

Student Success Tips: Everything you need to think about and do to help you be more successful in college.

1. Identify your purpose in being at the College of Charleston.
 - a. Why this school, why now, to what ends? At this point in your life, how does a college degree fit into your big picture of where you see yourself in 5 yrs?
 - b. Why are you here instead of a local community college for the first two years, or taking a year off and earning money to help avoid debt when later in college, or serving in the military learning skills-getting paid-earning the GI bill-getting medical/dental benefits, or volunteering for a non-profit (ex. Habitat for Humanity) serving the needed/advancing a social cause? If you can't come up with anything except, "my parents expect me to be here" or "I don't know what else to do" you may want to rethink your decision to be here and explore one of the other options listed above.
 - c. Consider going to **Career Services (953-5692)** who specialize in helping people identify their strengths, skills and passions and connecting them to meaningful study or work.

2. Make specific goals for each semester.
 - a. What kinds of grades are realistic given your academic/study/organizational skills. Given your actual study habits during high school do you need some help to make a transition to more reading, more intense classes, demands for critical thinking and writing?
 - b. Speak to your professor at least twice a semester-they want to help you succeed and learn-that is what they live for. You will not "bother them" you will make their day. Who in your class seems to "get" what the professor is saying – can you meet with them to review the material?
 - c. Is there a study group you can join-meet people and get ready for a test?
 - d. Use your **Academic Advisor (953-5981)**.
Note: many students who report being stressed or overwhelmed are under organized or under prioritized. If you know your goals and the specific things you need to do, and who can help you do them to reach your goals, your stress will be much less.

3. Plan daily/weekly for success.
 - a. Get a calendar-on your phone, in your backpack, on your wall by your bed and write down: each professor's office hours; when are your tests and when are the blocks of time each week you will study/prepare for those tests; when are your papers due and when will you prepare (each week) to work on those papers? Get organized by "due date" and use your available supports and you won't feel as overwhelmed.
 - b. When during the day are you usually your best? Is that when your schedule/calendar has you studying? Did you know that "problems concentrating" often reported by students are signs they are not getting enough rest? Are you getting enough sleep based on what you know your needs are? Planning for success means understanding school is like a marathon, not a sprint, take care of yourself-even race cars make pit stops.

4. Get an accountability partner.
 - a. Could be your roommate, parent, friend here or home, but find someone who regularly asks you, "How is your class attendance, study time, test preparation, and grades?" It is always better to feel like someone is actually expecting you to do these things as a motivator to actually do them. Make this a weekly practice.

- b. Go back to your calendar and check off the things you did you were scheduled to do or circle the things you ignored, didn't do, etc. Share your calendar with your accountability partner and listen to then do what they suggest.
 - c. If you know you have a learning disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or any other special need, get the help available at the **Center for Disability Services, (953-1431)**. If you have not had formal testing for ADHD, or it has been more than three years since testing, contact the counseling center, **CASAS-Counseling and Substance Abuse Services, (953-5640)** who can schedule you for a screening assessment or a full battery of testing if needed.
5. Do the math.
- a. You need to have more hours every week studying than you do playing/partying. However, make sure you do have some down time. If you need it every day build it into your schedule.
 - b. If you prefer to work hard and play hard, make sure you can check off the status of all reading, homework, papers, test preparation –say on Friday at 5pm, so you know you have earned time to relax, meet with friends, play video games, see the town etc.
6. Beat homesickness.
- a. If you know your purpose in being here, and organize your time here – 1-4 above (work AND fun), you are already making inroads to minimizing homesickness.
 - b. Make sure your daily routine is similar to what you had at home. If you are a late sleeper, night owl, exercise in the morning, have a daily devotional or read a good book at night, etc. make sure you replicate this as much as possible here. The goal is to make the college “feel” like home by recreating here as many routines as possible.
 - c. Make your living space as much like the one at home as you can (or want to). Where are your posters, pictures of your family or hobbies? How do you like your room set up (assuming you can move things)? What kinds, colors of sheets, pillows, stuffed animals (more important than some people realize) do you need in your room to “feel” comfortable?
 - d. One of the biggest factors in minimizing (not eliminating) homesickness is making social connections with others. Whether you are shy or outgoing, talk to people, join conversations, join one of the 200+ clubs on campus (especially important to try and do here what you enjoyed in high school or prior college if you transferred here), be friendly and others will respond positively. If you are feeling stuck in loneliness, want to learn ways to feel less anxious or depressed just call the counseling center, **CASAS-Counseling and Substance Abuse Services, 953-5640**. Appointments are confidential.

Note: if home was a stressful place and you are glad you are not there and here on your own you will not likely experience much homesickness.

7. Keep your expectations realistic.
- a. No one really expects you to know with certainty, “what you want to major in or what you want to do with your life” when you are 18-21 years old. This is a time of self-exploration and trial and error. Most students change majors at least three times before they graduate.
 - b. Can you really “handle” 18hrs? Did you pick your classes well so you are not reading 200 pages weekly for three different classes, or writing several papers? Do you know that the “four year” graduation rate is only about 50% - you will not “fall behind” if you take an extra semester or even 1-2 years to graduate.
 - c. Can you take a class in Maymester or summer semester so you are not cramping your brain during the regular semester?

- d. If you know you are usually a procrastinator or last minute crammer, you knew I was going to say this – USE YOUR CALENDAR-and plan for when you need to be studying and partner with someone else if possible-let your commitment to study with another or a group help “motivate” you to actually do what you know you need to do.
 - e. If you don’t have good study skills, have trouble organizing yourself, etc. consider going to the **Center for Student Learning for help, 953-5635** – the experts on studying and learning, who bend over backwards to help every student. If after the first 2-3 weeks you are having trouble, get help, don’t wait till midterm grades come out and then you are scrambling to recover.
8. Review 1-7 above at midterms and the end of each semester. Clarify, update why you are here and how well you doing the things you need to do to be successful, each day, each week and each semester to get you to your goals. The goal is not to feel guilty, but learn about how you work best and what else you need to do to be more successful next test, next paper, next semester. As the old saying goes, “fail to plan and plan to fail.”

A detailed list of helpful resources at the college can be found on the back page of the College of Charleston Family Calendar and Handbook, titled, “Who Does What.”