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New Beginnings



This book is designed to help you get through college and, more important, to help you get the most out of college. Whether you are a

- first year student,
- returning student,
- student athlete,
- nontraditional student who hasn't been in the classroom in years, or a
- high school student preparing for college,

you probably have a common goal: to graduate with the best academic performance possible, having spent the least amount of time studying.

We believe that by using your time well and by studying as efficiently as possible, you'll get more out of your education, and you'll have more time for life outside the classroom.

We've included the success tools that have proven most beneficial to students in the past, but after you've taken a look through them, you can decide which ones will work for you. As you read through this book, we'd like you to keep one thing in mind: the skills that will make you successful in college are the same skills that will make you successful in the workplace. In fact, we don't even use the term "study skills"—we prefer to call them "career success skills." We've found that students excel when they perceive and develop college success skills as if they're career skills.

A large part of your college success will depend on how comfortable you are with the program you've selected. You'll have a much better chance of succeeding if you're sure you're in the right place. We have a couple of thoughts that might help you feel better about your educational decision.

Have I Made the Right Choice?

You may be enrolled in a program that leads to a specific career, or you might be taking an undeclared or transfer program. Either way, it's likely that you've experienced some degree of uncertainty about your career or program choice. It's common to have doubts and second thoughts, and the pressure to make "the perfect decision" can feel monumental.

Before you spend too much time worrying about your future, though, consider the following: rather than trying to make a final decision right now, you could approach your career as something that doesn't have to be fully defined at this time. It may be reassuring to know



that most people don't have ultimate clarity about their careers. In fact, many of those out in the workforce still think about alternative career paths and opportunities. There is no perfect or final decision. Careers are always evolving, and it's a rare person who has only one career in his or her lifetime.

What's important is to continually add to your skill base so that you're always prepared for change. People who stay current with trends in the workplace are better able to find employment in any economic climate. Keep in mind that it isn't the career you choose that matters—no decision is irreversible or binding—it's the work ethic and attitude you display that will determine your success. If you decide to change your career path, you can always pick up the necessary industry skills if you're willing to invest the time.

So don't sweat it if you haven't resolved the career issue. If you're lucky enough to be sure of what you want to do, that's terrific. If you're still undecided, there's lots of time to figure it all out. Either way, focus on developing the one thing that's certain you'll need throughout your life: career success skills, which are transferable to any profession.

Me Inc and the 8 Cornerstones of High Performance

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor, the median number of years that an employee stays with an employer ranges from 3.4 to 3.8 years. So again, whether you know your career direction or whether you're undecided, what's constant is the need to develop a complete set of employability skills that will see you through any number of career changes.

We like the concept of Me Inc: become your own company and develop the best all-round set of career skills you can. Then no matter what happens, you'll have your Me Inc skill set to take with you wherever you go.

The Me Inc career success skills have eight components: attitude, self-management skills, fundamental skills, workplace skills, contacts, experience, personal life, and career vision.

The 8 Cornerstones of High Performance

1. Attitude

- positive outlook, motivation, initiative, work ethic, persistence, discipline, coping with change and stress, willingness to learn, commitment to quality

2. Educational and Career Vision

- educational and career plans

3. Self-Management Skills

- time management, priority setting
- decision making

4. Fundamental Skills

- communication: written, verbal, listening skills
- creativity, critical thinking, problem solving skills

5. Workplace Skills

- teamwork skills
- computer skills
- technology skills
- professional skills
- career competencies

6. Contacts

- networking, references
- mentors, industry contacts

7. Experience

- direct: part-time work, co-op/placement opportunities
- indirect: volunteer work, projects, unrelated work experience

8. Personal Life

- family, friends
- health, lifestyle

The U.S. and Canadian governments have outlined these workplace competencies in detail, both of which can be found on pages XXX and XXX, respectively.



Timing Is Everything

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Do your work. It's as simple as that. Complete assignments on time, study for your tests, and do your homework. That's the secret of time management—getting your work done. The difference between knowing about commitments and actually getting around to fulfilling them is the difference between a poor time manager and a good one. And a great time manager is someone who gets his or her work done early so they've got time to do a quality job.

We believe that if, at the very least, you keep up with your assigned work, you'll probably make it through college successfully. Why? It seems that once the work piles up and you get too far behind, it's almost impossible to catch up. In fact, unsuccessful students pinpoint falling behind as the largest contributing factor to their failure.

The advantages to staying ahead of your workload are many: you enjoy your work more, you learn more, you don't get stressed out, you have time for quality, you get better grades, and your overall college experience is more fulfilling. Many people use schedules to help them with their balancing act.

Staying on Top of It All

It may sound obvious, but keeping track of what you have to do ensures that you don't forget to study for a test or keep a commitment. We recommend using schedules to give you a visual picture of how much work is building up. This will help you spread out your workload so you'll be less likely to hit a crunch time and have to pull all-nighters to get everything done. Three different types of schedules will help you stay on top of it all.

Semester Schedules

A calendar that displays one semester at a time will allow you to keep track of important dates and deadlines. If you keep your semester schedule where you can see it, you'll always be aware of what's coming up so you can plan how and where to spend your time.

Weekly Schedules

A weekly schedule will give you a detailed picture of each week's activities. Start by filling in your "must do's"—classes, study hours—and then leisure time.



Regular study hours?!

Most students wouldn't dream of scheduling regular study periods. While we acknowledge that there are more exciting things to do than study, we can offer three reasons why you may consider giving it a try.

1. Practice makes perfect.

Think back to when you were first learning your multiplication tables. Your elementary school teacher probably had the whole class recite each times table until you had them memorized. Repetition and review are two core principles of learning; the more you practice, the faster and better you learn. Study periods give you the opportunity to look over your notes regularly so that studying for a test is a quick review, not a monumental task.

2. Get more done.

Most students limit their study time to completing homework assignments. We're not knocking that—it's certainly important to do your homework. But on a light homework day, you could get a lot more done. Let's say you've set aside two hours to study on a given evening, and your homework takes only 45 minutes. You could use the remaining hour and 15 minutes to work on a major report or to review the day's notes. Your workload will be lighter later in the semester, when you'll probably need and appreciate the extra time.

3. Become a more efficient learner.

It's been proven that if you study at the same time in the same place on regular days, you become conditioned to study. In other words, when you sit down at your desk and open your books, your brain knows what you're there for. You don't have to sit around for 20 minutes trying to get into the right frame of mind. It becomes automatic.

Be realistic

However you decide to schedule your time, be realistic about yourself. If you know you're not going to sit down for four hours every Tuesday night and study, don't schedule it. Far better to set aside two hours and follow through. And if you can't live without watching your favorite weekly sports telecast, don't try to make yourself study then. A schedule is effective only if it suits your individual personality.

Daily Schedules

A "to-do" list will remind you of what you have to do each day. Prioritize each item on your list, and label the most important items "A," the less important ones "B," and the least pressing items "C." Start with your A's so that you finish your most important tasks first, and then work through your B's and C's.

Mike's To-Do List: Wednesday

- A Proofread essay before handing in
- B Read Chpt. 4 of accounting text
- A Study for mgt. test
- C Call Jen

