College Student Success Strategies

Succeeding in college is not all that difficult. Freshmen enter the "Halls of Ivy" with optimism and trepidation. They soon learn that it isn't always the smartest students who do the best.

The keys to success in college can be categorized into a few principles:

PERSISTENCE

Often it is the "last ones standing" that walk down the aisle to receive their diploma. Life happens along the way. Health problems, financial difficulties, family problems, etc., are common. Most students are trying to balance work and school, and many are raising a family, too. And, a large number of students today are single parents. It's easy to get discouraged when so many stressors are competing for our time and attention. The simplest solution may appear to be to drop out. However, it seldom is.

So, hang in there and realize that endurance is the most important factor in getting your degree.

PATIENCE

Be patient with yourself and your instructors. Patience will help avoid the escalation of trivial matters into major problems. Most of all, be gentle with yourself. Take matters in stride and you will not experience the degree of stress that leads to impulsivity and poor decisions.

FLEXIBILITY

In college, as the rest of life, things happen. Schedules change, instructors

change, rooms change, curricula change, grading standards change, textbooks change, classmates change, etc. Don't let these changes "throw" you.

Many students get frustrated or upset at frequent changes. Yet, their education is intended to help them successfully navigate an unpredictable world full of frequent and profound change.

One of the major difficulties for many students is adapting to the different teaching styles, personalities and manner of the faculty. All students have their "favorites." They expect faculty to adapt to them, instead of them adapting to their instructor. Just as in the workplace they will have to adjust to, and satisfy the expectations of their superiors (bosses); in the classroom they will have to adjust to the style and expectations of their teacher. In the business world if they fail to meet the standards for performance set by their employer, they will receive poor evaluations. In the classroom these evaluations are called GRADES.

SCHOLARSHIP

I would be negligent if I didn't refer to scholarship. As a student you have an obligation to go to class, be attentive, participate, and complete your homework. If you have difficulty meeting these obligations, examine yourself and your study habits. College should be a top priority. After all, your education should assist you throughout your life in making a living and progressing professionally. So take it seriously, and try to garner all of the knowledge and networking contacts you can.

While being the "class clown" may sound like fun, it's temporary and generally unappealing. Your classmates may regard you as a fool, or resent your intrusion on their learning experience.

INVOLVEMENT

Become involved with the school and the opportunities it affords. Frequently there are various Clubs, organizations, interest groups, community involvement opportunities, etc. These represent another dimension of your learning and provide opportunities for leadership and participation. Besides looking good on your resume, they contribute to your education. These entities may also provide professional and employment avenues.

COMMUNICATION

Get to know your instructors. It is important that you share with them your circumstances as they pertain to the course. If you have to be tardy or absent because of work requirements, child care, or emergencies, let the instructor know. Otherwise your instructor may think you are not interested, serious or disciplined. If you need to be absent, or miss an assignment ask if it will impact your grade. Try to arrange for homework/make-up/extra-credit assignments to offset this. Most instructors want to be kept informed concerning their students' issues, challenges and conflicts, and are more than willing to work with you.

If you have trouble keeping up, or understanding the material ask for help. Many schools offer tutoring or special study groups to address these matters.

RESOURCES

Use the other resources available. Everything from Admissions, to Financial Aid, Business Office, Registrar's Office, Student Services, Career Services, etc., is there to support you and facilitate your education. Familiarize yourself with these offices and their functions. For example, you may need to re-write your student loan, or you may need help with transportation, or a scholarship, or a job, etc. Ask!

FRIENDS

We all need a support group. Try to align yourself with those who will help you succeed. Study

partners, car pool buddies, those with similar majors or interests are all of value, and so are the good listeners, the motivators, etc. A large part of the college experience is making personal and professional contacts. Just as in the business world it's often "who you know," and not "what you know" that makes the difference.

FOCUS

Stay focused on the "prize." Students drop out when they get discouraged, feel overwhelmed, or lose focus. The more you see yourself as successfully completing your education, the greater the likelihood of you graduating. Almost every college grad comments on how quickly the time flew in college, and before they knew it they were done. Focusing on the end result will help you through the tough times and give you the motivation and courage to succeed.

From years in academia I have seen many students complete their education, and a surprisingly large number who don't. Paying attention to these simple, yet important, tips should help you successfully complete your educational journey.

Ben A. Carlsen, Ed.D, MBA, is an experienced CEO and manager. Dr. Carlsen has over 30 years experience in management, consulting, and teaching. Currently the Head of the Business Department at Everest Institute, Hialeah, FL., he was Chairman of the Los Angeles County Productivity Managers Network and President of the Association for Systems Management (So. Calif. Chapter). Additional information can be obtained at http://drben.info

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