

A Map to Success for Your College Freshman

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In California, applications continue to go up due to population growth, and the reductions in funding continue to cut space and programs throughout the current California community college system, which ultimately results in a one to two year wait to enroll in many of the classes being offered. At CPC, we can get our students through the first two years quickly, while maintaining a high rate of student retention. Of the students entering the community college system in California who express a desire to transfer to a four-year program, only 33% do so within six years.

There are some legitimate reasons that can be cited for failure to complete a college education. These reasons may range from financial obstacles to misguided career choices/academic decisions. Other, not so legitimate, reasons may include personal justifications stemming from fear of change, a sense of loneliness and isolation, or simply irresponsible time management after starting college.

Mentioning some of the above negative statistics and challenges is *NOT* meant to scare you or to take away any of the joy, excitement, and anticipation you feel about going to college. We at CPC believe that we offer a viable solution for beginning college students. At CPC, we have over a 90% retention rate for our students. It is our sincerest intent to be able to offer students a desirable alternative to other, more stereotypical, California community colleges. We believe that we offer a non-threatening, affordable, faith-based, private two-year education. This option for students was simply not available until we opened our Redlands, CA campus in 2007.

The decisions that you make and the actions you take during your first years of college will have a major impact on the rest of your college experience, as well as the rest of your lives. CPC can and does provide a successful spring-board to the successful completion your college career. At CPC, as part of our responsibility to students, we make every effort to recognize and address as many potentially problematic areas as possible before they can become real obstacles to a successful education.

The ratio of students to counselors at most community colleges in California ranges between 1,000-1,700 to 1. During the first two critical years of college level education, when students *most* need small classes and guidance, they are least likely to get it at most conventional community colleges. These crucial first two years of college education is a major focus at CPC. It is what we do...and one of the reasons we do it so well is because CPC's ratio of students to counselors is 100 to 1. CPC considers and treats each student as a deserving individual, not simply as a numbered entity in the system. Our counselors and teachers strive to continually become better acquainted with our students and help them to favorably navigate the uncharted waters of their educational goals.

In today's rapidly expanding high-tech and science arenas, and the ever constant flux of our world's global markets, it is quickly becoming more and more apparent that education beyond high school plays an ever more important role to one's success in life. Your successful completion of a college education

will impact not only your projected income potential, but will also vastly expand the quality as well as quantity of job opportunities available to you upon your graduation.

Once accepted for admission to CPC, you begin with a clean academic slate. Your high school experiences and records are in your past. You begin a new chapter in the book of your life and the remaining pages of that book are blank. Your primary goal should now be to not only survive in college, but to thrive in college. Your success is our success. The most basic and fundamental reason for our existence at CPC is to help our students to lay a solid foundation for their continued educational success.

Your conscious commitment to follow the suggestions below will help you to develop many of the tools, skill sets, and eventually habits that will allow you to succeed in college as well as in your future career.

1. **Attend all orientations.** The primary purpose of orientations is to familiarize students with their new surroundings and challenges. The faster you learn about what red tape -- the more at ease you'll feel and the better prepared you'll be when issues arise.
2. **Take the time to get to know your fellow students.** Many of them will go through similar experiences and emotions as you at the beginning of your college education and may become a valuable support team and safety net during this critical time in your life.
3. **Get Organized.** In high school, the teachers tended to lead you through all the homework and due dates. In college, the professors post the assignments -- often for the entire semester -- and expect you to be prepared. Buy an organizer, a PDA, a big wall calendar -- whatever it takes for you to know when assignments are due.
4. **Find the ideal place for you to study.** It may be your residence or a cozy corner of the library, but find a place that works best for you to get your work done -- while avoiding as many distractions as possible.
5. **Attend class.** This may seem obvious, right? Maybe, but sleeping in and skipping that 8 am class will be tempting at times. Avoid the temptation. Besides learning the material by attending classes, you'll also receive vital information from the professors about what to expect on tests, changes in due dates, etc.
6. **Become an expert on course requirements and due dates.** Professors spend hours and hours preparing course syllabi and calendars so that you will know exactly what is expected of you -- and when. One of the lamest excuses a student can give a professor is "I didn't know it was due today."
7. **Meet with your professors.** There are only upsides to getting to know your professors, especially if later in the semester you run into some snags.
8. **Get to know your counselor/academic adviser.** This is the person who will help you with conflicting course schedules, adding or dropping courses, scheduling of classes for future semesters, deciding on majors and minors. Any academic issues or conflicts should immediately be addressed with your counselor.
9. **Seek a balance.** College life is a mixture of social and academic happenings. Don't tip the balance too far in either direction. Study hard so that you will have time to play hard.
10. **Get involved on campus.** New students may begin to feel that they do not quite belong. One solution may be to consider joining a select group -- being careful not to go overboard -- of student organizations, clubs, or study teams. You'll make new friends, learn new skills, and feel more connected.
11. **Strive for good grades.** Another obvious one here, right? But be mindful that this will take more personal effort than high school did. This means setting some goals for yourself and then making sure you work as hard as you can to achieve them.
12. **Take advantage of the study resources on campus.** If you're having some problems keeping up with a class, learning labs or tutors are viable resource tools available to you. And, as was suggested earlier, it may also benefit you to join or form a study group.
13. **Make time for yourself.** Be sure to set aside some time and activities that help you to relax and take the stress out of your day or week. Exercise, write a journal, read a good book...anything that will help you to relax and regroup.

14. **Don't feel pressured to make a hasty decision about a career or a major.** It doesn't matter if it seems as though everyone else seems to know what they're doing with their lives -- believe me, they don't -- college is the time for you to really discover who you are, what you enjoy doing, what you're good at, and what you want to be. It's not a race; take your time and enjoy exploring your options.
15. **Make connections with students in your classes.** This will expand your network of friends -- and be a crucial resource at times when you may have to legitimately miss a class.
16. **Don't procrastinate; prioritize your life.** It may have been easy in high school to wait until the last minute to complete an assignment and still get a good grade, but that kind of stuff will not work for you in college. Give yourself deadlines -- and stick to them.
17. **Stay healthy/Eat Right.** Get enough sleep, take your vitamins, and eat right. Mom or dad won't always be there to serve you a balanced meal. You are now on a road to greater independence and you may be tempted to go for those extra fries or cookies. Stay healthy and avoid the dreaded extra "Freshman 15" pounds by sticking to a balanced diet.
18. **Keep track of your money.** If you've never had to create a budget, now is the time to do so. Find ways to stretch your money - and as best you can, avoid all those credit card solicitations you'll soon be receiving. The average credit card debt of college grads is staggering.
19. **Don't succumb to the temptation to cut corners.** College is all about learning. If you procrastinate and cram, you may do well on tests, but you will not retain as much. **Do NOT succumb to the temptation to cheat!**
20. **Realize that you will sometimes feel overwhelmed.** There's a lot going in your life right now. As one student describes this feeling..."be prepared to feel completely unprepared." Just know that others have felt that way and many around you may well be feeling that way right now, too.

Final Words of Advice

You've already accomplished much of your prep work. Determine that when you start college, that you will keep a positive outlook on life and enjoy all your hard work while laying the groundwork for a successful college career. Don't be a statistic; be determined to make it through your freshman year -- and beyond. Take advantage of your network of new friends and professors, have fun while learning as much as you can, and get the most out of your college experience.

(Should credit be given to the following source?)

Dr. Randall S. Hansen is founder of [Quintessential Careers](#), a career development site on the Web.