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To access ACES, the LearningCurve study tool, videos, and more, go to LaunchPad Solo for *Step by Step*.
launchpadworks.com

Congratulations—you are going to college! You’ve joined about two million other students who are starting college this year. No matter your age, background, academic skills, or economic circumstances, whether you succeed will depend on your motivation, commitment, and willingness to take advantage of all that your college or university has to offer.

College is the most important investment of time, money, and energy you will make in your life, and for some students, the college experience can be transformative. What do we mean by “transformative”? For most college students, completing a degree will have a significant positive effect on their employment opportunities and income over a lifetime. But far beyond that, college can have an impact on

how you think about and understand the world around you. You’re on an exciting journey that will take you to new places and introduce you to new ideas and new people. You will also learn more about your purpose for attending college and how to harness your particular strengths and interests to achieve goals you have always had and those you may discover.

This book is a step-by-step guide to college success. Reading, remembering, and practicing the information and strategies in each chapter will help you accomplish your goals and avoid the kinds of problems that sometimes trip up even the best students in their first year. What you learn from this book will also be valuable to you throughout your college experience and in life.

Review Your ACES Score

With this book, you'll have access to **ACES (Academic and Career Excellence System)**, an online self-assessment that will help you learn more about your attitudes, skills, habits, and needs for improvement across twelve key skill areas. You'll have an opportunity to review your ACES score at the beginning of each chapter and respond to a reflection prompt so that you can approach each chapter with an understanding of your current strengths and areas where you need improvement.



Score:

- ☐ High
☐ Moderate
☐ Low

To take the assessment, log on to LaunchPad Solo for *Step by Step* at launchpadworks.com.

Identifying Your Strengths and Setting Goals in College

Here's the thing: I'm not planning to stay in college," I tell my academic adviser, Dr. Beene, at our first meeting. "I'm just here for a year to get my parents off my back. College is a big deal for them; they were the first ones in their families to go, and my dad has always regretted dropping out before he got his degree. So, right now I'm just here to have fun."

"There's nothing wrong with fun, Cameron," Dr. Beene says. "But don't forget that college is a huge investment of time, money, and energy. Have you thought about how college can help you meet your long-term goals?" He must have known by the blank look on my face that I really didn't have any long-term goals, but he didn't give up. "Some students have goals focused around a career or how they want to live their life in the future," Dr. Beene adds. "But most students are like you—they're still trying to settle on their goals. Your college success course will help you figure out what you value most, and a visit to the career center here on campus will help you match your values, strengths, and special abilities with a possible career path."

Cut to the end of the first term: I'm back in Dr. Beene's office. "Remember how during our last appointment I told you my only reason for being in college was to have fun?" I say. "Well, the very next week in our college success course we did this values exercise, and I learned that I value being a leader and taking charge of whatever situation I'm in. I'm pretty competitive, and I want to make my own decisions. I've decided that I want to be an entrepreneur and run my own business, and I want my college courses to help me learn the skills I need to make good business decisions."



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How do Cameron's reasons for being in college compare with yours? What experiences did Cameron have that pointed him toward a goal? What steps should he take to ensure that his goal of owning his own business makes sense for him?

Thriving in College and Life

As authors of this textbook, our overarching goal is not only that you be successful in college and life, but that you *thrive* in both. Thriving means going beyond the minimum requirements to meet and even exceed your goals. Thriving is your discovery of talents and abilities you didn't know you had. Thriving is about achieving your highest possible level of performance and deriving the maximum amount of excitement, self-satisfaction, and pleasure.

Depending on who you are, your life situation, and your reasons for enrolling, college can mean different things. Whatever led you here, college will be a time when you take some appropriate risks, learn new things, connect with important people, and set goals for yourself—all in a supportive environment with people who will help you thrive so that you become the person you want to be.

So hang on for the exciting ride that is beginning right now.

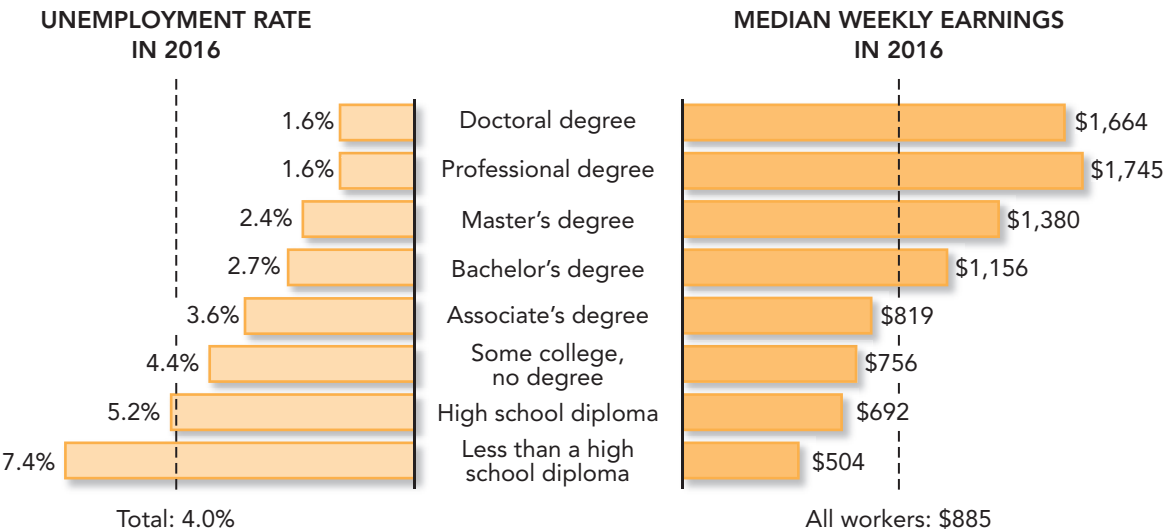
The Value of College

American society values higher education because receiving a college degree provides the opportunity to achieve your goals and dreams regardless of your race or ethnic background, national origin, immigration status, family income level, family history, or personal connections. Today, new technologies and the information explosion are changing the workplace so drastically that to support themselves and their families adequately, most people need some education beyond high school. Higher education allows people to improve their lives by obtaining new skills, learning to perform different jobs, and establishing successful careers. Making more money isn't the only reason to go to college, but as Figure 1.1 shows, the

Figure 1.1 ▽ Education Pays

Earning a college degree will improve your earning potential. This figure breaks down unemployment rate and weekly earnings according to education level. Use this information as motivation to make the most of college.

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *The Economics Daily*, accessed June 22, 2017, <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2014/data-on-display/education-still-pays.htm>. Bureau of Labor Statistics



“ In addition to increasing your earning power, college is about helping you become a better thinker and a leader in your community, workplace, and profession. ”

more education you have, the more likely you are to be employed and the more you will earn.

In addition to increasing your earning power, college is about helping you become a better thinker and a leader in your community, workplace, and profession. Your college experience will be filled with a set of experiences and opportunities that will help you further define your goals and achieve your own purpose. In short, college can change your life for the better.

Opportunities in College

Being in college will provide numerous opportunities for you to develop a variety of formal and informal social networks, both in person and online. You will enjoy meaningful relationships with instructors and fellow students who share your interests and goals. Social networking sites, such as Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and Facebook, will also provide ways to expand your interactions with students on your campus and at other campuses as well; most colleges and on-campus organizations have online presences where students share information. If you are participating in an online program or taking an online class, take advantage of free videoconferencing tools, such as Google Hangouts, Skype, and Zoom, to connect with your peers and instructors “face to face.”

TRY IT!

MAKING GOOD CHOICES ▸

Your Decision to Become a College Student

List five reasons you chose to go to college at this time in your life. Share what you wrote with a classmate, and see how many of your reasons are the same or different.

In addition to developing lifelong friendships and professional networks, college is about gaining and practicing academic skills that will benefit you in your personal life and future career. College will help you understand how to become a careful and critical thinker, someone who doesn't believe everything that he or she hears or reads but instead looks for evidence before forming an opinion.

While college is an experience you will remember fondly throughout your life, it is also a lot of work. Being in college means studying for hours each week, staying up late or getting up early to complete assignments and prepare for class, taking high-stakes exams, and probably working harder than you ever have. For many students, college is like a job, with defined opportunities, duties, expectations, and obligations.

Making the Most of the College Success Course and This Textbook

Even though the exact name of the course can vary, all college success courses show you how to be successful both in college and in life. They also provide you with a safe place to share your successes and your challenges, get to know other first-year students, build relationships with your instructor and other students, develop an academic plan based on your strengths and interests, and shape your plans after graduation.



Both this course and this text are based on extensive research in the field of student success, which investigates what students need to know in order to thrive in college. Student success research has also helped identify the strategies and attitudes of the most successful students. What have we learned from the research? Research shows that students who take *and complete* a college success course such as this one are more likely to earn better grades, remain in college, and graduate than students who don't. Not only do these students know where to get help, but they actually seek it out and use it when they need it. And perhaps most important, these students make better choices overall while they're in college.

As individuals with years of experience working with first-year students, and as former first-year students ourselves, we know that starting college can be challenging. However, if you apply the ideas in this book to your everyday life, you are more likely to enjoy your time in college, graduate, and achieve your goals. While you attend class and read this textbook, you will get valuable advice that applies not only to your college success course but to all your college courses this year and in the future. Think of this course as a kind of laboratory for what to do in all your college courses to be successful. ■

The Choices You Will Make

You will make choices every day of your college career, both big and small, and being successful in college has a great deal to do with the choices you are making, will make, and should not make, often on a daily basis. Think about it. You are your own boss in college. Therefore, you can choose to be a person with an internal *locus of control*. This refers to individuals who exercise control over their lives. They don't see themselves being made to do things by others or outside forces. Instead, they take responsibility for their own actions.

Students are like other human beings—they make some good choices, and they make some poor ones. And the poor ones can cost them a lot of time, money, and

heartache. Some college and university educators are now recommending—or even requiring—that students take a “pathway” or a “guided pathway”: a prescribed set of courses leading to certain majors and degrees. These pathways are based on the use of analytics—information about whether students like you will be more or less likely to complete certain courses successfully. With limited choices, you will be able to avoid courses in which you would likely be unsuccessful, and you will ultimately save time, money, and energy by taking courses that are right for you.

Beyond the big choices you will make in college, there will also be little choices you will make every day that will affect your success in

college for the better or worse. Consider the following questions: How much time will you devote to homework today? Are you going to get up in time for your first class, or sleep in and skip it? Are you going to eat breakfast and exercise today? Will you visit your instructor during office hours to get some questions answered? These may seem like minor decisions, but depending on how you answer these questions, your actions will interact with one another and either support or sabotage the achievement of your larger goals. This book will outline what strategies and habits will help you be more successful, so you can be aware of the choices you make and choose ones that support your future.

Exploring Purpose and Setting Goals

You may be very clear on why you are in college and what you hope to achieve, or—like Cameron in the opening example—you may still be trying to figure this out; either way, you are in charge of making the most out of your college experience. Wherever you are, achieving your purpose requires that you set goals along the way.

Considering Purpose

Your sense of purpose will drive many outcomes. It will give you motivation for today, this week, this term, college overall, and life.

It will shape many of the decisions you make. Purpose provides clarity, direction, commitment, and meaning. People who have a clear sense of purpose know how their past experiences have made them who they are. Purpose also connects to motivation, and this motivation plays out each day for college students in terms of the choices they make.

While some students come to college with a clear sense of purpose, others do not. For many students, a sense of purpose builds over time, and that's OK. College will provide you with a set of experiences that will help you clarify your purpose and achieve your



△ Begin with the End in Mind

Imagine that you've arrived at your graduation day and you're looking back over the years. How long has it taken you to get to this point? Describe what you feel most proud of. What plans do you have? We want to help you convert your ideas to reality through a plan to achieve the particular end you have in mind. In this section, we'll explore the most important driver of motivation and success in college: purpose. pixelheadphoto digitalskillet/Shutterstock.com



goals. It is possible that as you discover more about yourself and your abilities, your reasons for coming to college will change. In fact, a majority of college students change their academic plans at least once during their college years.

To gain insight about your purpose for being in college, reflect on the following questions: Why am I going to college? Is this college a good fit for me at this time in my life and for my goals? Do I have a strong sense of purpose for going to college and for my life at this time?

Your answers to these questions will drive most of the decisions you make in college, decisions that will likely affect the rest of your life. Because knowledge expands all the time, college won't teach you everything you will ever need to know, but it will teach you how to think and how to keep learning throughout your life.

Getting Started with Goal Setting

For most students, a central purpose for college is gaining the knowledge and experience that will lead to success. So what does success mean to you? Is it about money, friendship, or power? Is it about achieving excellence in college and beyond, or is it about finding a sense of purpose in your life? For most people, success is a combination of all these factors and more. First and foremost, your success will be the result of intentional steps you take and your accomplishments. So where do you get started?

Identify your personal strengths.

Everyone is good at doing something, and your strengths can help you choose the right path. Are you a good reader, and do you enjoy constructing an argument? If so, you might want to consider a career in the legal field. Are you a good science student, and do you enjoy working with your hands? If your answer is yes, dentistry is a profession that might be a good fit for you. Your campus career center can help you discover your unique strengths—and

weaknesses—which can influence your direction as you explore course and career choices.

Ask yourself questions. Am I here to find out who I am and to study a subject that I am truly passionate about, regardless of whether it leads to a career? To engage in an academic program that provides an array of possibilities when I graduate? To prepare myself for transfer, a graduate program, or immediate employment? To obtain specific training in a field that I am committed to? To gain specific skills for a job I already have?

Begin establishing your goals. As you identify your strengths, it makes good sense to establish goals—personal and career goals for today, this week, this month, this term, this year, and beyond. Students who prefer to go with the flow and let life happen to them are more likely to waste their time and less likely to achieve success in college or in a career. So instead of simply reacting to what college and life present to you, you should take more control over the decisions and choices you make now, literally every day, to achieve your goals. While making general plans is easy, you need to determine which short-term goals are necessary if those plans are to become a reality.

“As you identify your strengths, it makes good sense to establish goals—personal and career goals for today, this week, this month, this term, this year, and beyond.”

TRY IT!

MANAGING TIME ► How Will You Get Where You Want to Go?

The decisions you make today about how you will reach your goals will determine whether you can describe yourself as successful in ten years. List the skills and habits that will make you a successful and competent person. Did you include time management? Consider ways that you can improve your competencies as you prepare for life ten, twenty, or thirty years from now.

A short-term goal might be to read twenty pages from your history text twice a week to prepare for an exam that will cover the first hundred pages of the book. A long-term goal might be to begin selecting which elective college courses you should take to help you attain your career goals.

Follow the SMART Goal-Setting Guidelines

Here are guidelines that break down the aspects of goal setting. We call these the SMART goal-setting guidelines, designed to set goals that are *Specific*, *Measurable*, *Attainable*, *Relevant*, and *Timely* (SMART):

1. Be **specific** about what you want to achieve, why, and when.
2. State your goal in **measurable** terms. This means how many steps you will need to take

to obtain your goal, and how you will know when each step is complete.

3. Be sure that the goal is **attainable**. If you don't have the necessary skills, strengths, and resources to achieve your goal, change it. Be sure that the goal is something you really want to reach. Don't set out to work toward something only because you want to please others.
4. Be able to state the **relevance** of the goal to your life—that is, why the goal matters. Make certain your goal will help move you forward.
5. Consider whether the goal is **timely**—achievable within a reasonable period of time considering the difficulties you might face. Plan ways you might deal with problems.

For instance, let's assume that after you graduate you want to get a good job. This goal isn't very specific and doesn't state a particular deadline. A more specific goal would be to decide which major will prepare you for the job or position you are interested in. What short-term goals will help you reach this longer-term goal? Once you choose your major, the next goal might be to look through the course catalog to identify courses that you need to take. An even more specific goal would be to prepare your academic plan and identify which courses you should take each term. You can meet with an academic adviser who can help you create a program plan for your major, specifying which courses you need to take and in what order. Remember that dreaming up long-term goals is the easy part. To reach your goals, you need to be specific and systematic about the steps you will take. Use Figure 1.2 to set SMART goals for this term. ■



Figure 1.2 ▽ Practice Setting SMART Goals

What are your goals for this term? Using the SMART goal-setting guide, try to set one goal in each of the four areas listed: academic, career, personal, and financial. An example is provided for you.

Type of Goal	S	M	A	R	T
	What is my SPECIFIC goal?	What MEASURABLE steps are needed?	Why I can ATTAIN the goal?	How is this RELEVANT to me?	Is the goal TIMELY? What potential difficulties will arise, and how will I deal with them to stay on track?
Academic	Complete my academic plan this term based on my chosen major.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the next two weeks, review the college catalog to select a major that interests me and prepares me for my future job/career. Select my required courses and map every term. Choose my elective courses. Meet with an academic adviser to make sure my academic map makes sense. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am organized. I have a manageable range of interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can't use my time in college well if I don't know where I am headed. An adviser can give me ideas for how I can apply my interests to a major. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with an academic and a career adviser by the middle of the term. Obtain all the necessary signatures to finalize my academic plan. Have the plan all ready to go by Thanksgiving break. <p>Potential Difficulties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I do not know an academic or career adviser. I have not made a decision about the major I want to study. <p>How to Deal with Difficulties:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit the academic and career advising centers to work with advisers. Discuss my academic and career goals with the advisers and ask for their advice regarding the major I should select.
Career					
Personal					
Financial					

Connecting with Others

When you talk to college graduates and ask them what part of college was most memorable and influential, they will often tell you that it was the people. In college, fellow students, instructors, administrators, advisers, and other staff members will be important resources who can give you support in navigating college as well as enrich your overall experience. Let's consider the opportunities and challenges you will encounter when interacting with each group of people and how they can influence your college experience.

Students

Of all the different types of people on campus, the ones who will likely have the most influence on you and the choices you make are your

fellow students. Other students are tremendously important to your success, so it is important that you get to know one another; your fellow students can be of traditional college age, older, veterans, those who come from another country, or part time. They can also be taking all or a few of their courses online.

Traditional students. If you are a traditional student, meaning that you are around eighteen years old and have just graduated from high school, the transition you are making will involve adjusting to some significant differences between high school and college. For instance, in college you will most likely be part of a more diverse student body, not just in terms of race and ethnicity but also in terms of age, religion, political opinion, sexual or



△ You Aren't Alone

You can develop social and learning relationships with other students through participating in study groups, joining an organization related to your major, or engaging in student activities. It's not wise to go it alone as you approach your first year of college; you will learn more deeply by interacting with other students. You will also develop friendships that will last through your college experience. *The Washington Post/Getty Images*



gender orientation, identity, and life experience. College is a perfect time and place to step outside your comfort zone and peer group. You will find your college experience significantly enhanced by time spent with those who are nontraditional or different from you in some other way.

Nontraditional students. If you are a nontraditional or adult student, you might have experience in the job market, and you might have a spouse or partner and children. You might be returning to college or beginning college for the first time. You will face a special set of challenges, such as trying to relate to younger students and finding enough time to juggle the important, competing responsibilities of work, caring for a family, and being in college. Remember, though, that nontraditional students have determination that comes with maturity and life experiences, and they appreciate the value of an education. You will have the advantage of approaching college work with a very clear purpose for why you are there, which your instructors will notice and appreciate. You may be intimidated by the advantages many younger students seem to enjoy because they were in school more recently, and you may also be intimidated by technology. But you and other nontraditional students also have many advantages as well, and you need to build your college success on those advantages.

Veterans. You might be one of hundreds of thousands of veterans who have come to campus after serving during the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts or in other areas of the nation and world. If you are a veteran, you may have traveled the world, met all kinds of people, and faced life-threatening experiences. You may have already started college while you were on active duty. You likely made sacrifices, such as leaving your family behind, and you may have suffered either visible or invisible injuries. We believe that others on campus will find you and the stories you share about your time in the military very inspiring. Your knowledge and global experiences will enrich classroom discussions, and your perspective will be appreciated. Speak up and join in as much of campus life as your time will permit. Finally, we urge you to take advantage of special support services for veterans on your campus. Your school's veterans' affairs office is there to help

you maintain good grades and keep up with changes in your veterans' benefits, as Congress regularly revises benefits legislation.

International students. If you are a student who has come to the United States from another country, learning the unique language, culture, and expectations that exist at a U.S. college or university can be a challenge. Seek out English as a second language (ESL) courses or programs if you need help with your English skills. Also, visit the international student center on your campus to find out how you can continue to increase your understanding of life in the United States, both on and off campus.

As an important member of the college community, you will help U.S. students better understand and communicate with people from other countries. You will add a diverse perspective to class discussions and introduce students to what it might be like to work in a multinational organization. International students like you also play an important role in furthering peace and understanding among all peoples of the world.

Part-time students. If you are a part-time student, you are part of a large cohort in U.S. higher education. Students decide to enroll part time for many reasons. Maybe you have other obligations in your life, such as a family and a job, and need the flexibility of a part-time schedule. Or perhaps you are learning new skills to move forward in your current job. No matter what your age or particular characteristics, you will bring certain strengths to your college experiences that will help both you and others. Part-time students are motivated individuals who are experts at time management, often juggling work, education, and home responsibilities. However, if you, like many part-time students, commute to campus or take courses online, it can be challenging to feel part of the college community. It is also important to note that your financial aid options will be more limited than those of a full-time student. Be sure to talk to a financial aid adviser and analyze what it would cost you to move from part-time to full-time status in terms of the debt you would take on versus the income you would ultimately gain. If you decide that remaining a part-time student is the best option for you personally, professionally, and financially, know that college is just as real for you as it is for full-time students.

Online Learners

Some students will come to college with experience taking online courses in high school. For them, the idea of learning in an online setting will be easy to comprehend. But if you are a nontraditional student, this may be a totally new and confusing experience for you. Today, almost six million U.S. college students take courses online—about 28 percent of all enrolled students.¹ A few years from now, as more students want the flexibility and lower cost that online learning provides, the overall number of online students will be even larger.

Being an online learner will give you some advantages—for instance, you can take a class from home without having to travel to a college or university campus. If you are shy or reluctant to speak in class, online courses will make participating in class discussions or chats easier than in a face-to-face environment. Some students even report that they find it easier to concentrate in online courses because they are not distracted by other students.² Many online courses offer synchronous sessions in which you and your instructor meet online at a regular predetermined time. But the majority of online courses are asynchronous, meaning that you can access course materials and participate in class activities on your own schedule. Course materials, such as lectures, discussion boards, and e-mails, are recorded and always available, so if you miss any information or require more explanation, you can survey the material again.

Online learning, however, also comes with challenges. It is easier to procrastinate when your only contact with your classmates and instructor is online. The lack of formal structure can make it hard for undisciplined or unmotivated students to stay on track. And it is definitely harder to develop relationships with others in your classes. To succeed in an online environment, you will need to be very self-directed and disciplined as a learner. You will need to complete and turn in your assignments on time and become accustomed to taking online tests. However, if you are determined to do your best, your online learning experience can be as valuable as learning in a face-to-face setting.



△ Connect Online

College isn't just a physical place anymore, as an increasing number of students are choosing to take classes online. While it's true that online students have to work harder to connect with others, it isn't impossible. If you put in a little effort, you will likely meet people with many different perspectives, backgrounds, and goals in your classes, which will make learning online more engaging and enriching.

Hill Street Studios/Getty Images

¹ D. Frank Smith, "Report: One in Four Students Enrolled in Online Courses," *Ed Tech*, February 25, 2016, <https://edtechmagazine.com/higher/article/2016/02/report-one-four-students-enrolled-online-courses>.

² Paul Fain, "Only Sometimes for Online," *Inside Higher Ed*, April 26, 2013, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/04/26/online-courses-are-second-choice-community-college-students-some-subject-areas>.



Instructors

An important type of relationship you can develop in college is one with your instructors. Frequent, high-quality interaction with your instructors can have a positive effect on how well you do academically. Your instructors will expect you to be independent and to take the initiative to seek their advice and assistance. In addition, you will enjoy getting to know many of them, especially those who share your interests.

What do instructors expect? Whether you're a nontraditional student adjusting to less freedom than you're used to or a traditional student adjusting to more freedom, you will find that your instructors, whether online or face to face, are not going to tell you what, how, or when to study. In addition, they will rarely monitor your progress. You will, however, have more freedom to express views that are different from theirs.

TRY IT!

FEELING CONNECTED ► Get to Know Your Instructors

Developing relationships with your course instructors is important to your college success and to making a successful transition to college. Before your next class, do an Internet search on one of your instructors, and look for him or her on your campus website. Did anything you read pique your interest to learn more by talking with that instructor face to face? Research your other instructors over the course of the week, then make an appointment with an instructor whose background interests you. Get in the habit of visiting your instructors during office hours when you have a question, have a problem with a class assignment, or feel like strengthening these important connections.

To get a clear sense of instructors' expectations, pay close attention to the syllabus for each course. The syllabus, which you will receive on the first day of class, is both a statement of course requirements and a contract between you and the instructor. Whether on paper or online, the syllabus will give you information and dates for exams or presentations, a grading rubric, the course attendance policy, and other class guidelines or rules. Be sure to review and save the syllabus for each of your courses, so you can refer to them often.

In college, it is your responsibility to meet your instructors' expectations. In return, you can expect your instructors to be organized, prepared, and knowledgeable. They should give you thoughtful feedback on your work and grade it fairly.

Maximize learning relationships. You can meet with your instructors anytime during the term to ask questions, seek help, or discuss a problem. Most of your instructors will keep office hours—either virtual (meaning you connect online) or in person—during which they will be available to you. Talking with an instructor may seem a bit scary, but most instructors welcome the opportunity to get to know their students. By taking advantage of instructors' office hours, you are letting them know that you are serious about learning. During office hours, you can ask your instructors for direct help with any question or misunderstanding that you have. You might also want to ask questions about their educational careers and particular research interests, and share your own interests. Instructors who teach part time at your college, often called adjuncts, may not have assigned offices. While adjuncts are not usually required to maintain office hours, they are typically available to meet with you before or after class or by appointment.

The relationships you develop with your instructors can be valuable to you both now and in the future; you may even find that one or more of your instructors become lifelong mentors and friends. They can also write that



all-important letter of recommendation when you are applying for internships, research opportunities, graduate school, or a job during or after college. Many successful college graduates can name a particular instructor who made a positive difference in their lives and influenced their academic and career paths.

If you ever have a problem with an instructor, ask for a meeting to discuss the problem. If the instructor refuses, go to a person in a higher position in the department or college. If the problem is a grade, remember that your instructors have the right to assign grades based on your performance, and no one can force them to change those grades. However, you can always speak with your instructor,

“Of all the relationships you experience in college, those you have with instructors may be among the most enjoyable and influential.”

◀ The Instructor Is In

Of all the relationships you experience in college, those you have with instructors may be among the most enjoyable and influential. But you must take the initiative to meet with your instructors either before or after class or during their office hours. Instructors are available to help you with your coursework, and one or more may turn out to be lifelong mentors and friends. © Hero Images/Getty Images

find out what mistakes you made, and determine how you can improve your grade in the future.

Administrators, Advisers, and Other Staff Members

Administrators, academic advisers, and other staff members at your college will provide you with all kinds of assistance and support: advising, tutoring, counseling, career planning, financial advising, and much, much more. They will keep you and other students on track and your college running smoothly.

These people make the most significant policy decisions, determine important financial allocations and priorities, and—along with faculty members—help govern the institution. You will interact with some of these leaders, but because they are so busy, you may have to make the effort to do so. One way to meet administrators and other important staff members is to get a job on campus. Another way is to use the support services available to you. While it is harder to connect with administrators and staff members in an online program, these programs often have robust support services, which allow you to talk with key people in real time over chat or on the phone. ■



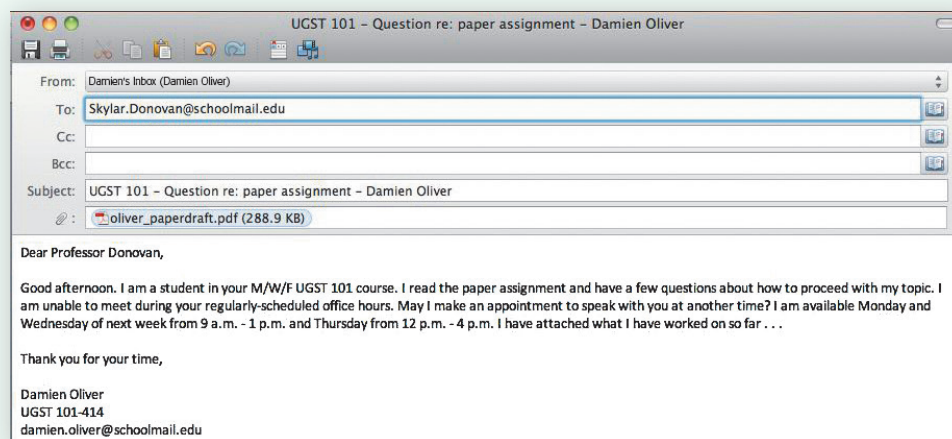
Send Professional E-mails

When you start college, you'll need to activate your college e-mail as soon as possible to receive information regarding class cancellations, weather-related closings, student events, and other types of communication that the college or your instructors may send you. Many colleges require you to use your student e-mail account to send and receive official communications. It is a good idea to get in the habit of checking that account daily or at least every other day. Whether your class meets online or face to face, at some point you will need to communicate with your instructor via e-mail unless he or she gives you another preferred method of communication. Writing e-mails to your instructors is different from writing e-mails or sending texts to your friends. Constructing well-written e-mails demonstrates that you are serious about learning and that you respect your instructor.

the GOAL

Send professional e-mails to your instructor.

how TO DO it



Follow the example here. It's best to use your college e-mail address because it has your name and college e-mail address, which will help your instructor recognize immediately that your message has been sent by a student. If you have to use another e-mail address, use a simple, professional address that includes your name. Here are some tips:

- **Make the subject line informative.** Your instructor might receive hundreds of e-mails every day, and a relevant subject line—such as the name of the course or the assignment—will help him or her respond to your e-mail promptly. A subject line like “Class” or “Question” isn’t helpful; a blank subject line usually sends the e-mail to the instructor’s spam folder.
- **Address your instructor with respect.** Think about how you address your instructor in class, or look at your syllabus to see his or her proper title. If an instructor uses “Doctor” (or “Dr.”), then you should, too. If you don’t know your instructor’s title, you can never go wrong with “Dear Professor” plus his or her last name.
- **Sign every e-mail with your full name and course number.**
- **When attaching files to your e-mail, use widely accepted file formats, such as .doc, .docx, or .pdf.** Also include your last name as part of the file name.

your TURN

Draft a sample e-mail to one of your instructors asking for clarification on an assignment. Exchange your e-mail with a partner, then provide feedback on each other’s e-mails.

Chapter Review

Reflect on Choices

Your decision to go to college is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Chapter 1 explores how you can make the most of your college experience by connecting with others, thinking about the choices you make every day, and defining your purpose and your goals. Reflect on what you found most useful or meaningful in this chapter. What additional information do you need?

Apply What You've Learned

Now that you have read and discussed this chapter, consider how you can apply what you have learned to your academic and personal lives. The following prompts will help you reflect on the chapter material and its relevance to you both now and in the future.

1. Why are you in college? Reflect on your decision to enter this college at this time in your life. Be honest about who or what influenced you to make this decision. What challenges do you face, and what strategies for success in this chapter can you use to overcome those challenges?
2. What experience do you have in setting and achieving goals? Do you have attitudes or behaviors that get in the way of reaching your goals? How can you change any negative attitudes that tend to obstruct your progress?

Use Your Resources

GO TO ▷ **Your college success instructor, check your college's directory or website, or call or visit student services or student affairs:** If you need help finding college support services.

GO TO ▷ **The academic advisement center or your assigned academic adviser:** If you need help choosing courses and understanding degree requirements.

GO TO ▷ **The career center:** If you are interested in learning more about careers, finding job and internship listings, and evaluating your fit with a particular career.

GO TO ▷ **Commuter services:** If you need help finding off-campus housing options, information about your community, transportation information, or possible roommates.

GO TO ▷ **The computer center:** If you are looking for information on campus computer resources; need help using Word, Excel, PowerPoint, or e-mail; or want to improve your computer skills.

GO TO ▷ **The counseling center:** If you need help dealing with personal problems and stress management.

GO TO ▷ **The financial aid and scholarship office:** If you want to learn more about financial aid programs, scholarships, and grants.

GO TO ▷ **The learning center:** If you need help finding tutors and improving your study skills.

GO TO ▷ **The veterans' affairs office:** If you are a veteran who wants to learn more about opportunities available to you, including financial aid.



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LaunchPad Solo for *Step by Step* is a great resource. Go online to master concepts using the LearningCurve study tool and much more. launchpadworks.com