Juanita calls her mother for the second time in two hours. She often finds her mother’s voice and advice exactly what she needs to hear. She has just created her schedule, visited with her advisor, and now is looking for where her classes will be. If there is one thing Juanita does well, it is preparing to make a good first impression.

“Call me,” she texts to her mother. Juanita’s mom calls immediately. Despite the fact that neither Juanita’s mother nor father attended college, her mother always seems to know what to say to keep Juanita on track.

“Do you think I can do this? I just discovered one of my classes is in a building on the other side of campus. Even on a nice day, I don’t know if I can make it in the 10 minutes I have between classes.”

“Juanita,” her mother says with softness and fatigue in her voice, “you always overthink these things. I know you like to be prepared, but things will be different, including how you are going to manage getting to classes in different buildings. It’s not high school.”

Juanita doesn’t know if her schedule is right for her. The classes seem different from the dual enrollment classes she took in high school; even though it seems the expectations and workload are the same, the different students of varying ages are something for her to get used to. Only a few of her friends are attending with her, and she didn’t see any of them a few weeks ago when the college offered campus tours for incoming students. Now, the only time she “sees” them is on their websites where she can view their latest pictures.

“Yeah, but I didn’t have to make a life decision in high school. It made me nervous when my advisor asked me to choose a degree plan,” she replies, biting her nails.

“You did choose electrical engineering, just like we talked about, right?” her mother asks.

“Well, I wanted to talk to you about that. I saw a flyer about careers in the health field. I showed my advisor and she said I could make a really good salary right after I graduate and it wouldn’t take as long as a degree in engineering,” Juanita says.

“But you don’t like working with people who are sick, Juanita. Don’t you want to build things instead? You were always building things in the backyard, growing up,” her mother responds.

Juanita feels the conversation going in the same direction it always does, and she moves from biting her nails to chewing her cuticles.
“Juanita, you need to make a decision really soon. You need to get through as soon as you can and get a good job that will pay enough to support you. If not, I don’t know if I can support you for much longer,” says her mother.

Hearing this causes Juanita’s stomach to harden because she knows that her father will not be able to work much longer and her mother will have to take care of him. When that happens, there may not be enough money to stay in college. Because of the classes she has taken in her high school’s dual enrollment program, Juanita could graduate with an associate’s degree next year, but if she doesn’t get a scholarship to continue her education, she may not be able to transfer to a four-year university. Now she is thinking seriously about a degree that takes less time and can get her into a good career fast.

“You can’t afford mistakes, Juanita,” says her mother. “I will be proud of you whatever you decide, but make a choice and stick with it."

Juanita knows her mother is right. She has a goal of getting a degree—and nothing will keep her from that—but she is not sure how to make the right decisions between today and the day she graduates.

As she winds her way down the hill and to the campus center food court, she tells her mother good-bye and promises to pick up a prescription on her way home. She resolves to make an appointment with her advisor and think about what she should do.

This chapter is devoted to you first because knowing who you are will help you lay a solid foundation on which to build success. Starting with understanding yourself seems like the easiest of subjects, but getting to the point of really knowing yourself will take time. You are now a college student and your journey will be an exciting one, but it will also be one in which you will find yourself changing, growing, and defining or redefining who you are and who you want to be.

More specifically, after completing this chapter, you will be able to do the following:

- Discover your story.
- Set your goals and create a mission statement.
- Determine your learning style preference.
- Develop your support system.

The question “Who are you?” sounds easy to answer. You may start by listing a variety of characteristics. For example, you are a male, age 25, married, father of a son, an electrician, and a Native American. Or you are a single female, age 19, part-time sales assistant, full-time student, and mountain climber. But what are you beyond those labels? Where have you been? What are you doing now? Where are you going and where do you want to be? Now the questions get a little more difficult and take more time and thought to answer. The point is that you need to have some
idea of who you are, or at least an idea of where you want to be, when you begin college.

Maybe you can say that you don’t know who you are yet, but you hope that enrolling in classes and pursuing a degree will help you come to a better understanding of who you are. Don’t worry, though, if you cannot immediately articulate the essence of you. This question—“Who are you?”—and the possible answers have been intriguing human beings for thousands of years. In his book *Who Are You? 101 Ways of Seeing Yourself* (2000), Malcolm Godwin explores the ways that we have tried to answer this question. From body types to ancient Indian mysticism to workplace dynamics, there are numerous ways you can learn more about what and how you think. The ultimate goal is to know yourself and your environment well enough to reach your goals.

Of course, who you are will change, maybe dramatically, as you take classes, encounter new subjects, and research interesting topics. But taking the time now to think and reflect about yourself will help you map your course throughout the college experience and beyond—returning to work, raising a family, attending another college, having a fulfilling career. This chapter assists you in understanding who you are by helping you identify what you know and how you learn. This chapter also aids in your decisions about who and what you want to be while helping you make the transition into college.

### Your Background

To discover your story—and to write your future—you will need to consider where you began. Your background, which includes your family, your culture, and your experiences, will serve as a foundation for creating a life. Think about your personal history and how it has shaped who you are. Also, consider how your family has influenced you as well—what beliefs have they instilled in you? What is their attitude toward your college aspirations? Who you are and how you have developed will be part of your value system as well as part of the foundation for setting goals for future achievements. If you have had great support and good educational experiences, you may find envisioning your future degree rather easy. However, if you have had substantial challenges in your life, you may need more support and resources to see that you can indeed be successful. No matter what your background—and to be a first-generation student means you have a unique life story and a wonderful opportunity to be successful—your college will give you the chance to write a life story that includes a college education.

### Your Values

Part of your life story will include your value system. Values can be inherited from your parents, or they can come from what your culture, religion, or ethnicity regard as important. Values can also be formed from both positive and negative experiences. For example, a value of yours may be honesty, which means that you try to be truthful and straightforward in most situations and that you expect others to be honest with you. If you value hard work, then you strive to do your best in your life. If a friend has treated you with compassion, you may value sensitivity to others. On the other hand, if
you have been discriminated against in the past, you may now value open-mindedness in others.

The importance of knowing and understanding your values is that this knowledge can help you set realistic goals. If you value a satisfying career, for instance, you will set goals supporting that value. Therefore, you will probably investigate careers and fields that are challenging and interesting. If you value a stable financial future, you will set goals that enable you to earn enough money to provide for your needs and wants. If you value your family, you will make spending time with them a priority. Your values should be a true reflection of who you are and what you believe.

Think about Juanita’s conversation with her mother. Her mother wants Juanita to consider electrical engineering, perhaps because she values financial stability and success or career prestige. What if one reason Juanita hesitates at choosing a major and career path is that she values a career that helps the human condition? What if she also wants to learn more about how we recover from illness? If she decides to adopt her mother’s values and ignore her own, what kind of future can you envision for her? Although her mother’s intentions may be well meaning, Juanita will have to compromise herself in order to meet her parents’ goals for her, and she will probably suffer some regret in the future.

Does this example mean that you should ignore others who have helped you figure out what you want to be? Certainly not. But you should pay attention to what you want when you do get help with your educational and career goals. Be open to others’ suggestions, but make sure you feel comfortable with your final decision. Those who truly want you to succeed will be proud of you when they know you have achieved your heart’s desire, not theirs.

Staying true to your values is part of integrity. If you try to please others or adopt their values when you do not completely agree with them, you will lack integrity. This may not be an issue for you until you are tested on those values.

For example, you may have been raised with the value of staying true to your ethnic or cultural heritage, even at the expense of meeting someone new or experiencing a new culture. Now that you are in college, you may find that you are exposed to a variety of ethnicities and cultures and that you enjoy and appreciate learning more about other perspectives and lifestyles.

YOUR TURN

Have you ever taken on someone else’s values that were not truly a reflection of your own? • Why did you? • What was the outcome? • What did you learn about yourself?

Integrity MATTERS

Staying true to your values is part of integrity. If you try to please others or adopt their values when you do not completely agree with them, you will lack integrity. This may not be an issue for you until you are tested on those values.

For example, you may have been raised with the value of staying true to your ethnic or cultural heritage, even at the expense of meeting someone new or experiencing a new culture. Now that you are in college, you may find that you are exposed to a variety of ethnicities and cultures and that you enjoy and appreciate learning more about other perspectives and lifestyles.
Your Dreams

As you consider your goals, you will also want to think about your dreams. What do you want to do that you have not written down because you feel it is too far-fetched? There are many stories of people who denied their dreams and took jobs that provided them with financial security and prestige, only to discover that their lives were not fulfilled because those were not their values.

Why don’t more people follow their dreams? First, they may not know what they are. Second, these same people may be scared. Following what one’s heart wants often contradicts what one’s head is saying. Third, some people need to make the “safe” choice first before they feel confident that they can fulfill their dreams. In other words, they may need to take a job that pays well so that they can save money to fulfill their dreams at a later date.

Although you may not be able to drop everything right now and follow your heart, you should at least start thinking about what you really want to do with your life as you plan your college degree.

YOUR GOALS and MISSION STATEMENT

To fulfill your mission in life, you will need to have a plan. Setting goals and achieving them will put you on the path to fulfilling that mission. If you are not used to writing down tasks for the day or voicing your plans for the future, you will need to start working on making lists and talking about what you want to be and do.

From your list of values and your mission statement, you will be able to formulate goals that support both what you believe in and what you want for yourself. The fact that you are reading this book is evidence that you are someone who has set a goal and is working toward achieving it. Also, the fact that you are in college says that you value education as a means of improving your life. You may have overcome many obstacles to get where you are today. You may have faced pressure from your family and friends to join the workforce on graduating from high school rather than go to college, or you may have gotten negative feedback from others when you decided to stop working, or stop working as much, to get a degree.

Nonetheless, realize that setting and achieving goals is not as easy as writing them down and crossing them off. You will encounter obstacles, some of which may threaten to knock you off course. Flexibility and determination are the keys to achieving your goals despite setbacks.

Your Mission Statement

Mission statements are declarations of what people or institutions believe in and what they hope to accomplish. Mission statements, then, are usually broad strokes of the overall picture of what you want to accomplish. Values are the foundation of a mission statement. If you are unsure of your values, then your mission statement will not be easy to understand and follow. Thus, you need to know what you value before you can write a mission statement.

As you meet your goals and learn new things, your mission will likely change and your mission statement will need to be revised. The following is an example of a mission statement that you can use as a model for writing your own.
Sample Personal Mission Statement
My mission is to have a fulfilling personal and professional life that allows me to meet new people, take on new challenges, and have flexibility in my schedule. As a mother and wife, I want to have a close relationship with my family, acting both as a caregiver and as a role model. As a teacher, I will be dedicated to providing students with the best possible education to prepare them for a four-year university curriculum as well as for the demands of the world of work.

Setting Goals
To build on your mission statement—and to fulfill that mission in the process—you will need to set goals that you can achieve. A goal is something that you work toward—it may be to learn how to cook macaroni and cheese, to quit a bad habit, or to write a novel. Whatever your goals, they should be reasonable and attainable in the time frame that you have assigned. For instance, if you want to lose 10 pounds in one week, you may need to rethink the time in which you would like to achieve your goal. A more reasonable goal would be to lose 10 pounds in four months. Reasonable goals are more likely to be met.

As you begin to think about your goals, consider dividing them into long-term goals and short-term goals. Certainly, one of your long-term goals is to earn a degree. This goal may take one year or more, depending on how many degree requirements you need to complete or how many other responsibilities you may have. Short-term goals that contribute to the long-term goal of earning a degree include completing your classes successfully, studying for exams, or working on research papers.

When you make your list of goals, consider the following guidelines:

■ Make your goals attainable and reasonable.
■ Break larger goals into smaller goals that will lead to fulfillment.
■ Think of setting goals in these time frames: 1 week, 1 month, 1 semester, 1 year, 5 years, 10 years.
■ Regularly review your goals and make changes as necessary.

Because it is difficult to plan 10 years into the future, make a list of goals that are tied to the near future. For instance, if you want to own your own business in the next 10 years, think about how to structure your short-term and long-term goals by looking at examples like the following:

Long-Term Goal (10 Years)
■ Run a successful landscape design firm.
■ Provide landscaping for low-income properties.

Long-Term Goal (5 Years)
■ Work for a landscape design firm.
■ Continue community service and encourage coworkers to participate.

Long-Term Goal (3 Years)
■ Complete my associate’s degree in landscape design and management.
■ Continue community service work.

Short-Term Goal (9 Months)
■ Complete two semesters of landscape design classes.
■ Continue working at the garden center.
- Plant and maintain my own flower and vegetable garden.
- Participate in a community service project that landscapes low-income properties.

**Short-Term Goal (1 Semester)**
- Complete the classes that will count toward my degree.
- Look for a community service project that landscapes low-income properties.

**Short-Term Goal (1 Month)**
- Help a friend plant new trees.
- Attend a local lecture on seasonal planting.
- Begin research for a final paper on plant diseases.

**Short-Term Goal (1 Week)**
- Study for my classes.
- Apply for a job at a garden center.
- Weed and fertilize the backyard.
- Take a hike in the park.

No matter what you want to achieve, be sure that you write down all your goals and review them every few months to assess your progress. Henriette Anne Klauser has made a career of helping people write down their dreams and goals so they can finally realize them. In *Write It Down, Make It Happen: Knowing What You Want and Getting It!* (2001), Klauser states, “Writing down your dreams and aspirations is like hanging up a sign that says ‘Open for Business.’ . . . Putting it on paper alerts the part in your brain known as the reticular activating system to join you in the play” (p. 33). In other words, the process of writing down your goals tells your brain to start paying attention to your ambitions and makes you aware of opportunities to achieve them.

**Managing Your Goals**

You will see this suggestion throughout this book: To accomplish anything, set goals by writing them down. Even something as simple as spending two hours preparing for class should be written down as a goal for the day or week. Goals must be manageable, however. Too many goals and you could become overwhelmed at the thought of meeting them all, or you may feel like a failure for not accomplishing everything. Avoid the temptation to overschedule and be realistic about how long it will take to complete your goals for the day or week. Too few goals and you will likely feel like a rudderless ship, easily veering off course.

Once you have written down your goals, communicate them to your coworkers, family, and friends. Enlist them to help you meet your goals, especially if you need to schedule time to study and complete assignments. For example, tell them that you must have the evenings free of distractions, or make arrangements with them to have a weekend or weekday to yourself to study. Don’t assume that because they know you are in school they will also know you need extra time and personal space to get your work finished. Managing your time will be much easier if your priorities and goals are concrete, realistic, and communicated to those around you.

**Staying on Track**

As you work toward your goals, make an effort to eliminate anything that keeps you from focusing on them. If you think you don’t have time to accomplish two short-term
goals during the week, examine where you have been spending your time and eliminate the activities that do not contribute to your goals.

If you watch seven hours of television a week and aren’t achieving your short-term goal, whether to become more informed, to relax, or any other sought-after result, then spend that TV time doing something that does contribute to your goal. In addition to meaningless activities, anything that distracts you and is unnecessary in your life should be eliminated, including a habit that is destructive or dangerous, such as taking drugs. In fact, making a goal of staying healthy (e.g., eating right, exercising, de-stressing your life) is not only a good goal in itself, achieving it will help you achieve your other goals.

If you are unsure whether your activities contribute to your goals, take a few minutes to list what you have done this week and determine how each activity has supported or not supported one of your goals. Table 1.1 gives some examples.

### TABLE 1.1 Activities That Contribute to or Distract from Your Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities That Contribute to Your Goals</th>
<th>Activities That May Distract You from Your Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practicing correct car maintenance allows you to get to school and work safely.</td>
<td>Socializing excessively depletes the time and energy you have to focus on your goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising allows you to remain healthy and reduce stress.</td>
<td>Mindlessly watching TV may not contribute to learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proper eating and sleeping will keep you healthy and reduce stress regularly.</td>
<td>Using drugs and alcohol is dangerous and keeps you from focusing on goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading the newspaper keeps you informed, helps improve reading skills, and contributes to learning.</td>
<td>Sleeping and eating irregularly creates stress, which inhibits the ability to reach goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Managing Your Priorities

A discussion of values and goals cannot be complete without also talking about priorities. Simply stated, a priority is something that is important at the moment. Today your top priority could be studying for an exam, but later in the day, it could be taking care of a sick child, which means that studying will have to come second if at all. Priorities, by their very nature, can change weekly, if not daily or even hourly.

Your actions also reflect your priorities. If you say that your first priority is to pass your classes this semester but you spend all your spare time playing basketball with friends, then your social life as well as a little exercise is really your top priority. You must make sure you know what your priorities are and take action to satisfy them. You may also need to express your priorities to others so that they can help you stick to them.

### STAYING MOTIVATED

One of the hardest parts of setting goals is maintaining the momentum to achieve them. There will be times in your academic career when you will feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities you have, and you will feel unsure of your ability to handle it all. When
you feel weighed down by all that you have to accomplish for a particular week or day, try to calm down first. If you can, talk with a friend, an instructor, or a counselor and explain your frustration and stress. Sometimes an instructor who knows you are feeling overwhelmed by expectations in a course will help you find resources to keep on track. A friend may also volunteer to help by studying with you.

To stay motivated and resist the temptation to give up because of the stress, review your short- and long-term goals. Is there anything you can change to make your goals more reasonable or attainable? Have you allowed enough time to achieve them? Revising your goals or your time line may be necessary to keep yourself on track.

Finally, think positively about yourself and your progress. Many students before you have successfully juggled a job, classes, and a family. That is not to say that they did not doubt themselves along the way or suffer any setbacks. The difference between these students and those who were not successful is that they persevered because they believed in themselves more often than not. Tell yourself that you can get through stressful times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN YOU SEE . . .</th>
<th>IT MEANS . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>The experiences you have had that make up who you are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning style preference</td>
<td>The learning style that you prefer or the one in which you learn best.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term goal</td>
<td>A goal that will take a month, a semester, a year, or several years to complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission statement</td>
<td>A statement in which you describe how your values and goals will create your life's mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>What keeps you moving toward your goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple intelligences</td>
<td>Learning style preferences, or “intelligences,” that include bodily/kinesthetic, intrapersonal, and naturalistic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority</td>
<td>Something that is important at a particular moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term goal</td>
<td>A goal that takes an hour, a day, or a week to complete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>What you believe in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VARK</td>
<td>Learning style preferences distinguished according to four categories: Visual, Aural, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM

Even the most dedicated student cannot do it all alone. In fact, behind every successful college graduate is a good support system, usually comprising family, friends, and community members. It is no secret that succeeding in college will take more than just studying hard—you will need to surround yourself with people who encourage you to do your best. There will be times when you need others for academic, emotional, and even financial support. Recognizing who in your circle of friends, family, and contacts will be your best resources is part of the process of creating a support system that will inevitably be part of your college success.

Your Family

Whether you live with your parents, you are a parent, or you are somewhere in between, your family is an important part of who you are and what you will become. Your family has influenced your values and beliefs, and your family members may be a part of the reason you have enrolled in college. For many students, staying in college and being successful depends on the support of family. If your family will be an important part of your life as you pursue a degree, then you will need to consider how they will support you and what you need to communicate with them about the time commitments of studying and taking classes that may reduce your time with them. As you begin your first semester in college, you need to ask yourself several important questions:

- Who in my family will support my decision to attend college?
- What types of financial support can I expect?

It’s All Relative

The definition of a first-generation student is one whose parents have not completed a bachelor’s degree. In some cases, students with a parent who has achieved a certificate or associate’s degree can still be considered first generation.

Your family’s educational experiences will affect your attitude toward obtaining a degree yourself. In some cases, you may be following in your family’s footsteps (especially those who have achieved degrees or other markers of distinction), or you may be blazing a new trail for future family members.

YOUR TURN

Has anyone in your family gone to college? • What kinds of education have your family members completed? • What is your family’s attitude toward a college degree? • How have their experiences and educational attainments affected your desire to get a college degree?
What kinds of emotional support can I expect?
How may my relationships change with my family?
What can I do to communicate my needs while I am in college?

Answering these questions early and communicating your feelings at the beginning of the semester will make it easier for you to keep the lines of communication open in the long run. If you don’t feel comfortable talking face to face with your loved ones, you could write a letter. At the very least, getting your thoughts down on paper first can help you polish what you want to say before you say it. Figure 1.1 provides a sample letter you can use for ideas to write your own family.

Your Friends
Another important part of your support system is friends. You may not be able to choose your family members, but you have more choice as to which friends will be positive influences on your college experience. If you have friends who have also attended or are attending college, you will have a great opportunity to connect with each other on this common pursuit. Even if you do not attend the same college, you can develop a support system with them based on your similar experiences. You can share advice and study strategies as well as a shoulder to lean on when you feel stressed. Knowing that a friend is also pursuing college success can often give you the motivation to continue working hard.

**FIGURE 1.1** Sample Letter to Family

Dear Family,

I want to first thank you for encouraging me to attend college. I am very excited and a little nervous, but because you have been so supportive of my decision, I know that I have a good support system to be successful. I do, though, want to let you know what you can expect as I take college classes. First, I will have to spend time at the college going to classes, meeting with my professors, and studying. I may not be able to participate in all the family activities and responsibilities that I used to because of tests, papers, and lab assignments. I may also not be available to help you in the ways that I did in the past because I will be devoting most of my time to school. However, when I do get breaks between semesters, I will do my best to use that time to reconnect with you. Remember that this won’t be forever—I will be graduating before we know it.

I also hope that I can count on you if I need someone to talk to. Encouraging me to continue during the times I get a little stressed will help me feel as though I can do it. Your understanding that I am doing something valuable and good for my future is important to me.

Sincerely,

You
Although friends, especially those who are in college too, can provide a solid support system, not all friends, just as not all family members, will be a positive influence as you work toward your certificate or degree. Those who are not supportive may be very open about their anger, jealousy, or disappointment that you are pursuing a different path than theirs; others will be more subtle. Some friends may fear loss of time together or even replacement by new friends. In some cases, you may discover that your values no longer match your friends’ ideas, which may signal a time to lessen your contact with them.

For sure, you will be busier than previously, and keeping in touch will be more difficult. Letting friends know that you may not be able to give them as much time as in the past can help you create some necessary distance. Of course, there is always the option of being upfront and honest about any lack of support. Telling certain friends that you need positive relationships while you are in college may be the message they need to hear to change their attitudes toward your exciting endeavor. If they still don’t get the message, it may be time to eliminate them from daily contact.

Your Community

There are a variety of places you can look for support as you make your way through college. Your community may offer support to college students such as you. Check out your local community center to see whether they offer workshops on time management or study skills; the local library may sponsor book clubs or study groups. Area churches, temples, and synagogues may provide financial support for students in need. Most communities support residents’ goals to go to college and earn degrees because of a feeling that as more residents achieve college degrees, the greater will be the likelihood that the community improves. A gesture as simple as offering a discount for college students at a local store is a sign that the area businesses recognize and value students’ hard work in college. Local community leaders may also be willing to provide internships or mentoring sessions for students who could use extra advice and guidance throughout college. See what your community has to offer, or start your own community support group.

Who is part of your support system so far? Are they mostly family or friends? Make a list of people and describe what kind of support they provide. Is it financial? Emotional? Academic? Spiritual?

YOUR LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCES

Knowing your learning style preferences provides a foundation for understanding yourself in other aspects of your life. Information about what you like and dislike, how you relate to others, and how you work most productively will furnish direction for achieving your goals and, as Gordon Lawrence (1995) states in his book *People Types and Tiger Stripes*, lead you to make “dramatic improvements in the effectiveness of [your] work” (p. 5). (See the Appendix for Neil Fleming’s VARK learning styles inventory, which focuses on four learning style preferences: Visual, Aural, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic.) In the next few pages, you will complete a personality preference inventory, which can help you see an aspect of who you are. Looking at your values, dreams, mission statement, and goals in light of your learning style can work to create a more complete picture of who you are and how to get where you want to go.
Although learning preferences are not necessarily directly linked to college majors or careers, you can easily see that your learning style preference will come into play when you choose your major and your career. Kinesthetic learners, for example, may be drawn to majors or careers that allow them to move about or use their bodies to complete tasks. Landscape design, auto body repair, culinary arts, and nursing are just a few college degree programs that would appeal to kinesthetic learners. Review Table 1.2, which lists possible majors and careers for some learning style preferences, but note that it is not considered an exhaustive list. Also, some majors and careers may speak to more than one learning style preference; for example, an advertising executive who writes, edits, and directs commercials may rely on almost all the learning style preferences on a daily basis as she creates commercials and ads for clients. For sure, she will need to work individually, with peers, and with her boss on different aspects of a project, and she may find that she is needed to complete tasks at different times of the day, even late at night when filming continues long after the typical workday ends.

Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner is well known for his theory of multiple intelligences, which is another term for “what we know, understand, and learn about our world” (Lazear, 1991). Gardner has created eight categories of how we can know and learn.

Verbal/linguistic intelligence is evident in people who can use language with ease; they enjoy reading and writing and may be journalists, novelists, playwrights, or comedians. The logical/mathematical intelligence is demonstrated by an ease and enjoyment with numbers and logic problems. People who have a strong leaning in this intelligence like to solve problems, find patterns, discover relationships between objects, and follow steps. Career choices for logical/mathematical thinkers include science, computer technology, math, and engineering.

The visual/spatial intelligence is characterized by anything visual—paintings, photographs, maps, and architecture. People who have a strong visual/spatial sense are usually good at design, architecture, painting and sculpture, and map making. The bodily/kinesthetic intelligence focuses on body movement. It is found in people who enjoy using their bodies to express themselves. Obvious career choices for this intelligence include dancing, sports, and dramatic arts. Musical/rhythmic intelligence encompasses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Style Preference</th>
<th>College Majors</th>
<th>Careers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>Art, graphic design, drafting, architecture, interior design</td>
<td>Art teacher, artist, graphic designer, architect, interior designer, stylist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aural</td>
<td>Music, communications, counseling</td>
<td>Musician, music educator, marketing director, public relations director, counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinesthetic</td>
<td>Sciences, sociology, computer technology, culinary arts, massage therapy</td>
<td>Nurse, doctor, therapist, networking specialist, computer technician, chef, massage therapist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although learning preferences are not necessarily directly linked to college majors or careers, you can easily see that your learning style preference will come into play when you choose your major and your career. Kinesthetic learners, for example, may be drawn to majors or careers that allow them to move about or use their bodies to complete tasks. Landscape design, auto body repair, culinary arts, and nursing are just a few college degree programs that would appeal to kinesthetic learners. Review Table 1.2, which lists possible majors and careers for some learning style preferences, but note that it is not considered an exhaustive list. Also, some majors and careers may speak to more than one learning style preference; for example, an advertising executive who writes, edits, and directs commercials may rely on almost all the learning style preferences on a daily basis as she creates commercials and ads for clients. For sure, she will need to work individually, with peers, and with her boss on different aspects of a project, and she may find that she is needed to complete tasks at different times of the day, even late at night when filming continues long after the typical workday ends.

Harvard psychologist Howard Gardner is well known for his theory of multiple intelligences, which is another term for “what we know, understand, and learn about our world” (Lazear, 1991). Gardner has created eight categories of how we can know and learn.

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mental proficiency with the rhythms of music and hearing tones and beats. People who have strong musical/rhythmic intelligence may use musical instruments or the human voice to express themselves. Career choices for this intelligence include all types of musical performance.

How you relate to others and yourself is part of the interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. People with strong interpersonal intelligence relate strongly with others. They read others’ feelings well and act with others in mind. Intrapersonal intelligence centers around the ability to understand oneself. People who possess intrapersonal intelligence know how and why they do what they do. Naturalistic, the eighth intelligence, refers to people who enjoy and work well in an outdoor environment. Naturalistic people find peace in nature and enjoy having natural elements around them.

### Learning Preference Inventory

There are numerous ways to see yourself and understand your behavior in certain situations, and many education specialists and psychologists have provided theories on how we take in and process information. They have developed different inventories and personality profiles to enhance your understanding of yourself. As you will discover in Chapter 5, the learning process is somewhat complex; it involves more than just our preferences in how we create knowledge, because there are many factors that influence our ability to take in and process information.

Theories about the two hemispheres of our brain, known as the left brain and the right brain, have given us insight into how people think, learn, and see the world. People who have strong left-brain tendencies are more likely to be logical, to see parts rather than the whole, and to prefer to do activities step by step. They are also more analytical, realistic, and verbal than their right-brained companions. The right-brain tendency shows up in a preference to see the whole picture rather than details, to work out of sequence, and to bring ideas together. Surveys available online can indicate which hemisphere is dominant in your brain.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), on the other hand, is a personality assessment that provides you with information about how you prefer to think and act. For example, one dimension of the personality test asks you how outgoing or extroverted you are in certain situations or how reserved, or introverted, you are in social settings. These questions indicate whether you are extroverted (E) or introverted (I). Like brain hemisphere inventories, the MBTI can be found in books or online sources. Samples of the complete inventories are also available.
Other inventories, such as both the Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Assessment and the PEPS Learning Styles Inventory, focus not only on how a person prefers to take in information, but also on social and environmental learning preferences. These types of inventories provide a thorough view of how you like to learn, whether it is the temperature of the room, the amount of light and sound, or an inclination for moving about as you learn.

Regardless of which learning theory leads you to greater personal insight, as stand-alone models they are somewhat insignificant unless you use the information to benefit actual learning. The purpose of the learning plan inventory in Figure 1.2 is to provide

---

**FIGURE 1.2 Learning Plan Inventory**

**TIME OF DAY PREFERENCE**
Read each statement and circle the number on the scale that best represents you
(1: Least like me—5: Most like me)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel most energized in the morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>My energy level soars late at night.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I get more accomplished in the afternoon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I concentrate best before noon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Late at night is my most productive time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Afternoon is the best time for me to complete important tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I wait to do projects until I have had a full night’s sleep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I prefer to start and complete projects after I have completed everything else I need to do for the day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I feel best about working on a project if it occurs between getting started for the day and ending the day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**INTAKE PREFERENCE**
Read each statement and circle the number on the scale that best represents you
(1: Least like me—5: Most like me)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When I am trying something new, I like to “see” it in my head before doing it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I can understand a concept best when I hear it explained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I don’t really understand something unless I do it or experience it myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I explain my ideas best by talking through them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I figure out what I think about a topic by experiencing it firsthand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I like to draw what I’m thinking so others will understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>When trying to get from one place to another, I am most confident when I have already traveled there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>When trying to get from one place to another, I am most confident if I can see the route I need to take.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>When trying to get from one place to another, I am most confident when I am told the directions by someone who has been there before.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
### FIGURE 1.2 Continued

#### SOCIAL LEARNING PREFERENCE
Read each statement and circle the number on the scale that best represents you (1: Least like me—5: Most like me)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I work best alone.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel comfortable asking my boss or professor questions when I’m not sure what to do.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I rely on friends or coworkers to help me complete work or figure out what to do when I am stuck on a task.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I need little interaction with others to complete a task.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I’m most comfortable working in groups on a project.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I’m most at ease working on a task that my supervisor monitors closely.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I can get group projects completed faster than when I work alone.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am more confident when my boss or professor gives me constant feedback as I complete a project.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. When others interfere with a project I am working on, I get little done.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### TASK MANAGEMENT PREFERENCES
Read each statement and circle the number on the scale that best represents you (1: Least like me—5: Most like me)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I enjoy thinking up and starting new projects.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It is easy for me to complete important tasks.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I like to be spontaneous when I work on a project; I go wherever the mood takes me.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I like to have a detailed schedule before I begin a project.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I like to have a general idea of the main goal and then discover what needs to be done as I work toward the goal.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I like to consider the steps to a project first before thinking about the overall picture.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I need to know what the end goal is before I begin a project.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am considered creative.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### FIGURE 1.3 Learning Plan Categories

Time of Day Preferences: morning, afternoon, night
Intake Preferences: visual, auditory, kinesthetic
Social Preferences: individual, peer(s), mentor (professor, expert, leader, etc.)
Task Management Preferences: logical/analytical, spontaneous/creative
you with a basic understanding of the factors that influence your learning preferences, which you can use to create an individualized and flexible learning plan for the various tasks and assignments that you will experience in college. Ultimately, greater personal understanding and self-knowledge leads to action, and this learning plan inventory provides you with not only information about how you prefer to learn but also a roadmap for completing tasks and goals successfully by applying your preferences.

The inventory in Figure 1.2 is adapted from the models just discussed, and the statements will help you discover your learning style preferences in four areas: time of day, intake, social learning, and task management (see Figure 1.3).

To complete the inventory in Figure 1.2, read the statements in each category and circle the number that corresponds most closely to your degree of identification with the statement. The number 1 means the statement is least like you whereas the number 5 means that the statement is most like you. You will calculate your answers after the inventory.

**Calculating Your Score**

For each learning preference category, write the numbers you circled for each statement in the calculation tables in Figure 1.4. Then add up the numbers for each type of question. The higher numbers will indicate your strongest preferences.

Afterward, complete Figure 1.5, labeled “My Learning Preferences.” You will use this information to complete your own learning plans.

**Learning Plan in Action**

Table 1.3 shows a learning plan in action for a student who works best at night, is both a strong visual and auditory learner, performs best with peers, and prefers to break down assignments into manageable parts.

There are many ways of viewing yourself and creating a plan of action for your work in college, but no single inventory, assessment, or work plan will reflect the exceptional person you are or your unique circumstances; in other words, no matter which inventory you take or what you learn about how you prefer to learn, the results are not the final verdict on your abilities and potential.

The goal then of this learning plan is to provide you with an adaptable, flexible model for putting your learning style preference into action. It also gives you a roadmap for accomplishing the many goals that you will set for yourself. Additionally, it can serve as a place to start when faced with situations that require you to work outside your learning preference comfort zone. For example, what will you do, as a morning learner,
when faced with completing an important project late at night? Or how will you, as an individual learner, fare when required to collaborate with classmates on an assignment?

One way to move outside your learning preference comfort zone is to take time to reflect on how you would act in such situations and consider how you will meet similar challenges to those portrayed in this book, especially involving the characters whose stories begin each chapter; for example, you have already met Juanita and have learned more about her relationship with her family. In the next chapter, you will read about all four characters and their experiences with orientation.
Although the characters are fictional, representative of the many different first-generation college students, their stories ring true because they are based on real-life situations that you may face as well. Reflecting on who you are and how you will get where you want to go will help you create your own story of success.

Learning Styles and Career Choices

Discovering your learning style preference and personality type will definitely help you set realistic short-term and long-term goals. For example, discovering that you have a read/write learning preference and work well with deadlines and staying organized may confirm that your long-term goal of being a writer will work well with who you are and how you learn and work. However, identifying your style and type should not limit your choices or keep you from working on areas of your learning style and personality that may be weaker or get less attention. If you are a strong visual learner but are taking a class that relies on listening effectively and critically, you should

**TABLE 1.3** Learning Plan Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Task: Study for biology midterm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time of Day</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night—after dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intake</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual and auditory—review notes and talk through them with study group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers—biology study group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task Management</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical/analytical—go in order of the chapters and work with classmate who can help me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
use that opportunity to become a better listener, to improve your aural learning style preference by following listening tips like the ones found in Chapter 7. Likewise, if you work better alone and have a strong kinesthetic learning style preference, choosing a career as a computer technician may play to your strengths. However, you may also find yourself working with others collaboratively and communicating frequently in writing and verbally.

Therefore, whatever your learning style strengths and personality preferences may be, consider how other styles and types will factor into your short-term and long-term educational goals. Then look for opportunities to strengthen those less-developed sides of your learning and personality so that you can become a more well-rounded person, comfortable in a variety of situations.

**WHAT YOU KNOW AND HOW YOU LEARN WILL CHANGE**

The transition from a community college to a four-year university can be relatively smooth if you are willing to apply some of the ideas in this chapter to your new environment and your new challenges. First, consider that your definition of who you are will change by the time you transfer, perhaps dramatically. You will likely be more confident in your abilities and you will be better able to handle the stress of juggling numerous responsibilities. Second, your values may also change after your semesters at a community college; if you were unsure of what you valued before, you may finally have a clearer picture of your belief system. On the other hand, you may be more confused than ever about what you believe after studying different religions, psychological theories, and social ideas. Because higher education values inquiry and research, no matter what shape your values are in by the time you transfer, you will find support as you struggle to make sense of it all at both the community college and the four-year university.

Third, just as your knowledge of yourself and your values will have changed, your goals will go through a transformation. Although your main goal of graduating with a four-year degree will still be in sight, you will notice that you have already met some of your smaller goals. You have probably become more organized. Perhaps you have successfully completed an associate’s degree. Just the fact that you are ready to transfer credits means that you have accomplished some necessary steps to fulfilling the rest of your goals.

Finally, you will be able to revise your statements about who you are because of the changes you have experienced after taking classes at a community college. You may even be able to include a career choice in your statement. Also, you may know yourself better through application of the learning styles discussed earlier. However, you will
need to be prepared to adapt to different teaching styles and new pressures after you transfer.

Now, to prepare yourself for the next step, you will need to revise, preferably on paper, your mission and values statements. You will also need to realize that you may have to adapt the learning styles that you have felt most comfortable with—or to explore and use new styles—at your four-year school.

Find someone you know (or ask your professor for the name of a former student) who has transferred to a four-year university and ask how his or her self-view has changed, if it has, since transferring to a university. Have learning style preferences changed or been reinforced? Has his or her mission and goals changed? If so, how?

GOALS AND A MISSION WILL HELP YOU SUCCEED

Many businesses rely on creating mission statements, strategic plans (long-term goals), and operational plans (short-term goals) to chart a course for their success. Because you have experience writing your own mission and goals, you will be able to contribute to your company’s planning because you understand how the company’s values underlie its mission and how its goals create its road map to success. Your experience in goal setting will also help you to write departmental or personal goals. If you understand how values, mission, and goals fit together, you will be better able to create goals that are explicitly linked to the focus of your workplace.

Contact someone whose career is similar to what you want to do. Ask how goal setting affects his or her job. Does the person’s company have a mission statement and long-term goals? What advice does he or she have about managing priorities? How does the person stay motivated to meet current goals and make new ones?
When I was finishing high school, I didn’t think that I would become a first-generation college student. My father was a construction worker—an electrician—and my mother was a secretary. They both worked full time, and they did their best, but they couldn’t afford to send me to college, so I left my small town in Texas and moved to Dallas. I got a job as a janitor, working all night at a community college and taking classes there during the day.

There were some dedicated instructors at that community college, and I received some good grades, and eventually I got a job there as a tutor for courses in English as a second language. I made friends with some of the immigrant students I was tutoring. Like them, I was also struggling to work and to be a student at the same time, so sometimes we helped each other out with things like car repairs and rides to class.

Before I transferred to a university, I went to community college for three years. At a community college in Dallas, Texas, I learned the most important thing I know, namely, that learning transforms our lives. Once I graduated from my community college, I eventually earned a Ph.D. in philosophy.

Today I am an instructor at a community college because a community college changed my life—a college made up of ordinary people like me: people from the big city and people from small towns, people from around the world, people who agreed sometimes and disagreed a lot, people who worked together to learn and to share what was learned.

Based on my community college experience, the common purpose we share here is the commitment to equal opportunity in education. Because learning gives life purpose and meaning, equal opportunity in education can be more than a remote ideal.

PATH OF DISCOVERY

Journal Entry

Name and describe three people or situations that changed your life. What did these people or situations teach you about your values, priorities, motivations, or goals? How have they changed you?

CHAPTER REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do your values and background affect your goal setting?
2. Why do some people have trouble reaching their goals?
3. What steps can you take to manage your priorities effectively?
4. How does your learning style and personality preference affect goal setting?
CHAPTER 1 CASE SCENARIOS

1. Peter has started college, but he is not sure what he wants to do. In fact, he is afraid to tell his parents that he wants to be a dental hygienist because his parents want him to take over the family business. Neither of his parents went to college, and they don’t understand why any of their children would want to work outside the family business. Peter values loyalty to his family—he has been through many challenges that have strengthened his relationship with his parents—but he also has a strong interest in working in the health field. Peter’s ultimate goal is to be a dentist, but he thinks that working as a hygienist first would be a way to make sure that he has what it takes. What advice would you give Peter? What should he do to make sure his goals are met?

2. Serena, a single parent, has started her first semester in college, but she also works full time in a law office. Her sister keeps Serena’s twin boys while she works, but she sometimes has to miss work when her sister cannot look after them. Serena wants to get a four-year degree and eventually go to law school, but she feels as though it will take too long if she doesn’t start now. She is motivated by time and money. She wants to hurry and get her degree, and she wants to be financially independent so that she can take care of her boys. She works very hard, but she doesn’t have any other family or friends who can help her. To add to her obstacles, her sister is not supportive of Serena’s desire to get a degree and improve her life. Serena’s sister thinks that she has all she needs and shouldn’t “mess it up by going to college and getting all kinds of crazy ideas.” What advice would you give Serena? What have you learned about setting goals and managing priorities that would help Serena? What have you learned about overcoming challenges that might encourage her?

RESEARCH IT FURTHER

1. During the Middle Ages (A.D. 500–1500), the terms sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric, and melancholic were used often to describe people. Research these descriptions further and then determine a suitable category for each of your classmates.

2. Choose a long-term career goal and research the necessary qualifications to accomplish it. For example, if you would like to be a network administrator, check your college catalog for degree requirements and look on the Internet for job descriptions that include the kind of degree and work experience you would need. List any other necessary skills for this career.

3. Using the key term “mission statements,” search the Internet for college and business mission statements. Print at least three different mission statements and determine the similarities and differences. Report your findings to the class.

References and Recommended Readings