Creating a Successful Semester of College

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A successful college experience is created by establishing effective habits early in your first semester and taking specific actions in the first weeks. Turn the following tips into actions and make your first semester at Santa Barbara City College a huge success!

**Early is the new on time** - Plan to arrive at class about 20-30 minutes before the class begins. That way, you will have a cushion to absorb any mishaps, like not finding parking or getting lost. If all goes smoothly, you will have time to relax and chat with others who are in the class.

**Be Prepared** - Have at a minimum, something to write with and write on. A binder or folder for each class is also essential. If you have purchased the textbook for the class ahead of time, preview it and bring it with you.

**Front Row Seating** - Sit up front. It's more interesting there and it's easier to pay attention. You will have no distractions from other students in front of you fidgeting, texting, etc.

**Network** - Switch contact info with at least two other students in each class. Choose students who appear serious about doing well. These students will be your lifeline if you have to miss class. They can share notes and handouts with you, so you can return to the next class prepared. Don't expect the professor to catch you up.

**Project a positive image** - Just as you will be making snap judgments about your professor ("brilliant", "boring", "hard") they will be judging you ("bright", "slacker", "motivated") These initial judgments persist. Make sure your first impression is a good one. Be on time, polite, look interested, ask relevant questions. Avoid side-talking, texting, looking bored or falling asleep.

**Positive Communication** - Communicate with each of your professors early in the term. Write a brief email introducing yourself and expressing your interest in learning the material in the class. A good habit to establish is to attend their office hour(s). These hours and times should be listed on the course syllabus. Come prepared with some questions about the course or its content.

**Balance** - Up until now, others (parents, teachers, coaches, etc.) managed your time for you. Now, you are in charge of your time and surprisingly little of it is in class, only about 12 to 18 hours. Making the rest of your week healthy and productive is up to you now. Get a day planner and make a model weekly plan for each hour of the day. Fill in all of your responsibilities and activities. Get at least 8 hours a night of sleep, eat healthy, avoid alcohol and other drugs, exercise 3-5 days a week and study, study, study.

**Emphasize study** - Most learning in college takes place outside of the classroom. The general rule is to study two hours for every hour you are in class. Twelve hours per week in class equals twenty-four hours of study (reading, writing, outlining chapters, reviewing notes, flash cards, etc.) Be sure these study hours are in your weekly plan from the beginning and stick to them.

**Reach out** - Unlike high school, college does not "come at you." A wide variety of support services are available at SBCC, but you have to take the first step and make contact. In the first week, explore all that your campus has to offer: tutoring, counseling, career assessment, health services, disabled student support and on and on. You paid for access to these services. Get your money's worth.