

Achieving Personal and Academic Success

By Trent A. Petrie, Lisa Pinkenburg Landry, and Kimberly Bobinski Edwards
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306 pages

Reviewed by

Dr. Michael Miller and **Dr. Myron Pope**

One of the most difficult tasks of collegiate transitional programs is the development of the essential skills necessary for student success. Student success, defined either broadly as student learning, or narrowly as matriculation toward degree, are addressed through this course book designed for orientation-type courses. Petrie, Landry, and Edwards combine a skills based workbook with practical advice on what it takes to succeed in college. In the 300-plus pages, the authors provide 16 chapters of material, all organized around a self-assessment, content, review questions, and goal setting format. Although each chapter is designed in a similar fashion, the density of material is impressive and the activities are well constructed and thought provoking.

The book is unusual in that the publisher allows for a customization of the text, including appropriate contact telephone numbers and email addresses. As a package, the text is innovative and exciting as a singular resource for students involved in a University 101, orientation-style or success-oriented course. The book provides a wealth of information, and has the potential to serve as a good reference for students once they leave the course. The supporting instructional materials are also well presented, but provide more of a text-enhancement foundation rather than a true supplement. Overall, *Achieving Personal and Academic Success* is well worth consideration and adoption.

The strengths of the book are the chapters on memory, motivation, communication, stress, health, careers, writing papers, library use, and critical thinking. These chapters seem to have a stronger sense of application to students, and the material is presented in a “teachable” fashion. The authors claim the book is not constructed from a “teach-down” approach, but there are sections that assume a low level of common entry knowledge that the material reads accordingly.

The introductory chapters are very readable and workable, with the important topics of reading, note taking, time management, test taking, and goal setting presented. “Chapter 2: Goal Setting,” for example, provides an excellent primer for new students on

Dr. Michael Miller is the Associate Dean of the *College of Education at San Jose State University*.
Mmiller5@email.sjsu.edu

Dr. Myron Pope is the Director of Student Recruitment in the *College of Education at The University of Alabama*. mpope@bamaed.ua.edu

the ideas of prioritizing and learning and thinking about the consequences of various actions. The last chapter in the book, “Critical Thinking and Creative Problem Solving.” is also excellent, and gives students opportunities to think outside of “the box” about their approaches to self-growth, development, and collegiate success.

Although the book has no major shortcomings, there is some room for improvement. “Chapter 12: Healthy Body, Healthy Mind” does not give the sense of importance healthful living can have on a new student. Eating disorders are covered only nominally, and issues about drinking, sexual diseases, and recreational drug use could be presented in a stronger fashion.

The other section that could be expanded was “Chapter 13: Choosing Your Career Path.” The material is very applicable to first-year students, but the text comes across as an activity rather than as a time for critical reflection. Excellent resources are provided, though, and with some supplementation the chapter would be a good source for initiating the very important discussion of career selection.

Overall, the book has great potential and is highly recommended. The caution, though, should be that the readings and information serve as a template for discussion and interaction, and that some supplementation may be required. In subsequent editions, the authors may want to consider including more problem-based learning episodes. First year students more than transfer students will find the information presented to be of value. The very readable book is an excellent template for courses designed for first-year students.