

# Helping Your Student Succeed in College

## A Message to Parents, Family Members and Friends...

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When a family member enters college, a journey begins for the whole family!

- *Encouragement from parents, family and friends is a critical factor in student success.*

## Making the Transition from High School to College

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Many students experience difficulties transitioning from high school to college.

- *they are unaware of the expectations placed on them.*
- *they aren't equipped with strategies for success on campus.*

In one study, college students reported they had to change their “**high school ways to college ways**” in order to meet the demands of college.

## High School vs. College

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### HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES

Students proceed from one class directly to another.

Students spend 6 hours each day (30 hours a week) in class.

Most classes are arranged for students.

Teachers carefully monitor class attendance.

Students are provided with textbooks at little or no expense.

### COLLEGE CLASSES

Students often have hours between classes and class times vary throughout the day and evening.

Students spend 12 to 16 hours each week in class.

Students arrange their own schedule in consultation with their academic advisor.

Professors may not formally take roll, but they are still likely to know whether or not students attend.

Students need to budget substantial funds for textbooks, which will usually cost more than \$200 each semester.

Adapted from South Texas College

### **PERSONAL FREEDOM IN HIGH SCHOOL**

Students' time is usually structured by others.

Students need permission to participate in extracurricular activities.

Students can count on parents and teachers to remind them of their responsibilities and to guide them in setting priorities.

Students will usually be told what their responsibilities are and corrected if their behavior is out of line.

### **STUDYING IN HIGH SCHOOL**

Students may study outside of class as little as 1-2 hours a week, and this may be mostly last-minute test preparation.

Students often need to read or hear presentations only once to learn all they need.

Students will usually be told in class what they need to learn from assigned readings.

### **PERSONAL FREEDOM IN COLLEGE**

Students manage their own time.

Students must decide whether to participate in extracurricular activities.

Students will be faced with a large number of moral and ethical decisions they have not had to face previously. Students must balance their responsibilities and set priorities.

Students are old enough to take responsibility for what they do and don't do, as well as for the consequences of their decisions.

### **STUDYING IN COLLEGE**

Students need to study at least 2 to 3 hours outside of class for each hour in class. If they are taking 12 hours, that means 24-36 hours of study time.

Students need to review class notes and text material regularly.

It's up to the student to read and understand the assigned material; lectures and assignments proceed from the assumption that the student has already done so.

## HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS

Teachers check completed homework.

Teachers remind students of incomplete work.

Teachers approach students if they believe they need assistance.

Teachers are often available for conversation before, during or after class.

Teachers have been trained in teaching methods to assist in imparting knowledge to students.

Teachers provide students with information missed during absences.

Teachers present material to help students understand the material in the textbook.

Teachers often write information on the board to be copied in students' notes.

Teachers often take time to remind students of assignments and due dates.

## COLLEGE PROFESSORS

Professors may not always check completed homework, but they will assume students can perform the same tasks on tests.

Professors may not remind students of incomplete work.

Professors are usually open and helpful, but most expect the student to initiate contact if they need assistance.

Professors expect and want students to attend their scheduled office hours.

Professors have been trained as experts in their particular areas of research.

Professors expect the student to get any notes from classmates when they miss class.

Professors may not follow the textbook. Instead, to amplify the text, they may give illustrations, provide background information, or discuss research about the topic.

Professors may lecture nonstop, expecting students to identify the important points. When professors write on the board, it may be to amplify the lecture, not to summarize it. Good notes are a must.

Professors expect students to read, save, and consult the course syllabus (outline). The syllabus spells out exactly what is expected of the student, when it is due, and how the student will be graded.

### **TESTS IN HIGH SCHOOL**

Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of material.

Makeup tests are often available.

Teachers frequently rearrange test dates to avoid conflict with school events.

Teachers frequently conduct review sessions, pointing out the most important concepts.

### **GRADES IN HIGH SCHOOL**

Consistently good homework grades may help raise a student's overall grade when test grades are low.

Extra credit projects are often available to help students raise grades.

Initial test grades, especially when they are low, may not have an adverse effect on a final grade.

Students may graduate as long as they have passed all required courses with a grade of "D" or higher.

"Effort counts." Courses are usually structured to reward a "good-faith effort."

### **TESTS IN COLLEGE**

Testing is usually infrequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material. Students, not the professor, need to organize the material to prepare for the test. A particular course may have only 2 or 3 tests in a semester.

Makeup tests are seldom an option; if they are, students need to request them.

Professors in different courses usually schedule tests without regard to the demands of other courses or outside activities.

Professors rarely offer review sessions, and when they do, they expect students to actively participate by coming prepared with questions.

### **GRADES IN COLLEGE**

Grades on tests and major papers usually provide most of the course grade.

Extra credit projects cannot, generally speaking, be used to raise a grade in college course.

Students should watch out for first tests. These are usually "wake-up calls" to let them know what is expected - but they also may account for a substantial part of the course grade. Students receiving a low grade on an early exam should seek assistance from the professor and/or the tutoring center.

Students may graduate only if their average in classes meets the departmental standard - typically a 2.0 or "C."

"Results count." Though "good-faith effort" is important in regard to the professor's willingness to help students achieve good results, it will not substitute for results in the grading process.

## What do Students Say?

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A study was conducted with students attending a public university in Texas. Students were asked to talk about strategies they used to achieve success during their first year in college.

- *upon arrival at college, many students reported feeling prepared to do well academically, but found that they had underestimated the amount of work necessary to be successful.*
- *other students reported that the ways in which they studied in high school were no longer effective in college.*

Students reported a number of strategies that contributed to their success during their first year:

- *attending class regularly*
- *taking classes with friends*
- *sharing class notes*
- *participating in study groups*
- *reading before class*
- *meeting with professors regularly*

Students stated that major distractions included the Internet, friends, and Facebook/MySpace.

The students discussed trying to attend to their academics while at the same time minimizing distractions from their social lives.

- *in order to maintain this balance, students described the importance of managing their time appropriately.*
- *although students were able to describe why time management and responsibility were important, **they admitted to often procrastinating on their schoolwork.***

## Our Findings

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Students often had to adjust their expectations regarding the degree of work it takes to be successful in college.

Although students described a range of strategies that contributed to their academic success, they did not always employ them.

## Support Strategies

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We hope the following strategies might be helpful for parents, family members, spouses and friends as they provide support for their student as they progress through their academic career at Indiana State University.

Prepare your student for the increased academic demands they will face in college.

- *share your own experiences or introduce them to others who have recently attended college.*

Discuss the importance of attending class regularly, reading before class, taking thorough notes, completing all class assignments, and participating in study groups.

Encourage your student to meet with their professors outside of class to follow-up on questions about course material.

Encourage your student to use free services available on campus such as tutoring, the counseling center and academic advising.

Stress the importance of effective time management.

- *use a calendar to keep track of due dates and tasks that need to be accomplished.*

Discuss the dangers of spending too much time online!

- *although the Internet can serve as a way of maintaining social connections, too much time online can prevent students from meeting their academic responsibilities.*

Encourage your student to “get involved” on campus. Research shows that students involved on campus are more likely to be successful in college.

### **How Can I Find Out How My Student is Doing in College?**

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All information about college, including courses, grades and financial obligations, goes directly to the student.

**The best way to obtain information is to talk to your student!**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records.

- *academic information cannot be shared with others, including parents and spouses, unless the student gives written permission.*
- *this includes grades, schedules, classes, attendance, college services and financial information.*

### **Communicate with your Student!**

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Establish a communication plan to discuss college with your student today!

### **My Student Seems to be Having a Problem in College - How Can I Help?**

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The Office of Student Success has many resources and services to help students succeed.

Become familiar with our resources and encourage students to reach out for help.

## College Services

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College Web Site

Academic Catalog

Departments

- *Student Academic Services Center* 812-237-2300
- *Student Counseling Center* 812-237-3939
- *Career Center* 812-237-5000
- *Writing Center* 812-237-2986
- *Math Center* 812-237-2130
- *Residential Life* 812-237-3993
- *Disability Services* 812-237-2300
- *Financial Aid* 800-841-4744
- *Public Safety* 812-237-5555
- *Library Services* 812-237-2580
- *International Programs and Services* 812-237-2440
- *Office of Diversity* 812-237-2877
- *African American Cultural Center* 812-237-3811
- *Student Ombudsperson* 812-237-3849
- *Veteran Services* 812-237-2540