

College Rules! How to Study, Survive, and Succeed in College

By Sherrie Nist and Jodi Patrick Holschuh

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Historically, the holistic development of students has been a major objective of higher education (Stanford, 1992). The transition from high school to college can be both a difficult and defining time in many students' lives. Shifting from parental authority and the defined curriculum of secondary education to the freedom of choice afforded by higher education can prove to be the demise of even the most talented student. Trends in higher education, including rising tuition costs, declining state financial support, and increased student attrition has led to many institutions creating specific interventions promoting the retention of their students. There has also been increased research on the adaptation to and ultimately the retention of college students. Nist and Holschuh in this text provide practical and easy to follow solutions for today's college students to acclimate to the academic life of college. The text consists of 22 chapters covering preparation steps for academic and personal success in college.

Though not done by the authors, the text could be further broken down into four main sections: (1) introduction to college, including information to prepare the student for understanding the importance of college, providing operational definitions and explanations for institutional processes; (2) an academic overview, understanding the importance of selecting an academic major, time management, and other related issues; (3) study techniques, how to best prepare for coursework and handle stress related to academics; and (4) examination preparation and tips for successfully conveying information retained.

Many students achieved academic success in high school through rote memorization, but have failed to master the ability of information integration. Chapter one provides students with six ways in which college differs from high school and places the transition in an easy to follow context. The subsequent three chapters (2, 3, 4) moved through the resources that may be available on campus for both personal and academic assistance, working with and understanding professors as opposed to the previous experiences with high school teachers, and a realistic approach to course selection and course load balance for optimal performance. Information is provided for professor selection and when to withdraw from a course. Which can be important points as an early academic disappointment may shake a student's self-confidence and esteem. The section concludes with a base understanding of grade point average calculations.

Chapter 5 highlights major selection, campus resources available, and what to consider when making academic decisions. Balancing the demands and responsibilities of college life, social life, emotional, financial, and academic adjustments are then covered. Chapter 7 discussed time management and the mindset that students should

enter college with. The authors suggested that students approach college with a 40- hour week mentality. Unfortunately, that can be unrealistic for many students in that they may not have ever placed that much focus on academics prior to college. This mentality does, however, give students realistic ways in which to manage tasks and accomplish goals. The next three chapters address motivation, goal setting, balancing stress and learning styles and how an understanding of an individual learning style can be beneficial.

The authors provide direction on how students can create a positive environment conducive to studying and also provide ways to remove distractions. This can be important for students that may live in traditional residence hall settings and must adjust to a shared living space. Understanding the expectations of professors and instructors and how to successfully take notes follows a complete understanding of the syllabus, how to read it, and what information is critical to understand is also covered. Chapters 15-19 cover how to read college textbooks for increased information retention through active reading, memorization, and how students should study for different subjects and understanding how changing methods depending on the subject can enhance learning. Learning in the context of technology and computers in classroom learning experience are mentioned including studying, taking exams, and doing research on the computer. Plagiarism is briefly mentioned, but students might benefit from a more detailed discussion of academic honesty.

The final three chapters of the text discuss examination preparation, specifically in the case of objective exams (multiple choice, true-false, etc.), preparation for essays and other types of subjective examinations, and finally, a conclusion about midterm and final examination preparation and success.

The text does a wonderful job of explaining inherent differences or adjustments that might have to be made when transitioning to college. The material is not written to specific to certain types of institutions. Students, in general can benefit from this material no matter what type of institution they attend. The chapters are not long, but do provide an overview and direction for additional assistance for students seeking more information. Whenever applicable the authors have provided short bulleted lists and checklists of items for the reader to consider. Detailed graphics are provided to ensure that the reader understands the intent and allow for greater clarity of the information. An additional feature to this text is the use of sidebars to convey information that would be useful to different student populations. There are seven topics for the sidebars:

1. Sad but True; detail actual stories of student experiences
2. The Inside Scoop; advice based on research
3. Listen Up; study tips based on experience
4. Do you Homework; advice for experiences outside the classroom
5. For Adults Only; tips directed toward non-traditional students returning to higher education
6. Get Wired; information for the use technology in education
7. Urban Legend; the myths and false assumptions of many students

These sidebars contribute a wealth of information to supplement the text and make for a

smooth transition between chapters.

Though filled with vital information for prospective and current students, there is concern of whether students, rather than their parents, would invest the time into reading the book. The information could also be used as a supplement to University 101 courses, orientation programs, and student activities planning. Ensuring the academic success of students can promote their involvement in the social atmosphere of the campus. The authors cover a broad range of subjects that any student could find beneficial. Nist and Holschuh throughout the text encourage the use of campus resources to the students. This connection with campus services and resources, along with individual responsibility, could work well to promote academic success.

References

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