.

Colleges award credit hours (remember this term from earlier in the chapter?) based on how many hours a week you are in class during a regular semester (summer or intersession terms will double or quadruple the number of hours a week as compared to a regular semester). Thus, a 3-credit-hour class will require that you spend about three hours in class per week—some classes may last only 50 minutes, three times a week. Exceptions do exist: Labs are often worth 1 credit hour, but they may meet for more than one hour, one day a week.

Exhibit 1.3 shows a typical schedule of a full-time student. Notice the “TR” under the “Days” column: “T” stands for Tuesday and “R” stands for Thursday. Thus, the biology class meets both Tuesday and Thursday, while the lab meets on Thursday only. Labs and other special classes may meet for more than one hour a week, but they are usually worth only 1 credit hour. Although the classes in this schedule meet two-and-a-half hours each week, they are given 3 credit hours. Three hours is often an approximation of the time spent in class.

If the schedule in Exhibit 1.3 reflects a 16-week semester, this student will spend over 40 hours in class for the semester. During summer or intersession terms, you will

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**EXHIBIT 1.3 Sixteen-Week Class Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE ID</th>
<th>COURSE NAME</th>
<th>DAYS</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>CREDIT HOURS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engl 030</td>
<td>Composition Fundamentals</td>
<td>M W F</td>
<td>8:00–8:50 A.M.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biol 110</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>T R</td>
<td>8:00–9:15 A.M.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biol 112</td>
<td>Biology Lab</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>9:25–11:25 A.M.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math 034</td>
<td>Intermediate Algebra</td>
<td>M W F</td>
<td>10:00–10:50 A.M.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coll 101</td>
<td>Freshman Seminar</td>
<td>T R</td>
<td>12:15–1:30 P.M.</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL HOURS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>13.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
spend about the same number of hours in class, but you will attend class more often and for longer periods of time.

Because Exhibit 1.4 is a schedule for a four-week term, the classes meet for more than three hours a week. In this case, students meet for 10 hours a week for four weeks, which will equal 40 hours or the equivalent of the total number of hours a 3-credit-hour class will meet during a 16-week term.

As you build your schedule each semester, here are a few tips to consider:

- Identify the courses you need to make progress toward a degree. Meet with your advisor well in advance of when you need to formally enroll in the next semester, and make sure you know what GE courses you should take next, and what required and elective courses you should be taking for your major. Don’t build your schedule around classes that are interesting or fit the time of day when you want to attend class—focus on the courses you need to move closer to graduation.

- Have a contingency plan, or alternative courses in mind. Depending on the balance between student demand and the supply of courses at your college, you may encounter situations in which the classes you want to take are either not being offered next term (not every class listed in the college catalog is offered every term) or are already full by the time you register for classes. For that reason, identify courses that could be appropriate second options for you. For example, some GE requirements provide several options. Your top choice might be a popular culture class that you know you would really enjoy, but it’s a good idea to identify another suitable GE course that you could take if that class is full or not scheduled.

- Don’t make your schedule a popularity contest. If you rely on fellow classmates to tell you when you should take class and which professor you should choose, you’ll find yourself competing against everyone else for the same classes. This doesn’t always work in your favor. Sometimes an “unpopular” 7 A.M. class may be your best option because it fits your schedule well, and you may discover that you think most clearly in the morning. You might also discover that a professor is “unpopular” simply because he or she challenges students to work hard, and you actually learn a lot in the course. Select courses for the right reasons, not the popular reasons.
Build in time for individual study and to meet with study groups. As you build your schedule, insert blocks of time when you can go to the library or other study space to review lecture notes, read the textbook, and complete homework and assignments. Also, set time aside for study group meetings and team projects.

There are other factors you’ll want to consider when you build your schedule—such as your part- or full-time job, eating, exercising, sleeping, and social activities—so take time to build a complete schedule before you have to officially enroll in the next term. The schedule you build will determine the rhythm of each term, and you want that rhythm to fit you well.

**Grades**

What is a discussion about college expectations without mentioning grades? Grades are an important part of your education, but they aren’t the only measure of your learning and success. Grades are important because they reflect your level of achievement on an assignment or in a course, they are often used for obtaining and maintaining scholarships and financial aid, and they are a relevant piece of news to family, friends, and employers who may be supporting you financially and emotionally. Many people view grades as a reflection of a level of success. For instance, most of the people you ask would view a student who has straight A’s as someone who is smart and successful. Earning good grades can motivate you to do your best and give you more confidence as you earn them.

Although good grades feel great when you earn them, grades are not always an indication of your success or lack of success in mastering a subject. Banner and Cannon assert that grades have limitations: “Grades are evaluations of your work, not of your character or intelligence. You may be a wonderful person but a failure as a biologist. You may find it impossible to do satisfactory work in history but may excel in all other subjects” (Banner & Cannon, 1999, p. 160). They are a necessary part of evaluation, much as you are evaluated on your job. However, as Banner and Cannon point out, grades do not show the whole picture of who you are. Grades, then, are only part of the story of your education. Grades are important because they are a way to describe the work you have done in a class. However, grades alone are not the magic carpet to success in college; they are only part of the story of your achievements. Your goal should be to strike a balance between caring about your grades and caring about improving your skills and increasing your knowledge.

As stated earlier, college professors grade a student on his or her ability to meet the standards of the course or of a particular assignment. Effort is definitely a necessary part of earning good grades—and you will earn the respect of your professor and fellow students by demonstrating an intense effort to master the concepts of a class—but it is
only one part of achieving success in a course. College professors expect that you also
meet the standards, sometimes called grading criteria, of the course. Exhibit 1.5 shows
a potential set of criteria for a college-level paper. In this case, these criteria must be met
to receive a grade of A on the paper.

Knowing how your college assesses student performance is a start to improving
your overall outlook on grading. The following is a typical grading scale in college:

100–90 A  89–80 B  79–70 C  69–60 D  59–0 F

Some colleges may use a + or − next to a letter grade, such as A− or C+. Colleges
that allow for +'s and −'s will usually alter the grading scale to designate the different
grades. Here is an example of a grading scale that includes +'s and −’s:

100–94 A  93–90 A−  89–87 B+  86–84 B  83–80 B−

Each semester, the registrar, the person who keeps your academic records at your
college, will calculate your grade point average, or GPA, and post it to your transcript,
or your list of classes and grades. Because the calculation of your GPA requires a little
mathematical skill, it is important to know how your registrar figures it. Hours are the
number of hours you are in class each week. As discussed, classes are usually 3 credit
hours. Science or specialized classes that have labs usually carry 4 credit hours. Depend-
ing on the course and the program, credit hours can be as many as 6 or as few as 1. To
know how many hours a course carries, check the description in the college catalog,
because some classes meet for more hours a week than they are worth in terms of credit.

Letter grades carry point values called quality points. Exhibit 1.6 shows how many
quality points each letter grade is worth.

Courses that are designated as developmental or remedial usually do not figure into
your grade point average, so they do not carry any quality points. If you audit a course
or receive AP or CLEP credit for a course, you will not receive quality points either. In
other words, while you receive credit on your transcript for taking the course or taking
an equivalent of the course, the course will not factor into your grade point average.
Before you figure your GPA, you will need to figure your grade points for each class
(see Exhibit 1.6). You arrive at your grade points by multiplying the quality points for
the grade you received by the number of hours the class is worth. For instance, if you
took a 4-credit-hour class and you made a B, then you will multiply 4 (hours) by 3
(quality points for a B).

Evan is taking 15 hours (five 3-credit-hour courses) this semester; if he receives an
A, a B, and three C’s, then his grade would be calculated as shown in Exhibit 1.7.
Finally, divide the total grade points by the total hours (39/15). Evan’s GPA would be 2.6.

Building your schedule every term and tracking your grades will establish a regular rhythm for your college experience. Other activities may be part of this rhythm as well, such as club or Greek life responsibilities, intramural sports, academic competitions, career fairs and workshops, and on-campus events such as concerts and sporting events. Over time, you’ll adapt to the ebbs and flows of these activities and the intensity of your work to meet all of the expectations and responsibilities that you face. As you learn to anticipate these variations in intensity and pace, you’ll be able to prepare for them and succeed.

**EXHIBIT 1.6 Grades and Quality Points**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Quality Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXHIBIT 1.7 GPA Calculation Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Grade (Quality Points)</th>
<th>Grade Points (Hours × Quality Points)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A (4)</td>
<td>3 × 4 = 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>B (3)</td>
<td>3 × 3 = 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>C (2)</td>
<td>3 × 2 = 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>C (2)</td>
<td>3 × 2 = 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>C (2)</td>
<td>3 × 2 = 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Hours</td>
<td></td>
<td>39 Grade Points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflect on your own schedule and how you’d like to arrange it each semester to best suit your own personal circumstances and preferences. Besides classes, what other activities will fill your schedule?
Your college transcript, which includes your grade point average, can reveal more than just the grades you earned in your courses. For example, some colleges make notations on students’ transcripts if they have failed a class because of plagiarism or cheating. These marks can be evidence that a student did not follow academic integrity policies. In some cases, these marks can be deleted from transcripts if the student successfully completes an academic integrity workshop.

Your Turn

In approximately 250 words, discuss the specifics of your college’s academic integrity policy. Describe how your college records failing grades that are due to academic integrity violations. Also include in your discussion whether there are any programs at your college to help students understand and follow the academic integrity policy.

Your College Is a Community of Resources

Now that you have a better understanding of college culture and what is expected of you, it is time to examine how your college looks. Getting to know the layout of the campus and the people who work there is important to understanding the culture and getting the help you need to support your success. For example, knowing where to go when you need to use a computer will make your ability to complete an assignment a little easier. Finding your professor’s office may save you time and stress when you need to talk to him or her about an upcoming test. The more you are on campus, the easier it will be for you to find the people and places that will help you no matter what you need, but it will help if you take some time to study your campus so you know where to look.

Explore Your Campus

Find a map of your campus and study it for a few minutes. How many buildings does it have? How much parking space? How much “green” space, or landscaping? Are there any unique features to your campus that make it an inviting and exciting place? Familiarizing yourself with your campus is probably the first activity you did when you enrolled in classes. If you have not taken a tour or simply walked around the campus, do so within the first few weeks of the semester. Locate the library, the student center, student parking, the bookstore, the business office, and the registrar’s office—just to name a few important destinations.

The more you know about your campus’s layout, the easier it will be to find what you are looking for when you need it most. Using your map of the campus or your memory and Exhibit 1.8, check off the types of buildings or departments within buildings that you know are present at your college.

If your college has more than one campus, familiarize yourself with the layout of other college property. You may have to travel to a satellite campus to take a test or to pick up materials for a class. If you have the time and the other campus is not too far away, ask for a tour. At the very least, familiarize yourself with any of the items you marked “not sure” in Exhibit 1.8.
College Culture and the Campus

Locate Information about Campus Resources

Knowing where to go to find services and people is only part of learning about your college. Another important aspect is finding and using the information that the college produces for students. College publications are a great place to find information about courses, programs, scholarships, activities, and policy changes. It is important that you regularly read these publications in order to stay up-to-date with what is going on.

**College Catalog**

The college catalog is an essential document during your academic career. All the information that you need to apply for financial aid, to choose courses, and to graduate is contained in the catalog. You will also find out what you are required to do to complete a degree. The academic calendar is usually placed at the beginning of the catalog. There you will find the dates for registering, dropping courses, and taking final exams.

It is important to read and keep your college catalog, because if the college changes any requirements of your degree program, you will be able to follow the guidelines

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**EXHIBIT 1.8 Campus Layout Checklist**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building or Area</th>
<th>At My College</th>
<th>Not Sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student center or union</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bookstore</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theater or auditorium</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snack bars, food courts, and other dining facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic training facilities (indoor or outdoor)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science labs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer labs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual colleges and departments (such as business, psychology, engineering, and graphic communication)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student parking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benches and tables for meeting outside</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet study space inside</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability Resource Center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Center</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashier’s Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrar’s Office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that were published the year you began the program. For instance, if you are working on a psychology degree and you have taken three semesters of courses so far, you will not necessarily have to adhere to new requirements that are made at a later date.

**Student Handbook**

The student handbook, which provides you with specific information about student conduct, academic standards, and services, is another valuable publication. The handbook usually contains descriptions of career services, the bookstore, computer labs, and financial aid offices. Academic information, including probation and suspension for misconduct and qualifications for making the dean’s list, can also be found in the student handbook. Most schools view the student handbook as a legal document that outlines what students can do in certain situations, so be sure to read it closely and keep a copy at home or in your book bag.

**College Newspaper**

College newspapers differ from the college catalog and student handbook in that students are usually the ones who are responsible for the content. Within a college newspaper, you will find articles about upcoming events; reports on changes on the college campus; editorials on important student issues; profiles of programs; and advertisements for used books, performances by musical groups, and anything else that students want to announce. The college newspaper is also a forum to explore controversial topics and to discuss sensitive issues.

Newspapers always need students to interview, write, edit, and publish. If you are interested in working for the newspaper, contact the editor or visit a journalism or composition professor.

**Bulletin Boards**

Even with the increased use of the Internet, the bulletin board is still an important way to get a message to students. Found all over campus, bulletin boards usually advertise used books, needs for roommates and part-time jobs, and upcoming campus events. Bulletin boards within academic buildings often announce study abroad opportunities, summer workshops, special events, and other types of notable activities.

**It’s in the Syllabus**

Anything that professors hand out in class is a communication tool. The syllabus is one of the most important documents that you will receive in class, so be sure to read it carefully. In the syllabus, you will usually find the following information:

- instructor’s name; office location, phone number, and hours open to students; and email address
- prerequisites for the course
- course description from the catalog
- textbook information

Students who have “the right stuff”—such as access to a computer, textbooks, and other materials and equipment that are required for classes—are much more likely to be successful.
course objectives, or what you will accomplish by the time you finish the class
■ course content, or what topics will be covered throughout the semester
■ assignments and due dates
■ grading criteria
■ attendance and late-work policies
■ academic integrity statement (which also appears in the student handbook)
■ disability accommodations policy
■ general policies for classroom conduct

The syllabus is considered a contract between the student and the instructor. This means that not only will the syllabus contain what is expected of you during class, but it will also contain what you can expect from the professor. Both of you—the student and the professor—will be bound by what is stated in the document. Reading the syllabus closely and following it regularly will keep you on top of the policies, expectations, and assignments.

Other essential information that is handed out in class includes directions for assignments, photocopied readings, study questions, and notes. Regard anything that is given to you by the instructor as important, even if you are told “This won’t be on the test.”

You should also consider the grades and written comments you receive as communication from your instructors. Be sure to read any comments or suggestions that are written on papers and exams, ask questions if you don’t understand them or they are illegible, and save all feedback until the semester is over.

Online Resources
The college’s website is where you can find the most current information about classes, academic programs, and contact information for professors. It is easier to update information on a website because it doesn’t involve printing and distribution, so it is more likely to provide the most accurate information. College websites usually list phone numbers and email addresses of professors and deans, which makes contacting them easier.

In addition to general information about degrees and departments, your college’s website may give you access to professors’ syllabi and assignments. This provides a good opportunity to investigate what courses you want to take based on the course objectives and activities and information about the professor.

Most professors establish a course website, either as a standalone site, or within a learning management system such as Blackboard or Moodle. Once you’re enrolled in a course, you will gain special access to the course website, and you need to visit this site often. Professors use course websites to post announcements; distribute the syllabus, assignments, and reading materials; facilitate discussion boards; track grades; collect electronic versions of projects and assignments; and even administer online quizzes and tests.
Campus Organizations

Campus organizations and student groups are another part of college life you will want to learn more about. Depending on how large your college is and how involved the students are, you may find a variety of student organizations and clubs in which to participate. Even if your time is limited, consider getting involved in some way, because these activities can enhance your college experience, and employers value extracurricular leadership experience when they recruit potential employees. Campus organizations include, but are not limited to, student clubs, student government, student leadership programs, and clubs focused on certain interests (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered issues; political action; community service; academic honors and distinctions; religious or spiritual development; and career exploration). Getting involved will help your transition to the college and provide immediate connections with students, faculty, and staff. You can learn about these opportunities on the college website, through on-campus club fairs and information sessions, and by asking upperclassmen about their own experiences.

College is an exciting place with a wide variety of activities and experiences that can enrich your life and help you succeed. Because there are many options for how you can get involved, you’ll need to gather information about them and carefully choose the best opportunities in which you’ll invest time and effort. It’s a common mistake among students to get excited about all these opportunities and then overcommit. This leads to avoidable disappointment and failure. As you begin your college career, carefully select only one or two extracurricular activities until you can gain experience with your academic responsibilities and determine what capacity you have for commitments outside the classroom.

60-second PAUSE

How well do you know your campus already? What are some steps you could take this week to become more familiar with the resources and opportunities mentioned in this section?
The Changes in Culture and College Services

If you are moving from your community college to a larger, more diverse university, you may experience a slight culture shock despite the semesters you already have under your belt. In addition to a bigger campus with more buildings to find and more students to meet, you may find that a university seems more impersonal. Transfer students also note that expectations are higher—and their grades are lower—especially as they move into their majors and begin working toward a career.

All in all, the culture shock you experience when transferring to a four-year university will depend on how much bigger and how much more different the school is from your community college. Just remember that whatever differences you notice, there are people at the four-year school who can help you deal with the adjustment. Seek out counselors, advisors, faculty, and students to help make your transition smoother.

How the Culture Will Change Again

When starting your first job out of college, you will experience a period of getting used to the way the office or business works. You will encounter new terms, new methods of doing things, and new people. In addition, you will experience working in groups or teams to accomplish tasks, and you will be expected to communicate orally and in writing. There will be less supervision and more expectation that you will do the work you say you will do.

Paying attention to how others act on the job can alleviate any anxiety that you may feel. Just as you made friends and found mentors in college, you should look for others who can offer guidance and help as you learn the ropes of a new career. Also, think about how you adjusted to college, and use the same strategies to make your new working environment seem less foreign and more comfortable.
Chapter 1

UNDERSTAND & REMEMBER

Review Questions

1. What differences exist between high school and college or a full-time job and college?
2. Name and explain five characteristics that professors will expect from you as a college student.
3. For what purposes do colleges assign grades? What benefits are there for receiving a grade for a course?
4. What types of documents and communication can you expect in college? What are their purposes?

APPLY & ANALYZE

Critical Thinking

1. As part of learning outside of class, professors expect that you visit a tutor if you need additional practice or help. Nonetheless, students may not always take advantage of the help. What could the college do to encourage more students to get help with their classes?

2. With the prevalence of technology in the classroom (notes and slides available online, videos of lectures, etc.), explain why you think attending class is important or not. Discuss your college’s attendance policy and the effect it may—or may not—have on student attendance.

3. What information have you already received that will help you navigate college more smoothly? Organize the different sources of information by type and answer the following questions: What information have you received from email or the Internet? What information have you received from an advisor? Finally, which kinds of information are most useful to you and why?

EVALUATE

Case Scenarios

1. In Jennifer’s literature class, she is reading Tim O’Brien’s novel, The Things They Carried. Although she understands that the book is about the Vietnam War, she doesn’t know why she has to read a book that contains so much profanity and graphic images of death. She has made an appointment to speak to her professor about the reading assignment because she wants to get out of reading a book that is so depressing and discomforting. She is prepared to suggest that she read and write a paper on a Shakespeare play instead, one that she did in high school and got an A on.

Use the following scale to rate the decision that has been made (1 = Poor Decision, 5 = Excellent Decision). Be prepared to explain your answer.

Poor Decision ← 1 2 3 4 5 → Excellent Decision
2. Jai-Ling is taking a biology class. One of her assignments is to create a group presentation on an assigned topic. Her group’s topic is the theory of evolution, a theory that Jai-Ling finds fascinating although she does not know much other than what she learned in high school. However, when she meets with her group to prepare for the presentation, two group members express deep concern that they are being asked to study something that they don’t believe in. They refuse to help with the project even though they know their lack of participation will lower the whole group’s grade. Jai-Ling tells her group members that they are being immature and ridiculous because one of the purposes of being in college is to be challenged in one’s thinking. She goes straight to the professor to complain and ask for a new group.

Use the following scale to rate the decision that has been made (1 = Poor Decision, 5 = Excellent Decision). Be prepared to explain your answer.

Poor Decision ← 1 2 3 4 5 → Excellent Decision

3. Paul has just graduated from high school and enrolled in college, and he is surprised by some of his classes and the expectations. One professor told the class that she didn’t care if they attended or not. She would post all the lectures, notes, answers to homework, and study guides online. Another class has 300 students, and Paul feels lost in the sea of fellow classmates. Only his first-year orientation class is small and demands that he attend regularly. A couple of his classmates have approached him about taking turns attending classes and sharing notes. He will attend one week and then the other two will take the following two weeks. He won’t have to attend some of his classes for two weeks, which will allow him more time to do other things like work or get involved in student activities. Because two of his professors do not take attendance or would not know if he attended, he decides to agree to the arrangement.

Use the following scale to rate the decision that has been made (1 = Poor Decision, 5 = Excellent Decision). Be prepared to explain your answer.

Poor Decision ← 1 2 3 4 5 → Excellent Decision

CREATE

Research It Further

1. Investigate what services or offices your college has to help first-time or first-year students. Using your college’s map (or creating your own of your campus), provide written or typed details for each building or area that pertains to these services.

2. What resources does your college’s website offer for first-time students? If your college does not offer any or not many, search the Internet for resources for first-time or first-year students. Present your website findings to your class and highlight the most useful information.

3. Interview your classmates about their first-day experiences on campus and in classes. What did they expect college would be like? What surprised or even shocked them? What are they most excited about? What are they worried about? Share your results and responses with your class.
TAKE THIS WITH YOU

Based on the goals we set at the beginning of this chapter, here’s how you can take this learning with you toward college success:

- Recognize the differences between high school and college that affect your habits and mindset.
- Familiarize yourself with the various resources on campus now, before you need them.
- Anticipate the expectations of college and use the resources you have available to meet those expectations.
- Adjust to the rhythm of college by getting plugged into important events and deadlines during the semester.

REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS


MyStudentSuccessLab

MyStudentSuccessLab (www.mystudentsuccesslab.com) is an online solution designed to help you ‘Start strong, Finish stronger’ by building skills for ongoing personal and professional development.