In college and beyond, your willingness to take targeted, productive risks will move you toward your desired reward – the achievement of the goals that spell “success” to you.
The Rewards of College

TAKING RISKS THAT MOVE YOU TOWARD SUCCESS

What Would You Risk? Dr. J. Raider Estrada

IN THIS TEXT, YOU WILL MEET PEOPLE LIKE RAIDER WHO HAVE TAKEN RISKS THAT HAVE HELPED THEM ACHIEVE IMPORTANT GOALS. WHETHER YOU HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON WITH THESE PEOPLE OR NOT, THEY WILL EXPAND YOUR PERSPECTIVE AND INSPIRE YOU TO MOVE AHEAD ON YOUR OWN PATH. YOU’LL LEARN MORE ABOUT RAIDER, AND THE REWARD RESULTING FROM HIS ACTIONS, WITHIN THE CHAPTER.

J. Raider Estrada’s childhood in Los Angeles was defined by challenges. His parents separated when he was 10, and his neighborhood was dominated by gang culture. He grew close to an older boy named Rudy who belonged to one of the local gangs. One day as he and Rudy walked down the street, members of a rival gang drove up, jumped out of the car, and fatally stabbed Rudy on the spot. Raider, age 12 at the time, could only hold his best friend and watch him die. This experience unleashed rage in Raider that he was unable to control. He joined the gang to which Rudy had belonged and participated in gang violence. He was repeatedly arrested for assault and battery. He went through several stints in juvenile hall and on probation, and he eventually lived in a group home for over a year. However, none of these interventions kept him from continuing to act violently on behalf of the gang.

When his stepmother discovered his gun and called the police, she disrupted Raider’s plan to avenge the deaths of several fellow gang members. After two weeks of hiding out, he risked going to the police on his own volition. This time the intervention was different. He went to a program called Rite of Passage in the heart of the Nevada desert, where he found encouragement and motivation. A devoted teacher who worked with Raider sparked his desire to learn, which led to his earning a high school diploma, and a counselor helped him apply to college. He was admitted to Lassen College and started classes two days after leaving Rite of Passage. Now a new challenge loomed: How could Raider, as a former gang member with a history of failure and violence, earn the reward of a successful college career?

To be continued . . .
## How Ready Are You to Risk Effort for the Rewards of College?

For each statement, fill in the number that best describes how often it applies to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
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<th>5</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel ready to handle college-level work.</td>
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<td>2. I can identify how college culture differs from high school and workplace culture.</td>
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<td>3. I am aware of what it takes to succeed in today’s technology-driven, ever-changing workplace.</td>
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<td>4. I believe my intelligence can increase as a result of my efforts.</td>
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<td>5. I often combine critical, creative, and practical thinking to reach a goal.</td>
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<td>6. I am willing to believe that effort and focus are more essential to success than ability or talent.</td>
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<td>7. I can explain the reward of acting with academic integrity in college.</td>
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<td>8. I am able to accurately perceive my own emotions, as well as those of others.</td>
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<td>9. I relate well to others and can work effectively in a team.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I know that I will need to learn throughout my life to succeed in the workplace.</td>
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</table>

Each of the topics in these statements is covered in this chapter. Note those statements for which you filled in a 3 or lower. Skim the chapter to see where those topics appear, and pay special attention to them as you read, learn, and apply new strategies.

**REMEMBER:** NO MATTER HOW PREPARED YOU ARE TO SUCCEED IN COLLEGE, YOU CAN IMPROVE WITH EFFORT AND PRACTICE.

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### WHY IS COLLEGE A RISK, AND WHAT REWARD DOES IT OFFER?

Think about the word risk. What, specifically, comes to mind? There are two different ways to think about risk. One involves risky behavior—impulsive decisions made with little or no forethought—such as substance abuse, unsafe sex, or breaking the law. The other concept is one of deliberate risk calculated to bring reward. Examples of this kind of productive risk include buying shares of stock in a new company or serving in the combat division of the military. This is the concept of risk that will take focus in this text—the one that will give you the power to achieve the rewards that are meaningful to you.

College is often seen as a risk-free, safe choice that increases your chances of career stability. However, striving for a degree in higher education is one of the most potentially rewarding risks of your lifetime. To follow this path, you will risk your most valuable resources—time, money, and yourself. You will dedicate time to learning and self-improvement. You, and anyone helping to finance your education, will commit a significant amount of money. You will sign up for years of responsibilities and challenges for both your mind and your body. Obtaining your degree is a perfect example of a targeted risk, calculated to produce reward down the line.
Why take calculated risks? Why not save your money, time, and effort? Because only with productive risk-taking (not risky behavior) come the rewards essential to your success. Skills, intelligence, motivation, employment, growth, and advancement can be yours, but only as a result of hard work, dedication, and focus.

This text and your course are part of an experience this term that will:

- Show you the value of deliberate risk-taking in your day-to-day life
- Allow you to discover more about how you learn and what rewards you seek
- Build academic skills as well as transferable life skills
- Help you set and risk pursuing your most important goals
- Increase your ability to relate effectively to others and work in teams

When a high jumper or pole vaulter gets over a bar of a certain height, someone raises the bar so that the athlete can work toward a new goal. The college experience will “raise the bar” for you with tougher instructors, demanding coursework, and fellow students whose sights are set high. You, too, can risk raising the bar, aiming for the potential rewards of jumping over it. There is potential for improvement in every life—think about how or what you want to improve. You don’t have to have experienced brutality as a gang member, as Raider did, to want to make changes for the better.

Begin your transition to college by looking at the present—the culture of college, what you can expect, and what college expects of you. Then, consider the future—what a college education means for you in the workplace and in life.

The Culture of College

Knowing what to expect in college will help you to transition more successfully. You are likely to experience most or all of the following aspects of college culture (your student handbook will contain details specific to your school). As you read, keep in mind that the reward you earn from college depends on the risk you take.

**Independent learning.** College offers the reward of freedom and independence in exchange for the risk of functioning without much guidance. This culture requires strong self-management skills. Instructors expect you to do the following—and more—on your own:

- Use syllabi to create and follow a schedule for the term (see Quick Start to College)
- Navigate course materials electronically if your school uses an learning management system (LMS) such as Blackboard
- Get to class on time with the materials you need
- Complete text and other reading with little to no in-class review of the reading
- Set up and attend study group meetings
- Turn in projects and coursework on time and be prepared for exams
- Seek help when you need it

**Fast pace and increased workload.** The pace of each course is typically twice as fast as high school courses and requires more papers, homework, reading, and projects. This demanding pace may energize and motivate you, especially if you did not feel inspired by high school assignments. However, it demands more effort and study time. For each hour spent in class, plan two to three hours of study and work time outside of class.
Challenging work. Although challenging, college-level work can reward you with enormous opportunities to learn and grow. College texts often have more words per page, higher-level terminology, and more abstract ideas compared to high school texts. In addition, college often involves complex assignments, challenging research papers, group projects, lab work, and tests.

More out-of-class time to manage. The freedom of your schedule requires strong time management skills. On days when your classes end early, start late, or don’t meet at all, you will need to use open blocks of time effectively as you juggle responsibilities, including perhaps a job and family.

Diverse culture. Typically, you will encounter different ideas and diverse people in college. Your fellow students may differ from you in age, life experience, ethnicity, political mindset, family obligations, values, student status (part or full time, commuter or resident), and more.

Higher-level thinking. You’ll need to risk moving beyond recall. Instead of just summarizing and taking the ideas of others at face value, you will interpret, evaluate, generate new ideas, and apply what you know to new situations (more on thinking skills later in this chapter).

You are not alone as you adjust. Look for support resources such as instructors, academic advisors, mentors, other students or tutors; technology such as the Internet, library search engines, and electronic planning aids; and your text for this course. Seek help from campus officials. And, to give meaning to your efforts in college, consider how your efforts will serve you in your career.

College Prepares You for the Modern Workplace

Because the skills and strategies that bring success in college are so similar to those that bring success at work, this course can lay a foundation for career exploration and workplace skill development. You will need to distinguish yourself in a global marketplace, in which North American workers often compete with workers from other countries. Thomas Friedman, author of The World Is Flat, explains how the digital revolution has transformed the working environment:

"It is now possible for more people than ever to collaborate and compete in real time with more other people on more different kinds of work from more different corners of the planet and on a more equal footing than in any previous time in the history of the world—using computers, e-mail, networks, teleconferencing, and dynamic new software."

These developments, combined with an enormous increase in knowledge work such as Internet technology, mean that you may compete for jobs with highly trained and motivated people around the globe. The workplace, too, has raised the bar, and you need to take greater risks to vault over it.

What can help you achieve career goals in this "flat" world?

College degree. Statistics show that getting a degree increases your chances of finding and keeping a highly skilled, well-paying job. College graduates earn, on average, around $20,000 more per year than those with a high school diploma (see Key 1.1). Furthermore, the unemployment rate for college graduates is less than half that of high school graduates (see Key 1.2).
More education is likely to mean more income.

Median annual income of persons with income 25 years old and over, by gender and highest level of education, 2009

- Bachelor’s degree or more
- Associate’s degree
- Some college, no degree
- High school graduate
- Some high school, no diploma


More education is likely to mean more consistent employment.

Unemployment rates of persons 25 years old and over, by highest level of education, 2009

- Bachelor’s degree or higher
- Associate’s degree
- Some college, no degree
- High school graduate, no college
- Less than high school graduate


21st century skills. Taking a careful look at what the current workplace demands of workers and what it rewards, education and business leaders founded an organization called the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. Together these leaders developed a “Framework for 21st Century Learning” shown in Key 1.3, delineating the categories of knowledge and skills that successful workers need to acquire.
Looking at this framework, you will see that success in today’s workplace requires more than just job-specific skills. Author Daniel Pink argues that the ability to create, interact interpersonally, generate ideas, and lead diverse teams—skills, all demanding risk-taking, found in the Framework for 21st Century Learning—will be more and more important in the modern workplace. Often, interpersonal and creative skills can be developed through in-class collaboration and teamwork, as well as volunteer work, internships, and jobs.

As you read the content and do the exercises in Keys to Success, you will grow in every area of the Framework for 21st Century Skills. In fact, the three thinking skills that you will build throughout this course—analytical, creative, and practical thinking—are all included within the framework, and are critical to delivering what the world needs workers to do.

**HOW CAN SUCCESSFUL INTELLIGENCE help you achieve your goals?**

How do you define intelligence? Is an intelligent person someone who excels in high-level courses? A successful professional in science or law? Or a person who scores well on standardized tests? Using an IQ (intelligence quotient) test to gauge intelligence and predict success is based on the belief that each person is born with a fixed amount of intelligence. However, cutting-edge researchers such as Robert Sternberg and Carol Dweck have challenged that belief.

When test anxiety caused Sternberg (a psychologist known for his work on intelligence and creativity) to score poorly on IQ and other standardized tests during elementary school, he delivered what was expected of him—very little. However, his fourth-grade teacher turned his life around when she expected more. Sternberg has conducted extensive research showing that traditional intelligence measurements lock people into poor performance and often do not reflect their potential.

Researching how children cope with failure, Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck gave elementary school students a set of puzzles that grew increasingly difficult. To her surprise, certain students welcomed failure as an opportunity. “They knew that human qualities, such as intellectual skills, could be cultivated through effort. . . . Not only
Sternberg’s, Dweck’s, and others’ research suggests that intelligence is not fixed; people have the capacity to increase intelligence. In other words, the risk of effort and focus can produce the reward of greater brain power. Studies in neuroscience show that a learning brain can develop throughout life. Recent research shows that when you learn, your brain and nerve cells (neurons) form new connections (synapses) among one another by growing new branches (dendrites). These increased connections then enable the brain to do and learn more.

The Three Thinking Skills

How can you take productive risks that move you toward your important goals in college, work, and life? According to Sternberg, it takes three types of thinking: analytical (critical), creative, and practical. Together, he calls them successful intelligence, a concept that he illustrates with a story of a book-smart boy and a street-smart boy running from a bear in the forest. While the book-smart boy is figuring out the exact amount of time they have before being attacked, the street-smart boy puts on his running shoes and dashes off, having realized that he only needed to outrun the first boy in order to survive.

This story shows that successful goal achievement and problem solving requires more than book smarts. When confronted with a problem, using only analytical thinking put the first boy at a disadvantage. On the other hand, the second boy analyzed the situation, created options, and took practical action. He took the wisest risk and earned his reward: living to tell the tale.

How Thinking Skills Move You toward Your Goals

Sternberg explains that although those who score well on tests display strong recall and analytical skills, they are not necessarily able to put their knowledge to work. No matter how high you score on a library science test, for example, as a librarian you will also need to devise useful keyword searches (creative thinking) and communicate with patrons (practical thinking). Of course, having only practical “street smarts” isn’t enough either. Neither boy in the bear story, if rushed to the hospital with injuries sustained in a showdown with the bear, would want to be treated by medical personnel lacking in analytical skills.

What does each of the three thinking skills contribute to goal achievement?

- Commonly known as critical thinking, analytical thinking starts with engaging with information through asking questions and then involves analyzing and evaluating information, often to work through a problem or decision. It often involves comparing, contrasting, and cause-and-effect thinking.

- Creative thinking involves generating new and different ideas and approaches to solving problems, and, often, viewing the world in ways that disregard convention. It can involve imagining and considering different perspectives. Creative thinking also means taking information that you already know and thinking about it in a new way.

- Practical thinking refers to putting what you’ve learned into action to solve a problem or make a decision. Practical thinking often means learning from experience and emotional intelligence (explained later in the chapter), enabling you to work effectively with others and to accomplish goals despite obstacles.

Together, these abilities move you toward a goal, as Sternberg explains:

- Analytical thinking is required to solve problems and to judge the quality of ideas. Creative intelligence is required to formulate good problems and ideas in the first place. Practical intelligence is needed to use the ideas and their analysis in an effective way in one’s everyday life.
get analytical

**DEFINE YOUR “COLLEGE SELF”**

Complete the following on paper or in digital format.

When you understand who you are as a student, you will be more able to seek out the support that will propel you toward your goals. Using the following questions as a starting point, analyze and describe your “college self.” Write and save your description to revisit later in the course.

- What is your student status—traditional or returning, full or part time, resident or commuter?
- How long are you planning to be at your current college? Have you transferred in, or is it likely that you will transfer in the future?
- What goals or rewards do you aim to achieve by going to college?
- What family and work obligations do you have?
- What is your culture, ethnicity, gender, age, lifestyle?
- What are your biggest fears right now, and how do they affect your willingness to take risks?
- What challenges (physical or learning disabilities, emotional issues, language struggles) do you face?
- Has your family gone to college for generations, or are you a first-generation student?
- What do you like to study, and why does it interest you?

The following example illustrates how this works.

The goal-achieving thinking skills of Raider Estrada.

- He *analyzed* his situation when hiding out from the police, and determined that he would experience more reward from the risk of turning himself in.
- He *created* a vision of himself as a high school graduate and a college student.
- He took *practical action* to get help from teachers and counselors and risked time and effort to earn his high school diploma and apply for college.

Why is developing successful intelligence so important to your success?

1. *It improves understanding and achievement, increasing your value in school and on the job.* People with critical, creative, and practical thinking skills are in demand because they can apply what they know to new situations, be innovative, and accomplish their goals.
2. *It boosts your motivation.* Because it helps you understand how learning propels you toward goals and gives you ways to move toward those goals, it increases your willingness to risk.
3. *It shows you where you can grow.* Students who have trouble with analytical skills can see the role that creative and practical thinking play. Students who test well but have trouble innovating or taking action can improve creative and practical skills.
Although thinking skills provide tools with which you can achieve college and life goals, you need motivation to put them to work and gain rewards from your efforts. Explore a mindset that will motivate you to vault over that bar (and perhaps set a higher one).

HOW CAN A “GROWTH MINDSET” motivate you to persist?

Different people have different forces or motivators—grades, love of a subject, the drive to earn a degree—that encourage them to keep pushing ahead. Motivators can change with time and situations. Your motivation can have either an external or internal locus of control, meaning that you are motivated by external factors (your parents, circumstances, luck, grades or instructors’ feedback, and so on) or internal factors (values and attitudes).

Internal motivation may have a greater influence on success, because although you cannot control what happens around you, you can control your attitude, or mindset. Based on years of research, Carol Dweck has determined that the perception that talent and intelligence can develop with effort—what she calls a growth mindset—promotes success. “This view creates a love of learning and resilience that is essential for great accomplishment,” reports Dweck. By contrast, people with a fixed mindset believe that they have a set level of talent and intelligence, and they tend to work and risk less. “In one world [that of the fixed mindset], effort is a bad thing. It . . . means you’re not smart or talented. If you were, you wouldn’t need effort. In the other world [growth mindset], effort is what makes you smart or talented.”

For example, two students do poorly on an anatomy midterm. One blames the time of day of the test and says she is horrible in science, while the other feels that it was a challenging test and she didn’t put in enough study time. The first student couldn’t change the material or class time, of course, and didn’t see the point of changing her approach to the material (no risk or extra effort). As you may expect, she did poorly on the final. The second student put in more study time after the midterm.
(risk and increased effort) and improved her grade on the final as a result. This student knows that the risk of focused effort brings valuable reward.

You don’t have to be born with a growth mindset; you can build one. “You have a choice,” says Dweck. “Mindsets are just beliefs. They’re powerful beliefs, but they’re just something in your mind, and you can change your mind.”13 Actions that may help you change your mind include being responsible, practicing academic integrity, and facing adversity with optimism.

Build Self-Esteem with Responsible Actions

You may think that you need to have strong self-esteem to take action toward your goals. In fact, the reverse is true. Taking responsible action builds strong self-esteem because it gives you something to be proud of. Your actions change your thinking. Basketball coach Rick Pitino explains: “If you have established a great work ethic and have begun the discipline that is inherent with that, you will automatically begin to feel better about yourself.”14

A growth mindset helps you build self-esteem because it encourages you to put forth effort. If you know you can earn the reward of accomplishing something, you will be more likely to risk trying. A research study of employees taking a course in computer training supports this idea. Half of the employees were told their success depended on innate ability, and these people lost confidence by the end of the course. By contrast, the other half were told that their skills could be developed through practice, and they reported a good deal more confidence after they had completed the same course and made, in many cases, the same mistakes.15 Even simple responsible actions can build the foundation for powerful self-esteem. What actions will you take to build your confidence? Consider using Key 1.4 as a starting point for ideas. Taking daily responsible actions such as these will help you to succeed in any course. Your efforts will enable you to grow no matter what your starting point.

Practice Academic Integrity

Each action you take in college has an effect that shapes your immediate experience and perhaps your life. Although academic integrity may seem to consist of two basic rules—don’t cheat on tests and don’t use copied, unattributed material in papers and projects—it encompasses far more. Having academic integrity means taking action based on ethics (your sense of what is right to do) and a value of hard work. The International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) defines academic integrity as a commitment to five fundamental values:16

- **Honesty.** Honesty defines the pursuit of knowledge and implies a search for truth in your classwork, papers, and lab reports, and your teamwork with other students.
- **Trust.** Trust means being true to your word. Mutual trust—between instructor and student, as well as among students—makes the exchange of ideas possible.
- **Fairness.** Instructors must create a fair academic environment where students are judged against clear standards and in which procedures are well defined.
- **Respect.** In a respectful academic environment, both students and instructors accept and honor a wide range of opinions, even if the opinions are contrary to core beliefs.
- **Responsibility.** You are responsible for making choices that will provide you with the best education—choices that reflect fairness and honesty.
Notice that students are not the only ones who need to act with integrity. Bill Taylor, emeritus professor of political science at Oakton Community College in Des Plaines, Illinois, wrote a letter to his students explaining that academic integrity makes requirements of both students and instructors, and that these requirements are in five distinct areas, as detailed in Key 1.5.17

The role of electronic materials

With a few clicks of a mouse, any amount of digitized text can be instantly copied and pasted into a document that a student is creating for an assignment. Furthermore, the availability of electronic information has led many students to believe that it has no author and is free to use without citation.18 As a result of these technological developments, plagiarism has become more prevalent in recent years.

In this environment, it's easy to plagiarize without even knowing it, for example by copying something from a website that doesn’t list an author and forgetting to go back and determine the source of the material. However, the fact that technology makes plagiarism quick and easy does not make it acceptable. To avoid plagiarism, use this one general directive: Do not submit as your own any words you did not write or any image you did not create. Resources must be properly cited and either quoted (if used word-for-word) or paraphrased. The effort and attention that following this rule requires are no more than what true learning demands.

Note that even as technology facilitates plagiarism, it presents tools to detect it. Sites like Turnitin.com allow instructors to check student work for plagiarism, and WriteCheck helps students do the same with their own work before submitting it.

Violations, regulations, and consequences

Violations of academic integrity include turning in previously submitted work, using unauthorized devices during an exam, providing unethical aid to another


Academic integrity involves both students and instructors.

### AREAS OF ACTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACADEMIC INTEGRITY REQUIRES THAT STUDENTS . . .</th>
<th>ACADEMIC INTEGRITY REQUIRES THAT INSTRUCTORS . . .</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation for class</strong></td>
<td><strong>Know the material they are teaching</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Read assigned materials before class</td>
<td>• Plan a class that is worth students’ time</td>
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<td>• Come up with questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Be prepared to contribute</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In class</strong></td>
<td><strong>Treat students with respect</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Treat instructors and other students with respect</td>
<td>• Arrive and leave on time</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Arrive and leave on time</td>
<td>• Use class time well</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Participate in discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ask questions and pay attention</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>With regard to exams</strong></td>
<td><strong>Prepare students effectively</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be as prepared as possible</td>
<td>• Create a fair exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not use cheat sheets</td>
<td>• Be available to help students prepare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not copy or get help from another student</td>
<td>• Grade fairly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not give help to another student</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Take the time you need to do good work</td>
<td>• Clearly explain assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hand in work that is entirely your own, not copied from another person’s work or from work you’ve done in another course</td>
<td>• Create assignments that relate effectively to coursework</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cite sources for ideas, facts, and excerpts completely and according to guidelines</td>
<td>• Evaluate carefully and grade fairly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>With regard to written assignments</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weigh all aspects involved in the grade, as defined in the syllabus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do your best on all aspects that are incorporated in your final grade</td>
<td>• Grade fairly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consult the instructor if you feel your grade is unfair</td>
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student, and downloading passages or whole papers from the Internet. Consequences of violations vary from school to school and include academic integrity seminars, grade reduction or course failure, suspension, or expulsion. Many schools have legal systems that investigate and try accused students in a court-like atmosphere, with decisions made by honor council members (often a mix of students and faculty members).

When you enrolled, you agreed to abide by your school’s code of honor or academic integrity policy. Find it in your student handbook, on the school website, or in your syllabus, and read it thoroughly so you know exactly what it asks of you. Measure the consequences of violating the policy against the risk of working hard to complete your degree with integrity. Which reward would you choose?

**How academic integrity benefits you now and in the future**

It may seem that a slip here and there is no big deal. However, as Professor Taylor states in his letter, “Personal integrity is . . . a quality of character we need to nurture, and this requires practice in both meanings of that word (as in practice the piano and practice a profession). We can only be a person of integrity if we practice it every day.”¹⁹ Finally, know that a growth mindset can help. Because academic integrity comes naturally to students who aim to grow and see struggle and failure as opportunities to learn, maintaining a growth mindset promotes academic integrity and makes its rewards more obvious (see Key 1.6).
Face Fears, Challenges, and Failures with Optimism

Every single person experiences adversity in the form of fears, challenges, and failures. Dr. Martin Seligman, a psychologist who has spent most of his career studying how and why some people persist and cope with bad things successfully while others give up and give in, has determined that optimism greatly improves one’s chances for life success. He presents what he calls learned optimism as a skill that can be learned and used by anyone, no matter how optimistic or pessimistic a person may be naturally.

Your explanatory style

Through extensive research, Dr. Seligman has determined that explanatory style—how you explain and think about adversity—predicts how well you are able to cope with it, learn from it, and move on. Furthermore, an optimistic explanatory style has been proven to contribute to better physical health, less depression, and more personal and professional success. Key 1.7 describes the optimistic and pessimistic sides to the three aspects of how people explain adversity.

Explanatory style and the growth mindset

Using an optimistic explanatory style goes hand-in-hand with maintaining a growth mindset in the face of adversity. When you believe that you can learn and improve, you are more able to see a problem as temporary, specific, and not personal, and to manage it and move on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASPECTS OF EXPLANATORY STYLE</th>
<th>OPTIMISTIC PERSPECTIVE</th>
<th>PESSIMISTIC PERSPECTIVE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanence: how long the adversity will last</td>
<td>Temporary: &quot;It’s not forever; it is tough but it will pass.”</td>
<td>Permanent: &quot;It will always be like this for me.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pervasiveness: how far ranging the effect of the adversity is</td>
<td>Specific: &quot;This situation is bad but there are good things going on in other areas of my life.”</td>
<td>General: &quot;Every part of my life is like this. Everything is a catastrophe.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personalization: what is to blame for the adversity</td>
<td>External: &quot;There are some specific causes for this failure that I can examine.”</td>
<td>Personal: &quot;This is all my fault. I’m a failure.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How can you put an optimistic explanatory style to work for you? For an example, look again at those two anatomy students.

- Student #1 blamed the time of day of the test (permanent) and says she is horrible at science (permanent, general, personal). Faced with problems that she feels she can never change, she became helpless and stopped trying.
- Student #2 thought it was a challenging test (specific, not personal) and she didn’t study enough (temporary). Understanding that she had the power to study more and to be more aware of the type of tests this instructor gives, she put in more effort and study time.

The second student has done what an optimistic explanatory style and a growth mindset give you the power to do: Consider what you can do better, take action, and learn from the experience. Here’s how you follow that lead the next time something stops you in your tracks.

**Analyze the situation realistically.** Look carefully at the fear, challenge, or failure and what has caused it. For example, imagine that you forgot about a U.S. history paper. If your first thought is that your memory is useless, get yourself off that pessimistic path to helplessness by looking at some facts. First, you had a chemistry test on the day that the paper was due, and you spent most of that week studying for it. Second, you have not checked your calendar consistently over the week. Third, chemistry is required for the associate’s degree you are considering.

**Come up with potential actions.** You can request an appointment with the instructor to discuss the paper. You can set alarms in your planner and check due dates more regularly. Realizing that chemistry is a priority for you, you can accept that it’s okay to put it first when time is short.

**Take action and cope with consequences.** Meet with your history instructor to discuss the situation, accepting that there may be consequences for handing in your paper late. Commit to better monitoring of your planner, perhaps setting dates for individual tasks related to assignments and trying to complete papers a day or two before they are due so you have time for last-minute corrections.

Failure approached with a growth mindset can spark motivation, showing you what you can do better and driving you to improve. Keep in mind that increased effort in the face of failure is a hallmark of successful people. Thomas Edison, one of the most prolific inventors in the history of the United States, and his employees tried over 3,000 different materials before finding the material they originally used as a filament in the electric bulb. His ability to see each “failure” as a step closer to the right answer enabled him to persist.

**talk risk and reward . . .**

Risk asking tough questions to be rewarded with new insights. Use the following questions to inspire discussion with classmates, either in person or online.

- Describe a dream you have that you feel is out of reach. Why does it feel impossible? Why do you still dream it? How might a growth mindset help you achieve it?
- How do you tend to respond to a challenge? Do you risk dealing with it, run away, ignore it? What tends to result from your action (or inaction)?

**CONSIDER THE CASE:** If you knew Raider Estrada in his teen years when he was a member of the gang, would you have thought that he had any hope of going to college? Moving in a new direction, for him, resulted from his stepmother’s risk-taking. Who believes in you, and what do they risk for you? What do they think you can achieve?
get creative

CONSIDER HOW TO CONNECT

Complete the following on paper or in digital format.

Making early connections with people and groups in your school can benefit you later on. List and describe your ideas about how you would like to spend whatever time you have available outside of your obligations (class time, work, family). Try one or more of the following questions as a starting point:

- If you had no fear of risk, for what horizon-broadening experience would you sign up?
- When you were in elementary school, what were your favorite activities? Which ones might translate into current interests and pursuits?
- What kinds of organizations, activities, groups, experiences, or people make you think “Wow, I want to do that”?
- Think about the people that you feel bring out the best in you. What do you like to do with them? With what kinds of activities are they involved?

Although adversity can raise all kinds of emotional reactions, people who can manage those emotions are more likely to learn from the experience. They also demonstrate the last of this chapter’s ingredients in the recipe for success—emotional intelligence.

WHY DO YOU NEED emotional intelligence?

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uccess in a diverse world depends on relationships, and effective relationships demand emotional intelligence. Psychologists John Mayer, Peter Salovey, and David Caruso define emotional intelligence (EI) as the ability to understand “one’s own and others’ emotions and the ability to use this information as a guide to thinking and behavior.” An emotionally intelligent person uses an understanding of emotions to make choices about how to think and how to act.

Modern neuroscience holds that thought and emotion function together in the brain and depend on one another. One particular research project showed that brain-injured patients who cannot perceive their own feelings experience severe difficulty in thinking, highlighting the importance of emotion. “Emotions influence both what we think about and how we think,” says Caruso. “We cannot check our emotions at the door because emotions and thought are linked – they cannot, and should not, be separated.”

Emotions also connect you to other people. Research has demonstrated that the brain and nervous system have cells called mirror neurons. When a friend of yours is happy, sad, or fearful, you may experience similar feelings out of concern or friendship. An MRI brain scan would show that the same area of your friend’s brain that lit up during this emotional experience lit up in your brain as well.
How Emotional Intelligence Promotes Success

Two short stories illustrate the power of emotional intelligence.

1. Two applicants are competing for a job at your office. The first has every skill the job requires, but doesn’t respond well to cues when you interview him. He answers questions indirectly and keeps going back to what he wants to say. The second isn’t as skilled, but you feel during the interview as though you are talking with a friend. He listens carefully, picks up on emotional cues, and communicates a strong willingness to learn on the job. Whom would you hire?

2. Two students are part of your group for a project. One always gets her share of the job done but has no patience for anyone who misses a deadline. She is quick to criticize group members. The other is sometimes prepared, sometimes not, but responds thoughtfully to what is going on with the group. She makes up for it when she hasn’t gotten everything done, and when she is on top of her tasks she helps others. Whom would you work with again?

To be clear: Skills are crucial. However, emotional intelligence in communication and relationships is a necessary component of success along with job-specific skills. Research using an assessment measuring emotional intelligence (MSCEIT) shows how strongly it predicts work and life success:

- Emotionally intelligent people are more competent in social situations.
- Managers in the workplace with high emotional intelligence have more productive working relationships.
- Employees scoring high in emotional intelligence were more likely to receive positive ratings and raises.

The bottom line is that more emotional intelligence means stronger relationships and more goal achievement.

The Abilities of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a set of skills, or abilities, that can be described as reasoning with emotion (an idea illustrating how thought and emotion work together). Key 1.8 shows how you move through these skills when you reason with emotion.

As you encounter references to emotional intelligence in this course and elsewhere, think of it as thinking skills applied to relationships. Putting emotional intelligence to work means taking in and analyzing how you and others feel, seeing the ideas those feelings create, and taking action in response—all with the purpose of achieving a goal.

**USE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TO GET INVOLVED**

Complete the following on paper or in digital format.

First, look in your student handbook at the resources and organizations your school offers. These may include some or all of the following:

- Academic centers (reading, writing, etc.)
- Academic organizations
- Adult education center
- Arts clubs (music, drama, dance, etc.)
- Fraternities/Sororities
- Groups for students with disabilities
- International student groups
- Minority student groups
- On-campus work opportunities
- Religious organizations
- School publications
- School TV/radio stations
- Sports clubs
- Student associations
- Student government
- Volunteer groups

As you read the list, take note of how different organizations or activities make you feel. What interests you right away? What makes you turn the page? What scares you? What thoughts do your feelings raise—for example, why do you think you like or fear a particular activity? Is a positive outcome possible from trying something that scares you at first?

Thinking about this emotional intelligence feedback as well as your self-analysis from other exercises, risk trying some new experiences. List three offices or organizations you plan to explore this term. Then, using school publications or online resources, find and record the following information for each:

- Location
- Hours, or times of meetings
- What it offers
- Phone number, web site, or e-mail

Finally, when you have made contact, note what happened and whether you are considering getting involved.

**HOW WILL YOUR WORK NOW PREPARE you for life success?**

This text is designed to help you build what you need for success in school and beyond, including thinking skills, attitudes, and emotional abilities that you can use to reach your goals. Topics will broaden your understanding, and exercises will have
you put it into action in personal and productive ways. Self-assessments and journal questions will encourage reflection. Your thinking skills will grow and will transfer to any task or situation in your life.

One of the most essential skills you will build is learning for life. The signs in Key 1.9 point to the need to be a lifelong learner, continuing to build knowledge and skills as your career and life demand. Your work in this course will help you fulfill that need.

Finally, you will strengthen your ability and willingness to take calculated risks large and small. You will find threaded throughout this text the concept of targeted, productive risk leading to a desired reward. In everything you approach in life, a reward waits in exchange for your risk. Here are just a few examples of how to take action, earn rewards, and build your risk-taking habit while in college:

- Risk looking confused by asking a question in class or in an online class forum, for the reward of greater understanding.
- Risk the time it takes to match or exceed your abilities on a project, for the reward of increased knowledge and skill (and perhaps an excellent grade).
- Risk the awkwardness of reaching out to an instructor, for the reward of a relationship that can deepen your academic experience and perhaps provide career guidance.

If you stop learning, your knowledge base will be inadequate to keep up with the changes in your career, thus affecting your marketability.

In the United States and abroad, jobs are being created that ask workers to think critically to come up with solutions.

The Internet and technology will shape communications and improve knowledge and productivity during the next 20 years—and will require continual learning.

Every time you decide to start a new career, you need new knowledge and skills.
About me:
I major in communications, have added a business minor, and play wide receiver on the URI (University of Rhode Island) football team. Although I have some great mentors in several fields, I am not sure what my career choice will be. I hope to play football for as long as possible, but when I am done on the field, I might like to become a motivational speaker, open a warehouse-style gym, or help my grandfather run Horseless Carriage Carriers, his automobile transportation business.

What I focus on:
Ever since I was a toddler, my parents encouraged me to interact with as many people as possible. My life experiences have brought me in contact with people of many backgrounds, ages, races, and beliefs. I’ve developed an ability to carry on a conversation with practically anyone about practically anything. I like to think that I make as great an impact on people I meet as they often do on me.

Two years into my college career, I find it interesting to look back at how far I have come since arriving at summer football camp before my freshman year. Not only have I learned a lot in the classroom, but daily interactions with classmates, professors, teammates, coaches, roommates, and others in the college community have shaped me in ways that I would never have anticipated.

To me, college is a place where I am exploring who I am, gaining a better understanding of what makes others tick, and figuring out who I will be when I enter the professional world.

What will help me in the workplace:
While I don’t know exactly what I will do with my life, I believe that the communication, social, and emotional skills I am developing each day will help me succeed in whatever career I choose.

- Risk the work required to prepare for a test rather than cheating, for the reward of learning you can use in higher-level courses or in the workplace—as well as the habit of integrity, which is essential for life success.
- Risk saying no to a substance or activity for the reward of greater health, even if it costs you a friend or an affiliation.

Imagine that you are sitting in class with your growth mindset, ready to risk and learn. You are prepared to use analytical and creative skills to examine knowledge and come up with new ideas. You are motivated to use your practical skills to move toward your goals. Your emotional intelligence has prepared you to adjust to and work with all kinds of people. The bar has been raised: Risk using Keys to Success to fly over it and find out just how much reward waits for you.
RISK AND REWARD

What happened to Raider? All too aware of the consequences of falling back into anger, Raider risked working hard and challenged himself to sit in the front row in every class. “All the students were smarter than I was,” he says, “but I worked a lot harder than they did.” His work rewarded him with two years of straight As. Raider completed his undergraduate degree at Pepperdine, keeping the hard work going despite failing chemistry more than once. He then earned a medical degree from Georgetown University Medical School and completed his internship and residency at the University of Chicago Medicine.

Now married, a father, and a fellow in cardiology, he plans to continue taking productive risks by focusing his medical practice on disadvantaged communities similar to where he grew up. He also speaks out—both in person and in a public service announcement made by the California Wellness Foundation’s Violence Prevention Initiative—about the public health issue of violence, hoping to save children and families from its brutal consequences.

What does this mean for you? Everyone has challenges to either face with risk-taking or avoid. These roadblocks can serve as opportunities to find out what you are capable of. Name a challenge—or challenges—that you face now. Consider what might happen if you avoid this challenge. On the other hand, consider what growth and rewards wait for you if you risk facing it with hard work. As you think the situation through, be specific about what that hard work looks like.

What risk may bring reward beyond your world? Part of Raider’s mission as a successful professional is to reach out to families and young people who need him as a role model. Although you might not think of yourself as a role model, the fact that you are here beginning college says that you have something to offer. Think outside yourself and consider who looks up to you—a younger family member, a friend still in high school, someone in your neighborhood, someone you know from an online group. Consciously act as a role model to that person. You may be surprised at how your actions can provide rewards for others.

Complete the following on paper or in digital format.

**KNOW IT** Think Critically

**Activate Yourself**

Robert Sternberg found that people who reach their goals successfully have 20 particular characteristics in common that motivate them to persist. Each of the “I” statements in the list below identifies one of the characteristics.

**Build basic skills.** Use this self-assessment to see how well you think you can get motivated right now.
The Rewards of College

1. I motivate myself well. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I can control my impulses. 1 2 3 4 5
3. I know when to persevere and when to change gears. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I make the most of what I do well. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I can successfully translate my ideas into action. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I can focus effectively on my goal. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I complete tasks and have good follow-through. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I initiate action—I move people and projects ahead. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I have the courage to risk failure. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I avoid procrastination. 1 2 3 4 5
11. I accept responsibility when I make a mistake. 1 2 3 4 5
12. I don’t waste time feeling sorry for myself. 1 2 3 4 5
13. I independently take responsibility for tasks. 1 2 3 4 5
14. I work hard to overcome personal difficulties. 1 2 3 4 5
15. I create an environment that helps me concentrate on my goals. 1 2 3 4 5
16. I don’t take on too much work or too little. 1 2 3 4 5
17. I can delay gratification to receive the benefits. 1 2 3 4 5
18. I can see both the big picture and the details in a situation. 1 2 3 4 5
19. I am able to maintain confidence in myself. 1 2 3 4 5
20. I can balance analytical, creative, and practical thinking skills. 1 2 3 4 5

**Take it to the next level.** Choose three characteristics you most want to develop throughout the term. Circle or highlight them on the self-assessment. Then, pretend to be an instructor recommending you for a job. On a separate sheet of paper or digital file, write a short email about the ways in which you display strength in those three characteristics. Set a goal to deserve those compliments in the future.

**Move toward mastery.** Select one of your three chosen characteristics. Then do the following:

1. Find material in your text that will help you develop this characteristic. If you wish to procrastinate less, for example, look for information on time management.
2. Skim the section you find and note a concept or strategy that catches your attention. Copy it onto paper or into an electronic file. Briefly describe how you plan to use it.
3. Take action in the next week based on your plan. You are on the road to growth.

In your course, you may have the opportunity to revisit this self-assessment and get more specific about actions you have taken, and plan to take, to promote personal growth.
CHAPTER 1

WRITE IT Communicate

Emotional intelligence journal: How you are feeling now. First, describe what you are feeling right now about college. What do those feelings tell you about how ready you are for the experience? Generate ideas for actions that will help you be as prepared as possible to benefit from the experience of college. (For example, if shyness prevents you from feeling ready to meet new people on campus, one action might be to join an organization or study group that will help you get to know people more easily.)

Real-life writing: Skills you have now. No matter what professional goals you ultimately pursue, the skills that the 21st century workplace demands will be useful in any career area. Look back at Key 1.3 to remind yourself of the four skill areas, and the individual skills within each category, defined as essential for 21st century success. Identify three skills you have already built and can demonstrate. For each skill, write a short paragraph that contains the following elements:

- A description of your abilities in this skill area
- Specific examples, from school or work, demonstrating these abilities
- Jobs or coursework in which you have built this skill

Keep this information on hand for when you build a resume—or, if you already have a resume, use it to update your information and add detail that will keep your resume current.

WORK IT Build Your Brand

Assess Your Successful Intelligence

A “brand” is an image or concept that people connect with a product or service. A key factor in your ability to succeed in the modern workplace is your ability to “build your brand.” Identify the qualities and skills that best define you, and emphasize them in how you market yourself. Seeing yourself as a product can help you work to package that product in the best possible way.

Compiling a portfolio of personal documents can help you build your brand as you work toward career exploration and planning goals. This is one of several that you may create throughout the term. Type your work and save the documents electronically in one file folder. Use loose paper for assignments that ask you to draw or make collages, and make copies of assignments that ask you to write in the text. For safekeeping, scan and save loose or text pages to include in your portfolio file.

21st Century Learning Building Blocks

- Initiative and self-direction
- Critical thinking and problem solving

As you begin this course, use this exercise to get a big-picture look at how you perceive yourself as an analytical, creative, and practical thinker. For the statements in each of the three self-assessments, circle the number that best describes how often it applies to you.
Assess Your Analytical Thinking Skills
For each statement, circle the number that feels right to you, from 1 for “not at all true for me” to 5 for “very true for me.”

1. I recognize and define problems effectively. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I see myself as a thinker and as analytical and studious. 1 2 3 4 5
3. When working on a problem in a group setting, I like to break down the problem into its components and evaluate them. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I need to see convincing evidence before accepting information as fact. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I weigh the pros and cons of plans and ideas before taking action. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I tend to make connections among bits of information by categorizing them. 1 2 3 4 5
7. Impulsive, spontaneous decision-making worries me. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I like to analyze causes and effects when making a decision. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I monitor my progress toward goals. 1 2 3 4 5
10. Once I reach a goal, I evaluate the process to see how effective it was. 1 2 3 4 5

Total your answers here: __________

Assess Your Creative Thinking Skills
For each statement, circle the number that feels right to you, from 1 for “not at all true for me” to 5 for “very true for me.”

1. I tend to question rules and regulations. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I see myself as unique, full of ideas, and innovative. 1 2 3 4 5
3. When working on a problem in a group setting, I generate a lot of ideas. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I am energized when I have a brand-new experience. 1 2 3 4 5
5. If you say something is too risky, I’m ready to give it a shot. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I often wonder if there is a different way to do or see something. 1 2 3 4 5
7. Too much routine in my work or schedule drains my energy. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I tend to see connections among ideas that others do not. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I feel comfortable allowing myself to make mistakes as I test out ideas. 1 2 3 4 5
10. I’m willing to champion an idea even when others disagree with me. 1 2 3 4 5

Total your answers here: __________

Assess Your Practical Thinking Skills
For each statement, circle the number that feels right to you, from 1 for “not at all true for me” to 5 for “very true for me.”

1. I can find a way around any obstacle. 1 2 3 4 5
2. I see myself as a doer and the go-to person; I make things happen. 1 2 3 4 5
3. When working on a problem in a group setting, I like to figure out who will do what and when it should be done. 1 2 3 4 5
4. I apply what I learn from experience to improve my response to similar situations. 1 2 3 4 5
5. I finish what I start and don’t leave loose ends hanging. 1 2 3 4 5
6. I note my emotions about academic and social situations and use what they tell me to move toward a goal. 1 2 3 4 5
7. I can sense how people feel and use that knowledge to interact with others effectively. 1 2 3 4 5
8. I manage my time effectively. 1 2 3 4 5
9. I adjust to the teaching styles of my instructors and the communication styles of my peers. 1 2 3 4 5
10. When involved in a problem-solving process, I can shift gears as needed. 1 2 3 4 5

Total your answers here: __________

With your scores in hand, use the Wheel of Successful Intelligence to look at all the skills at once. In each of the three areas of the wheel, draw a curved line approximately at the level of the number of your score and fill in the wedge below that line. What does the wheel show about the balance you perceive in your three thinking skills? If it were a real wheel, would it roll?
Based on the appearance of the wheel, in which skill do you most need to build strength? Keep this goal in mind as you proceed through the term.