



Dear Student,

Congratulations on making the decision to further your education and take on a new challenge! You are embarking on an adventure that is sure to benefit your future.

Being a transfer student means new surroundings, new responsibilities, and new requirements. It's exciting - and perhaps a little stressful. But it's nothing you can't handle if you've gotten this far.

This book will help you learn the ropes, set your priorities, and be successful at your new college. This is an exciting time for you...so turn the page and let's get started.

Alan Farber, PhD

“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”

John F. Kennedy

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PART I

The Transfer Experience

As the “new kids on the block,” transfer students face unique challenges. The following tips will help ensure that you make a successful adjustment to your new school.

Participate in transfer student programs

Take full advantage of the services and resources specifically designed for transfer students, including Transfer Orientation programs, “University 101” courses, residence hall sections for transfer students, and Second Year Experience programs for sophomores. If you live off-campus, check to see what’s available for commuting students.

Get to know the campus

Take the time to thoroughly familiarize yourself with your new surroundings. Drop by or make an appointment at any department or office that provides a service you might use. Take a walking tour of the campus and stroll through as many buildings as possible. You may run across a theater, gallery, café, study area, computer lab, pool, workout facility, or other amenity that you otherwise would never have known about.

Remember when your parents told you not to talk to strangers? Good advice when you were seven, but it no longer applies. Strike up conversations, ask for directions and advice, and generally make yourself at home. This is as much your school as anybody’s.

Take advantage of new opportunities

Although colleges can be quite different in terms of academics, cultural climate, student dynamics, and physical surroundings, your adjustment will primarily be a function of your willingness to make the most of every resource and opportunity your new college has to offer.

Your goal is to take advantage of the campus experience by fully immersing yourself in as many residence hall, departmental, and campus activities and resources as possible. Once you’ve gotten the lay of the land, identify activities and organizations of interest and plunge in.

Make your new school your home

If you are living on campus and this is your first time away from home, it's only natural for you to miss your family, friends, and the comforts of home. Life is a series of transitions and this is a major one.

Of course you will want to stay in touch with family and friends via phone, texts, social networking, email, and visits home. Most established students, however, suggest that new students avoid the temptation to text or call home too often, or to go home every weekend. Staying on campus over the weekends speeds up the transition process. It also gives you the opportunity to socialize, study, do laundry, and catch up on your sleep.

Learn the rules and regulations

Enrollment at a new school requires learning a whole new set of rules, policies, and procedures regarding pretty much everything - classes, course registration, financial aid, scholarships, residence life, study abroad, meal plans, campus jobs, parking, wireless and email access, etc.

Confusing - yes. Rocket science - no. You just need to spend some time gathering information and learning the ropes. If you thoroughly familiarize yourself with your new school's regulations and deadlines, you'll be at a distinct advantage. Many students make poor educational decisions or miss out on valuable opportunities because they didn't take the time to review their college catalog or bulletin.

Expect courses to be tougher

Whether it is because your new school is more academically rigorous, or because you are enrolled in upper division courses, it is likely that you now have more reading, more challenging assignments, and tougher exams. But major and upper division courses should be tough. If you ask alumni which classes they derived the most benefit from, they'll generally report that they were the ones in which the professors were the most demanding.

While major and upper division courses may be tougher, most students' grades improve in their junior and senior years. This is because students generally find the topics in upper level courses more interesting. Smaller classes and greater classroom participation also make for a more dynamic and personalized learning environment.



Work hard



As a transfer student, you most likely understand the importance of good grades and career preparation. The consequences of mediocrity or failure are also likely to seem more real now than they did during your freshman year.

Many employers, and all graduate and professional schools, will consider your GPA in the hiring or admission process. Your upper division and major course grades are particularly important - they speak to your performance in coursework directly relevant to your career goals. So, buckle down and embrace the challenge to excel. Get your priorities in order, improve your study habits, and do what it takes to succeed.

Expect to be busy

As a rule, upperclass students work more and play less than freshmen. In addition to taking classes and studying, upper class students often work at a part-time job, participate in one or more student organizations, conduct research, and/or volunteer in the community.

There's an adage that states "If you want something done, give it to a busy person." Busy people tend to manage their time more effectively and be more productive than those with plenty of time on their hands.

You can and should socialize and have fun in college, but academics and career preparation must be your top priorities. Successful students generally have one thing in common: they manage their time effectively.

Be prepared to make decisions quickly

Incoming freshmen have plenty of time to acclimate to campus, select a major, weigh their career options, apply for campus jobs and summer internships, join clubs, and plan to study abroad. As a transfer student, you simply don't have the same luxury of time.

In order for you to get the most out of your college experience and graduate in a reasonable amount of time, you need to be able to make decisions quickly. If you follow the recommendations in this booklet, thoroughly gather information, and seek the guidance you need, you will be prepared to make the best choices for you and for your future.

"By the time I got on campus, the other students already had groups of friends. Everything's great now, but it took awhile before I felt like I fit in."

BJ, senior math major

PART II

Get Involved

To achieve success in your new environment, get involved in student activities and organizations, meet new people, and take full advantage of the services your new college has to offer.



Reach Out to People

Your relationships with students, faculty, and staff are critical to your adjustment to college life. Make a special effort to meet people on campus.

Participate in activities for transfer students

If your school has a Transfer Student office, check their website, visit their office, and read their email or Facebook announcements to see what they have planned for you. Attend all events that are specifically designed to help transfer students acclimate to campus.

Live on-campus

This is a sure-fire way to meet fellow students and get involved in campus life. Residence halls are not just apartments; they are “living and learning communities” that provide social activities, educational programs, athletics, entertainment, and much more.

Befriend your resident assistant

If you live in a residence hall, get to know your resident assistant. RAs enforce rules, provide assistance, and work to see that everything runs smoothly on their floor. They know their way around campus and may be able to provide useful information about courses, professors, and campus life. They’re also there for personal support when the going gets tough.

Participate in study groups

Check to see if your classes offer study groups. If not, make a classroom announcement that you're organizing a study group for all interested classmates. Study groups are a great way to learn course material while meeting classmates.

Get an on-campus job

You may be eligible for work study, based on your family's income. If you are not eligible, there are still likely to be many student employment positions available. Colleges typically have students working in libraries, recreation centers, bookstores, dining halls, computer labs, and elsewhere on campus. Working on campus is a great way to meet people while earning some cash.

Participate in alumni programs

Visit your school's alumni office and ask what they offer current students. They may have an Alumni-Student Mentoring Program that pairs incoming students with alumni. Alumni are a great source of support.

Become a campus guide or ambassador

Campus tours for prospective students and their family members are often led by current college students. The orientation requires that you become an expert on almost everything about your new school, and prospective employers and graduate schools love students with public speaking experience.

Talk to people in the know

Your college employs hundreds of people in an array of positions - not just professors, but administrators and staff members - working in dozens of offices. Never hesitate to seek out university personnel for guidance, support, and assistance.



Participate in student organizations

Explore and get involved in any organization that looks interesting. The following section provides a list of the kinds of organizations available on most college campuses.



Be Organized

Successful college students typically have two things in common: they are well organized and they manage their time effectively.

Use an academic planner

To help you stay organized, buy an academic day planner and use it regularly. Your cell phone or online calendar are also fine as long as you use them. *Don't rely on your memory; write everything down.*

Here are some items you need to record and keep updated:

- ▶ Class times, professors' office hours, study/extra help sessions
- ▶ Assignment due dates and test schedules
- ▶ Course registration dates and withdrawal deadlines
- ▶ Payment deadlines for tuition, housing, meal plans, parking passes, and car registrations
- ▶ Application deadlines for summer internships, study abroad programs, student employment, scholarships, grants, and loans

Make efficient use of your time

- ▶ Create "to do" lists. Determine which tasks are the most pressing and which can be put off until later.
- ▶ Look for ways to streamline and combine tasks. Study while you're doing your laundry or get your exercise by jogging to the library. Look for "chunks of time" that are wasted and figure out how to use these times more effectively.
- ▶ Make a practice of studying, reading, doing research, and completing assignments during "dead hours" between classes.
- ▶ Learn to say no. In college, there's so much to do and so much going on that it's easy to get sidetracked. Know what you need to do, and don't let anything get in the way of your academic success.

Register early

Colleges publish a Schedule of Courses that includes the registration schedule. You'll be given a registration date (or range of dates). Some classes fill up quickly, so always register at the earliest possible date. Closed out courses are not necessarily closed out. See the professor and plead your case. He/she may add a spot or put you on a waiting list. If closed out, you can try attending the first class in the hopes that the professor will allow you in.

Keep fastidious records

Some time in the future you'll need documentation or written proof of school-related information. So create and maintain a file that won't get lost, stolen, or destroyed.



While you're at it, maintain an additional file of non-academic records including credit/debit card statements, bank/checking account statements, car insurance, receipts for purchases over \$10, and so forth. Don't rely strictly on online statements. You want a "paper trail" in the event that online records are corrupted, stolen, or otherwise compromised.

Archive important messages

Create an email folder of all messages you receive regarding academic issues (registration procedures and deadlines, messages from professors regarding assignments or deadlines, scholarship and internship opportunities, etc.). Don't delete them – file them away for future reference. If you get a lot of such messages, create subfolders for each department, professor, academic advisor, department chair, career counselor, etc.

Even with the advent of online course registration, bill payment, etc., it's still a good idea to keep separate printed copies of all important records and documents.

Back up computer files

To avoid every student's nightmare of lost or corrupted assignments, papers, and projects, create a backup system. Use an external hard-drive, email yourself important documents, or pay a few dollars a month for an online back-up system such as Mozy or Carbonite.

It's easy to lose flash drives and memory sticks, and desktop and laptop computers may be stolen. *Back up all important documents online.*