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# going to college

guidelines for success  
on campus

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Choosing a major, passing organic chemistry, dealing with lunch-lines, laughing late at night, and sitting in lecture halls filled with 400 other English 101 students; that's college life and it's one transition you cannot afford to get wrong. The decisions you make in these four years will have an impact on the rest of your life. While at school you will choose your vocation, possibly find a spouse, and make serious decisions about your values. This is big.

But don't worry. Whether you want to graduate "Summa Cum Laude" or just "Thank You Lordy," succeeding on campus is not that difficult.

After 20 years of observing college students from all over the world, I've noticed that successful students employ the following basic strategies. If you apply these simple strategies, you will do great.

### Strategy Number One: Rest and Roughage

Let's be clear about the physical needs of the human body. It simply cannot live indefinitely on pizza, and lattes are no substitute for REM sleep.

After a couple months of empty calories and late night laughter, some students find that they are easily discouraged, unable to focus, and well, "puffy."



While it's true everyone on campus pulls the occasional all-nighter, a lifestyle of low protein and sleep-depriving study is ultimately counter productive.

Instead, try writing down an eating, sleeping, and exercising plan that is both realistic and healthy. Be sure to include all the green stuff and allow for some fun food occasionally. Also, it is very important to get up and move. Exercise is one of the best stress relievers known to man. Find a work out partner for fun and

accountability. Even taking a one-credit PE class helps. Then stick with your plan.

Bottomline: Successful students make a plan about when they will sleep, what they will eat, and how they will exercise.

### Strategy Number Two: Dream

If you really want to stay energized and get the most out of your education, you'll need to go dreaming. In other words, find a big vision that fits your particular gifting and go after it passionately.

College is the ideal time to discover what you were born to do with your life. Experiment with different roles. Ask your trusted mentor to help you evaluate your gifts. Ask God to give you a new and creative idea that will help you serve your campus. For instance, start a study group for struggling students or sponsor a late night poetry and philosophical round table to challenge students. Join a Christian group and set up the campus fellowship's sound system each week. Become a small group leader in that fellowship. Innovate. Do something great. If you do, you will never regret your time on campus.

Bottomline: Successful students are passionate about a vision that serves God and other people.

### Strategy Number Three: Same Time, Same Place

I knew a student so serious about his classes that he had the library hours tattooed on his forearm. Another guy I knew was so

cavalier about his studies that he lived in the dorm for six years before he realized he was at the wrong school. The point, of course, is that both of these extremes should be avoided. Finding a regular schedule that balances study and fun is a key strategy for success on campus.

From your first week, establish firm study times and a regular study place. Go to class everyday. (It is amazing how many students don't understand that their poor grades are related to their poor attendance.) Once you have a habit of studying at the same time and in the same place, reward yourself by making a firm commitment to fun. If you can find a balance between disciplined study and fun rewards, both your GPA and your emotional fulfillment will be high.

It is not easy. Be careful not to reward yourself if you have not been disciplined in your studies. You will feel guilty during your entire "fun" time anyway. Also, find a regular time to call your folks. Whether this is once a week or once a month, establishing this is good for you and them.

**Bottomline:** Successful students determine a working schedule that balances work and play and they stick to it.

#### **Strategy Number Four: Hang Out With Babies**

There is something important about being around babies, families, seniors and the occasional Sunday potluck; in other words, get off campus and actually build relationships in the community.

The campus is a sort of bubble. If you are not careful, you can get caught in this bubble and lose track of the "real world." I recommend you have a life outside of campus that includes attending a local church. In fact, after service is over if you stand by the front door and look really hungry, some nice family might even take you home with them. Think of it— washing machines that don't require quarters and food that is not served on a bright orange tray.

**Bottomline:** Successful students keep their head in the real world by going to church every Sunday and connecting with the wider community.

#### **Strategy Number Five: Avoiding Overload**

One of the biggest mistakes students make every year is trying to do too much, too quickly. In their rush to get a degree (and keep costs down) they take too many or the wrong credits. Many students rush into the wrong major, end up taking classes over again, or worse, flunk out. In the long run, overloaded schedules do not save time or money; they cause students to work harder and spend more money.

Every student needs to spend a significant amount of time planning what credits they will take. If your academic advisor doesn't work hard for you, find one that will. Try your best to take only one very challenging class per semester. Do not waste credits by declaring your major before you are 100 percent sure it is for you. Do not be afraid to consult non-traditional advisors. Peers, pas-

tors, parents and the real sage of every department on campus, the dean's administrative assistant, are the people that can give you some of the most practical advice available.

Bottomline: Successful students get the facts and plan their academic schedule very carefully.

### **Strategy Number Six: Go Global**

Disney was right. It is a small world. The fact is, you will not make it in the global market without thinking globally now.

Befriending an international student and getting involved in a campus group or church that serves people overseas is extremely important. Overseas service will grow your character, teach you how to serve people of a different culture, give you the adventure of a lifetime, and help you form deep, life-long friendships.

Bottomline: Successful students think and act globally. They go on Christian missions trips, give to missionaries, and pray for the world.

### **Strategy Number Seven: Dorm Dweller**

A strange disease hits millions of students, usually sophomores, every spring. The main symptom is delusional thoughts about how renting an off campus apartment will be better than living in the dorm. The disease is not fatal. In fact, it usually goes away after just one semester off campus, and these people are already back in the dorm dining hall mooching of their friends.

Shopping for all the staples, preparing your own meals, cleaning your own kitchen, cleaning after your roommates meals, sorting out the bills between roommates, and handling all of the other details of renting off campus, take up lots of precious time. "But it will be so much cheaper off campus." Sure, until you get busy and start ordering out pizza and buying fast food burgers every night, or your roommate drops out of school halfway through the semester and you're stuck with the other half of the rent.

Dorms are a once in a lifetime privilege. They are an incredible place for sharing your worldview, making great friends and avoiding the distractions that come with renting.

Bottomline: Most successful students stay in the dorms a little longer to simplify their lives.

### **Strategy Number Eight: Learn to Learn**

One of the best things you can do is take a course on how to take courses at the college level. Getting expert advice on how to read textbooks, write papers, and take great notes in class is huge.



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Most universities offer non-credit classes on how to do college-level research, reading and notetaking. If yours does not, there are several excellent books on this subject available at most campus bookstores. If you can get some practical input on these areas you will do much better in class.

Bottomline: Successful students work hard learning how to learn.

### **Strategy Number Nine: Ask the Big Questions**

Here's the great thing about college: it is not just about memorizing. It is about forming your opinions and learning how to think about life. Don't just accept what you're told, and don't be afraid to ask questions. Press yourself to not just record information but to actually understand it.

This is especially true when it comes to the big questions in life. Why are we here? Is God real? Where do we go when we die?

In fact, Chi Alpha Campus Ministries exist on campus solely to help students ask these big questions. At Chi Alpha you are accepted no matter who you are, what your background is or what you've been through. We refuse to buy into the idea that any one person is better than the next. If you exist, you are important and deserve to be treated as such. We want to join with you to make your campus experience truly great.

So what exactly is Chi Alpha? Sometimes there aren't enough words to describe Chi Alpha. Then at other times, those words

won't stick, because the face of Chi Alpha is a reflection of those involved, constantly changing and maturing. The question is not so much what is Chi Alpha, but who is Chi Alpha?

Ok, so who then? We come from a lot of different backgrounds and that diversity makes Chi Alpha unique, but most of us have one thing in common. We're excited about what God is doing in our lives. He has been so good to us it makes us want to express our appreciation and love to Him in whatever way we can.

We realize that, "Blessed are those who know their need for God" (Matthew 5:3).

Our encounter with God began with a simple confession. We are not perfect! In fact we are far from it. The Bible says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Once you can admit you need forgiveness, encountering Jesus is just a matter of trust. Belief in God means trusting Him as good enough to die in your place on the cross. It also means believing He is alive today and wants to be the leader of your life. College is hard. Jesus leads us with incredible joy and wisdom. Jesus' best friend John summed it up this way, "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Trust? Believe? How does this work exactly? It starts by praying a simple prayer. Tell the Lord your sins and ask him to help you leave them behind forever. John promises that, "If we confess

our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Then find a Bible and begin to read. Finally, don't forget to visit Chi Alpha on campus.\*

Bottomline: Successful students understand that a degree is good and friends are great but real success can only be found as you encounter God.

### Strategy Ten: Avoid the Desert

"I need to buy books, decorate my room, get to know my dormmates, meet with my advisor, go to the financial aid office, set up my checking account, learn my way around the campus, pledge a frat, exfoliate my skin, and write home to my cat."



There will always be a never-ending list of urgent things to do on campus. For many freshmen, finding quality Christian friendships, slowly but surely, gets pushed to the back burner. If you don't make finding a Christian fellowship a priority, before you know it your soul is as dry as a desert and you are wondering why you ever thought God was real.

Even if you are not a Christian, a Christian group is a great place to find sincere and loving friends. Be sure to put joining a group at the top of your things to do list. Life is hard even with close Christian friends supporting you. It is almost impossible without them.

Here are some questions to ask about the groups on your campus:

- a. Are they committed to true Biblical ideals and are the leaders affiliated with a reputable, Evangelical denomination or para-church organization? (Beware there are a lot of strange groups out there.)
- b. Do they have healthy small groups set up?
- c. Do students own the ministry and have a big say in the events of the ministry?
- d. Do they reach out to all races, sizes and shapes of people? The best groups are those that look like heaven- people from every tribe, language, and nation.
- e. Do they use creative means to teach and defend the Gospel on campus?

Bottomline: Successful students get involved in a Christian fellowship without putting it off.

\*For more information on Chi Alpha or a complete list of the campuses where we are located log on to [www.chialpha.com](http://www.chialpha.com).

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