

# COLLEGE BOUND

## YOUR APPLICATION MENTOR<sup>SM</sup>

### Tips for Surviving and Thriving in Freshman Year

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:: Tips for Survival

Congratulations on almost finishing senior year and making it through the college application and acceptance process in one piece. I hope you had fun at prom for those of you who went. As you transition from high school to college you will undoubtedly face challenges and successes along the way. I put together some tips on how to make a successful transition based on my experience teaching at Whittier College and with previous clients. I also asked my clients from the class of 2008 to weigh in on what advice they would give to incoming freshmen which I've highlighted in orange. Below are common themes that came up.

**Strike a Balance Between Work and Play.** The sooner you realize how much time you can spend playing and still manage all of your work, the better off you are. I have worked with students who thought the end goal was getting into college and once they were there, they partied the whole time. Guess what? They ended up taking a leave, maturing, and having to prove themselves at another college before going back to their original (Ivy League) school.

*"Don't get involved with drugs and alcohol above your head. You don't have to be "that guy/girl" on your floor for people to think that you're cool. The only thing you may end up getting yourself is kicked out of school for low grades, and than nobody will be proud of you! So do what you know you can handle, and don't let anybody convince you to do anything else. You know yourself and your body the best!"*

**Time Management** When you start out freshmen year, it feels like you have all the time in the world because classes meet less frequently than in high school and the work is not broken down into smaller assignments. Therefore, students often feel like they have time to complete an assignment that is due in a month. Students, who could procrastinate in high school and still get by, find that this strategy does not work in college. It is important to set aside time every day during the week to do work so that the workload does not become overwhelming. Even though you do not have an assignment due, that does not mean that you do not have work to do. When I taught at Whittier, the rule of thumb for a professor in assigning work was to give three hours of homework for every hour of class. So if you meet for 3 hours of class time per week, you should expect to do 9 hours of work outside of class to keep up.

*"During my first semester I was taking 21 credits and it was hard to adjust to the new teaching styles. I was used to studying hard and doing well. But college was different; I had a lot more free time and I had figure how to prioritize schoolwork, a social life, extracurriculars and actually getting sleep. Don't be afraid to change your studying style. I think I was really stuck on the way I had done it in*

*high school and didn't try to adapt to my new academic challenges. Eventually I figured it out."*

**Roommate Harmony** If you are lucky, your roommate will become your best friend. If you are not lucky, your roommate will become your worst enemy. Most students from upper middle class families often do not share a room at home. Add to that a stranger with whom you will now be sharing a tiny room can lead to discord. Colleges do a good job of trying to match students with similar living habits, however, some students lie on those surveys. Fill it out honestly and communicate openly with your roommate at the beginning of the year to determine some house rules of how you will handle various situations. Some areas that can cause conflict are music choice, time that lights are out, hooking up in the room, having a boyfriend or girlfriend spend the night (every night!), cleanliness, personal space. There are no guarantees that if you talk about issues before they become problems, that you will have harmony, but it certainly improves your chances. If you cannot resolve your differences, go to your Resident Advisor immediately and try to find a more compatible roommate.

**Get Involved** Studies have shown that the key to retention is having students feel like they are connected to the college. The best way to do this is to get involved on multiple levels. Below are some ideas of what other students did.

*"Join clubs, even though everybody says to do it, and you think it may be lame, it turns out to be really fun and you meet a ton of people that way. Some clubs that I joined were A Cappella (The NYU Vocaholics All-Male...they're like the brothers I never had!), Third Avenue Government (hall council...this has led to my involvement in the larger NYU Inter Residence Hall Council, the umbrella organization for NYU housing and I've met tons of awesome people this way), and Music Business Ambassadors (not a lot going on here, but I just represent my grade and my major to the larger NYU community, giving me a lot of insight into the planning going into the curriculum behind my major)."*

*"I felt like I opened myself up really well to new experiences. I noticed that other people complained about not getting to the school they wanted to get into, which led them to not really fully experience all Berkeley had to offer. I felt like I came in with a good attitude, and I was willing to experience new things."*

**Get Help ASAP** The first thing you should do when you get on campus is find an "adult" you can trust to go to if you need help. Being in college can sometimes feel isolating, but there are always people that can help you.

*"If you're failing a class, go for help IMMEDIATELY. It's going to suck much more to have to repeat it again, even if you hate calculus!"*

*"Look into the resources that your school offers such as tutors and study guides in the library. Don't be afraid to talk to professors!! Villanova professors are so welcoming and willing to help you with anything. They really want you to succeed in their classes."*

- If you do not like your roommate speak with a Resident Advisor.
- If you are feeling depressed or sad, speak with a counselor. About 85% of students feel depressed or sad once in awhile at school, but only 20 % of them actually seek counseling help in college. On average, 10% of students get counseling so you will not be alone. [Article on College Students and Mental Health](#)

**Money** Create a budget and understand how you are spending your money. Do not go into debt. If you can't afford it, don't buy it. Get a part-time job if you need extra cash. The habits you start now will create good spending habits for when are older. [Advice from Recent Grad](#)

## Stay in Contact with Family

*"Call your parents. Turns out that this makes them feel really reassured and they have less of a chance of calling you at 11PM on a Saturday night to see that you're alive when you have more of a chance of sounding like a fool on the phone. Just call them every few days to let them know you're alive and you'll both benefit in the long run."*

**Stay on Medication** I have seen students who did very well in high school on medication, (e.g. ADHD medication or depression medication). As soon as they get to college and outside of a parental influence, they decide to go off of their medication because they feel fine. This is a huge mistake. If you needed glasses to read and decided to stop wearing them, you would no longer be able to function. This happens in college too and can easily be avoided. I have seen many kids fail and have to take time off to regroup by making this decision.

I have enjoyed working with all of you during this process and I wish you continued success. Please keep in touch and I'll likely be asking you for your tips to surviving freshman year for next year's class. I'm on Facebook now, so that is a good way to stay in touch too.

Warmly,

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