10 Ways to Be a Successful 1st Year College Student

1. **Make your college education your #1 job.**
   
   It takes time to do the job of learning properly at the college level. If you make college your highest priority, it will be easier to do the work necessary to succeed and graduate.

2. **Learn how to organize and manage your time.**
   
   The toughest challenge for many college students is organizing and managing the time needed for college success. Very helpful tools are a weekly calendar book and a large semester planner (available in the Office of Academic Support) used to plan each week's activities: class attendance, studying, appointments, meetings, jobs, free time, etc. Record all due dates for exams, quizzes, assignments, and projects.

3. **One of the worst places to study may be where you live.**
   
   One's residence can be a poor place to study because of distractions or potential distractions such as roommates, TVs, computers, music, beds, refrigerators, personal items, pets, visitors, chores, etc. Many students find that the campus library or a quiet study area is much more conducive to concentration and study.

4. **Treat college like an 8-hour/day and a 40-hour/week job.**
   
   This model is easy to follow because most college students would be working about 40 hours per week if they did not attend college. Non-college degree jobs usually do not pay well, and opportunities for advancement without a college degree can be more limited. Investing 8 hours per day and 40 hours per week into attending class and studying can bring large returns such as graduation and full-time employment in your major.

5. **Set up a team for your college success.**
   
   Write a list of people you include on your team for your college success. Include the names of your academic advisor, professors, math lab staff, Writing Center staff, tutors, your DSP (Divisional Support Program) or ASP (Academic Success Program) advisor, career counselor, student affairs staff members, resident assistants, housing staff member, etc. These people's jobs and expertise exist solely to help you to succeed in college.

6. **Adhere to important university dates and deadlines.**
   
   Contrary to popular opinion, university deadlines, policies, and procedures exist to smooth and speed your progress to graduation. As many students have discovered, success in college is mostly a matter of following directions and meeting deadlines. Read your college catalog carefully and record important dates and deadlines on your semester planner. Be aware of deadlines such as the last day to add/drop, the last day to withdraw from a course without penalty, and the last day to request a tutor.
7. **Attend classes regularly and do not arrive late.**

   In class, most professors cover at least half of the possible exam material. It can be difficult to learn from another’s notes, so attend class to listen and take your own notes. Frequent absences or repeatedly arriving late communicates to the professor that you are not that concerned about the class. Remember: that professor assigns your grade.

8. **Dare to be different.**

   Nearly 60% of freshmen in your class will not be at graduation with you. You increase your chances of not graduating by 60% if you party, go out too often, socialize too much, or play before getting the job of learning done first. Be different. Be successful.

9. **Choose your friends carefully.**

   A friend is someone who supports, encourages, and helps you achieve your academic and personal growth goals in college. Beware of those whose social life is out of proportion to academic efforts. We tend to become like the people with whom we surround ourselves.

10. **Balance college to include academic growth and personal growth activities.**

    Students who neglect personal growth activities find college life boring. Consider joining a club or campus organization, attending social events, participating in residence hall or campus student government activities, attending athletic events, joining intramural sports, and attending cultural events on campus such as theatre productions. Doing the job of going to class and studying before engaging in personal growth activities is a successful way to balance college life.

11. **I lied. Here is number 11.**

    People become better at that which they practice. If you practice not doing algebra problems, take a guess at what you become rather good at. Practice does improve performance. Even though an athlete may not like practicing a sport, regular practice improves performance at that sport. Learning is no different. You will become better when you practice. So, what are you practicing? Will that practice move you closer to your goals and graduation?

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This is a slightly modified version of a document written by Dennis Congos, University of Central Florida, in 2005.