

The Educated Student: Getting the Most Out of Your College Years

By *Richard Labunski*

Versailles, KY: Marley and Beck, 2002, 246 pages

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The Educated Student: Getting the Most Out of your College Years by Richard Labunski, PhD., J.D. provides a number of key answers to the tricky problems associated with navigating college life. Packaged into a neat, easy to read summary, the book is organized into five parts that address almost every aspect of campus life from academics to legal issues. Labunski provides real, applicable advice for any student entering an institution of higher education today.

Part I dealt with how to go about obtaining academic advising, selecting classes to meet personal preferences and goals, and how to benefit from each class that you enroll in. Chapter 1 focused on advising, which is crucial for successful future academic planning. Labunski advised students to take advising and registration into their own hands, and not to depend on a campus advisor to make sure he or she is registered in the correct classes. He instructed students on where they can acquire information about general education and major requirements, including extra advice pertinent to those who are transfer students. He went on to recommend how students can acquire the classes they want, when they want them.

Chapter 2 directed students on how to get the most out of every class. Labunski asserted that students should approach every class with the right attitude and treat each as a journey, on which they will learn something new. Not only is this crucial in the first few semesters when students are likely to not take their classes so seriously, but it is fundamental in obtaining a meaningful, complete education long after the diploma is received.

Students learn how to balance classes and other activities in chapter 3, where the myth that a student must finish a college education in four years is debunked. Labunski urged students to consider how much time they will spend at a part-time job to avoid stretching themselves thin. He went on to illustrate how a student who does not attempt to burn the candle at both ends will benefit in the long run. He also encouraged parents to not put so much pressure on their student to finish within the traditional four year time span, as there are other variables in effect that the student can sometimes not control.

Finally in chapter 4 the issue of choosing a major is addressed. Students are urged to consider many factors before declaring a major, including realistic expectations about future career plans, exploring internships, and talking with professors about their real-life

experiences. Labunski recommends students not to choose a major based on their parents' expectations or for financial gain. He helps students see that their career is a reality that will be faced every day upon entering the workforce, and choosing a major that is not fulfilling is a misuse of their education.

Part II focused on the issues of exams, grading, and writing papers. In chapters 4, 5 and 6 he provided tips for how to effectively take notes in class, how to review these notes in conjunction with assigned texts for exams, how to write a college-level paper and what to expect when your grades are posted at the end of the semester. He encouraged students not to drop a class if they receive a 'C' on a test or a paper, but to instead seek out ways to improve their performance through contacting professors and teaching assistants. He further noted that students should not seek to change their major based on poor performance in one class or on one paper, and provides practical ways to discuss a grade with a professor.

Because maintaining high grades is such an important issue to many students, Labunski spent an entire chapter attempting to show students that good grades are not an indicator of a good education. He urged students to focus on what they are gaining overall in the class, and not to limit themselves only to the material to be covered on the exams. In addition, he asserted that students who spend all their time focusing on their grades and not pursuing outside activities are at a definite disadvantage when it comes to job searching. He provided a particularly persuasive example of which political science major is likely to get a job out of college; student 1 who got all A's but had no outside qualifications, or student 2 who received B's but had an internship in Washington D.C., was a part of a political organization on campus, and so on.

An ongoing theme that Labunski approached in detail in Part III was the student's relationship with professors. Beyond explaining what exactly a professor's role is at a University, he helped students understand why they must spend time conducting research and how this is important to them as an undergraduate. He explained the tenure process, and cited the pressures felt by a professor as a result. By allowing a student to understand these concepts, they are more likely to have reasonable expectations of their professors.

Part IV focused on non-academic factors that can impact a student's education. In chapter 10, the importance of having a good place to study was emphasized. Related issues with dorms, other living arrangements, and the campus library are also addressed. Chapter 11 dealt with a number of extra-curricular opportunities students can get involved with, from student media outlets to fraternities and sororities. Finally, chapter 12 urged students to give back to their campus, in various forms of service and activism.

Part V concluded the book and is written as a source of information for students and their parents, with the hopes that the advice will never have to be utilized. Chapters 13 and 14 addressed how to deal with an uncomfortable situation and pertinent legal issues. If a student were ever to find themselves in a situation of this magnitude, the book provided a general overview of a student's rights while on campus, as well as an idea of what becoming involved in a lawsuit against a University or one of its employees might be like.

If a student were to follow every bit of advice presented, he or she would hardly have time to study. Between visiting alumnae on their job sites, meeting with an attorney

to discuss terms of a lease and running around campus to double check information received in an advising session, who would have the time? Overall, the quality of advice presented in this book is impressive. As a new graduate and currently as a graduate student I can confidently say that it is a useful compilation of information that took me four years to acquire. While I did have a particularly fulfilling undergraduate experience without having access to this book until after I received my diploma, reading this book prior to setting foot on campus probably would have saved me from a number of frustrating events. I would enthusiastically pass this book on to any student about to embark on their undergraduate career with these final words of guidance: you can never be fully prepared for what University life has to offer, and some of your most valuable lessons from college will be the result of your mistakes.

Reference

Labunski, R. (2003). *The educated student: Getting the most out of your college years*. Versailles, KY: Marley and Beck.