

Lesson 13

College – A Different Culture

Materials Needed:
pen or pencil



Vocabulary: These words will help you understand this lesson.

| Word/Term | Definition |
|--------------------------------|---|
| academic | scholarly; dealing with schools, colleges, universities |
| syllabi | summary or outlines of a course of study |
| course | college class; usually meets for three or four hours a week for fifteen weeks; students must complete specific courses in order to earn a college degree |
| course of study | group of courses students are required to take in order to earn a college degree; major |
| credits or credit hours | points awarded for successful completion of college courses; credit hours usually equal the number of hours a class meets per week. (Associate's degrees usually require about 60 credit hours; Bachelor's Degrees, about 120 credit hours) |
| criteria | standards; conditions which must be met |
| degree | academic title given to students who have completed a course of study; two year course of study - Associates Degree; four year course of study - Bachelors Degree |
| cultural | having to do with customs, traditions, and language |
| indicates | suggests, shows |
| statistics | data or information in numerical form |
| vital | very important; essential |

Journal Entry

Five Minute Reflective Writing: Think about being in high school and going to college. How do you like going to high school? What will you be happy to leave behind after you graduate? What will you miss about high school the most when you are in college?

Introduction

This lesson is dedicated to your success in college. It has been designed, like all the lessons in this unit, to help you achieve your college and career goals. This lesson is meant to teach you how to get off to a good start in college by helping you get through the most challenging part of college – the first year.

The freshman year of college is the riskiest year because more students drop out or fail during that time than during any other year. Every year, all across the country, almost twenty-five percent of first year students give up or lay aside their dreams of a college education. Many freshmen decide to leave just a few weeks into the semester and most are gone by the winter break.



Counselors refer to the freshman year in college as a transitional period because of all the changes that happen in the lives of students who leave high school to become college freshmen. The biggest change or at least the one that takes the most freshmen by surprise is how very much the high school environment differs from the college culture.

High Schools vs. Colleges

On the surface, high school looks like college, only a lot smaller. It is hard for some people to accept that there are differences between high school and college as they appear to be similar in some basic ways.

- On the surface, high school and college do seem quite alike, don't they?
- Both are educational institutions.
- In high school, teachers give instruction to students in classrooms.
- In college, students receive instruction from professors in classrooms.
- High school students get diplomas after completing high school graduation requirements.
- College students get degrees after completing college program requirements.
- Both acknowledge successful seniors with ceremonial graduations.

The similarities between college and high school, however, are only skin deep. Under those surfaces high school and college are very different. Students who do not know about these differences or who do not believe they are important are not likely to succeed in college.

College has a long-standing and distinct culture. This culture has been around for a very long time. It's not going to change for you. If you want to stay in college and succeed, you must change for it. Two things about college culture that cause the most need for awareness and change in freshmen are the legal status of students at college and how college courses are taught.

College Students = Legal Adults

In high school, students are minors and dependent on their parents or guardians. In college, however, students are legally independent adults and colleges treat them as such. In the college culture, parents play a minor role. For example, students must give legal consent for their parents to talk to someone about their child's progress in college or to see their grades.

- College freshmen are suddenly in a position to make their own choices and run their own lives. Likewise, they are expected to be aware of what needs to be done and when they need to do it.
- College provides many opportunities for students to be informed about requirements, procedures, deadlines, and resources about what students need to know. Students must take advantage of these opportunities by attending orientations, reading handbooks, going to websites, and opening email.
- The college handbook is very important. New freshmen need to know what's in there and consult it often. Students should hang onto a copy of the college handbook from the year they matriculate. Program requirements listed in that handbook are the ones that apply to them.
- Freshmen need to take charge of their own lives in college from the very first day. To do otherwise is to invite defeat.
- Successful college students don't blame others or make rationalizations. Instead, they take responsibility for their failures as well as successes.
- There are no homeroom teachers or parents at college to nag or remind students. They need to be able to manage their own time and to motivate themselves enough to finish everything they decide to start.
- Freshmen need to know what they want out of college and to keep their goals in focus. Having a career goal increases students' chances of success. It helps to be goal-oriented. Students should achieve long-term goals with short-term goals, and short term goals with tasks.
- Help is available; it's up to the student to ask for it.

Analysis:

1. What will you have to be in charge of when you go to college that is taken care of for you now?

2. What can you do now to get ready for these new responsibilities?

College Professors = Experts, Not Teachers

How education happens is different in college. In high school, students receive instruction by state certified teachers. High school students are taught. Teachers feel they are in charge of making sure students learn. College professors, however, are usually not professional teachers; they are experts about the subject they have spent years studying. Professors expect their adult students to be in charge of their own learning. In college, freshmen need to understand this right away or they'll be lost.

- The three most important things that lead to success in college are attendance, attendance, attendance.
- Make friends in each class with people who can be your study buddies and source of class notes for that one class you might have to miss.
- Sitting in the front of the class, asking thoughtful questions at appropriate times, and participating respectfully in discussions are excellent active learning tactics.
- Good classroom note-taking skills are crucial. Practice now. Many freshmen feel that professors go too fast. Take advantage of class-room note-taking workshops offered by your college.
- If you start having problems in a course, get help as soon as you need it. **DO NOT HESITATE.** Professors' office hours and contact information will be on the course information sheets or syllabi distributed when courses start. Academic help, such as tutors and learning labs, is also provided through campus student services.
- Students must be able to keep track of what they need to do and be able to motivate themselves enough to get the needed work done. Keep track of your grades throughout the course.
- Professors do not check to see how you're doing like high school teachers do. They assume students have their work under control until students tell them otherwise – preferably by appointment, during their office hours.
- Curiosity and a sense of competition are learning-friendly attitudes.
- Help is available; students must seek it.

3. How do you think you'll do in a class that's *learning centered* (student is responsible for his/her own learning) as opposed to *teaching centered* (teacher focuses on content rather than student processing)? Explain.

4. What personal strengths can you apply to learning centered college courses?

5. What areas need to be strengthened?

Activity – Interview a College Graduate

Interview a college graduate to learn how they were successful in college.

- Set interview dates ASAP.
- Develop a list of open-ended questions beforehand. Ask for their opinions and ideas and listen to their stories about success and failure. Give yourself permission to go off script if a good question occurs to you during the interview. If possible, give your interviewee a copy of your questions a day or so beforehand.
- Thank your interviewee when you are done and ask if they'd like a copy of the completed assignment.
- Be sure your interviewee receives a short, hand-written thank you note from you ASAP. (Expressions of courtesy and respect are always appreciated. They are also



good networking tools. Who knows, maybe the person you interview will become a mentor someday. Maybe they're looking for someone who would appreciate receiving Granny's gently used computer.)

Optional Internet Activity – 25 Tips

- Read the following article at http://www.quintcareers.com/first-year_success.html
Your First Year of College: 25 Tips to Help You Survive and Thrive Your Freshman Year and Beyond by Randall S. Hansen, PhD

After you read the article, complete the following statements.

I look forward to _____

I dread _____

I was surprised to learn _____

The most helpful tips are _____

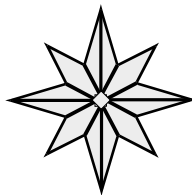
A tip I could apply to my life now is _____

Optional Internet/ Journal Activity – Blogging for College Success

http://www.utexas.edu/inside_ut/blogs/ directs you to the University of Texas at Austin’s website and puts you on *Longhorn Confidential* page. Here you will be able to read profiles and postings written by eight undergraduates at the UT student blog. The bloggers are a diverse group of college students enrolled in various programs of study at the university.

As you read look for examples of behaviors, attitudes, reactions, statements, observations, warnings, advice or anything else that shows how these students are aware of and work within the college culture at UT.

Summarize five examples below or in your journal. Explain how these examples show awareness of college culture.



End of Lesson 13