



1



## Exploring College

Figure 1.1

### Chapter Outline

- 1.1 Why College?
- 1.2 The First Year of College Will Be an Experience
- 1.3 College Culture and Expectations
- 1.4 How Can This Book And This Course Help?



## Introduction

### Student Survey

How do you feel about your ability to meet the expectations of college? These questions will help you determine how the chapter concepts relate to you right now. As we are introduced to new concepts and practices, it can be informative to reflect on how your understanding changes over time. We'll revisit these questions at the end of the chapter to see whether your feelings have changed. Take this quick survey to figure it out, ranking questions on a scale of 1 – 4, 1 meaning “least like me” and 4 meaning “most like me.”

Don't be concerned with the results. If your score is low, you will most likely gain even more from this book.

1. I am fully aware of the expectations of college and how to meet them.
2. I know why I am in college and have clear goals that I want to achieve.
3. Most of the time, I take responsibility for my learning new and challenging concepts.
4. I feel comfortable working with faculty, advisors, and classmates to accomplish my goals.

You can also take the [Chapter 1 survey \(https://openstax.org/l/collegesurvey01\)](https://openstax.org/l/collegesurvey01) anonymously online.

#### STUDENT PROFILE

“As students transitioning to college, responsibility is an inherent component of self-advocacy. As someone accepted on full funding to a 4-year university, but whose life's circumstances disallowed attending college

until years later, I used to dream of a stress-free college life. The reality is, college can be a meaningful place, but it can also be challenging and unpredictable. The key is to *be your own best advocate*, because no one else is obliged to advocate on your behalf.

“When I began my community college studies, I knew what I wanted to do. Cybersecurity was my passion, but I had no understanding of how credits transfer over to a 4-year university. This came to haunt me later, after I navigated the complex processes of transferring between two different colleges. Not everyone involved volunteers information. It is up to you, the student, to be the squeaky wheel so you can get the grease. Visit office hours, make appointments, and schedule meetings with stakeholders so that you are not just buried under the sheaf of papers on someone’s desk.”

—**Mohammed Khalid**, University of Maryland

## About this Chapter

In this chapter, you will learn about what you can do to get ready for college. By the time you complete this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Recognize the purpose and value of college.
- Describe the transitional experience of the first year of college.
- Discuss how to handle college culture and expectations.
- Identify resources in this text and on your campus for supporting your college success.

Reginald	Madison
Reginald has, after much thought and with a high level of family support, decided to enroll in college. It has been a dream in the making, as he was unable to attend immediately after high school graduation. Instead, he worked several years in his family’s business, got married, had a son, and then decided that he didn’t want to spend the rest of his life regretting that he didn’t get a chance to follow his dreams of becoming a teacher. Because it has been almost a decade since he sat in a classroom, he is worried about how he will fit in as an adult learner returning to college. Will his classmates think he is too old? Will his professors think he is not ready for the challenges of college work? Will his family get tired of his long nights at the library and his new priorities? There is so much Reginald is unsure of, yet he knows it’s a step in the right direction.	It has been only three months since Madison graduated from high school. She graduated in the top 10 percent of her class, and she earned college credit while in high school. She feels academically prepared, and she has a good sense of what degree she wants to earn. Since Madison was 5 years old, she’s wanted to be an engineer because she loved building things in the backyard with her father’s tools. He always encouraged her to follow her dreams, and her whole family has been supportive of her hobbies and interests. However, Madison is concerned that her choice of major will keep her from dance, creative writing, and other passions. Furthermore, Madison is heading to a distant college with no other people she knows. Will she be able to find new friends quickly? Will her engineering classes crush her or motivate her to complete college? Will she be able to explore other interests? Madison has a lot on her mind, but she aims to face these challenges head-on.

While Reginald and Madison have had different experiences before and certainly have different motivations for enrolling in college, they have quite a bit in common. They are both committed to this new chapter in their lives, and they are both connected to their families in ways that can influence their commitment to this pursuit. What they don’t know just yet—because they haven’t started their classes—is that they will have even more in common as they move through each term, focus on a major, and plan for life after graduation. And they have a

lot in common with you as well because you are in a similar position—starting the next chapter of the rest of your life.

In this chapter, you will first learn more about identifying the reason you are in college. This is an important first step because knowing your *why* will keep you motivated. Next, the chapter will cover the transitions that you may experience as a new college student. Then, the chapter will focus on how you can acclimate to the culture and meeting the expectations—all of which will make the transition to a full-fledged college student easier. Finally, the chapter will provide you with strategies for overcoming the challenges that you may face by providing information about how to find and access resources.

## 1.1 Why College?

Estimated completion time: 22 minutes.

### Questions to consider:

- Why are you in college?
- What are the rewards and value of a college degree?
- Why this course?

This chapter started with the profiles of two students, Reginald and Madison, but now we turn to who you are and why you are in college. Starting this chapter with *you*, the student, seems to make perfect sense. Like Reginald and Madison, you are probably full of emotions as you begin this journey toward a degree and the fulfillment of a dream. Are you excited about meeting new people and *finally* getting to take classes that interest you? Are you nervous about how you are going to handle your courses and all the other activities that come along with being a college student? Are you thrilled to be making important decisions about your future? Are you worried about making the right choice when deciding on a major or a career? All these thoughts, even if contradictory at times, are normal. And you may be experiencing several of them at the same time.



**Figure 1.2** Decision-making about college and our future can be challenging, but with self-analysis and support, you can feel more confident and make the best choices.

## Why Are You in College?

We know that college is not mandatory—like kindergarten through 12th grade is—and it is not free. You have made a *choice* to commit several years of hard work to earn a degree or credential. In some cases, you may have had to work really hard to get here by getting good grades and test scores in high school and earning money to pay for tuition and fees and other expenses. Now you have more at stake and a clearer path to achieving your goals, but you still need to be able to answer the question.

To help answer this question, consider the following questioning technique called “The Five Whys” that was originally created by Sakichi Toyoda, a Japanese inventor, whose strategy was used by the Toyota Motor Company to find the underlying cause of a problem. While your decision to go to college is not a problem, the exercise is helpful to uncover your underlying purpose for enrolling in college.

The process starts with a “Why” question that you want to know the answer to. Then, the next four “Why” questions use a portion of the previous answer to help you dig further into the answer to the original question. Here is an example of “The Five Whys,” with the first question as “Why are you in college?” The answers and their connection to the next “Why” question have been underlined so you can see how the process works.

While the example is one from a student who knows what she wants to major in, this process does not require that you have a specific degree or career in mind. In fact, if you are undecided, then you can explore the “why” of your indecision. Is it because you have lots of choices, or is it because you are not sure what you really want out of college?

### The Five Whys in Action

Why are you in college?	I am in college to <u>earn a degree in speech pathology</u> .
Why do you want to <u>earn a degree in speech pathology</u> ?	I want to be able to <u>help people who have trouble speaking</u> .
Why do you want to <u>help people who have trouble speaking</u> ?	I believe that <u>people who have trouble speaking deserve a life they want</u> .
Why do you feel it is important that <u>people who have trouble speaking deserve a life they want</u> ?	I feel they often <u>have needs that are overlooked and do not get treated equally</u> .
Why do you want to use your <u>voice to help these people live a life they deserve</u> ?	I feel it is my purpose to help others achieve their full potential despite having physical challenges.

Do you see how this student went beyond a standard answer about the degree that she wants to earn to connecting her degree to an overall purpose that she has to help others in a specific way? Had she not been instructed to delve a little deeper with each answer, it is likely that she would not have so quickly articulated that deeper purpose. And that understanding of “why” you are in college—beyond the degree you want or the job you envision after graduation—is key to staying motivated through what will most likely be some challenging times

How else does knowing your “why,” or your deeper reason for being in college, help you? According to Angela Duckworth (2016), a researcher on *grit*—what it takes for us to dig in deep when faced with adversity and continue to work toward our goal—knowing your purpose can be the booster to grit that can help you succeed.<sup>1</sup> Other research has found that people who have a strong sense of purpose are less likely to experience stress and anxiety (Burrow, 2013)<sup>2</sup> and more likely to be satisfied in their jobs (Weir, 2013).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, being able to answer the question “Why are you in college?” not only satisfies the person asking, but it also has direct benefits to your overall well-being.

#### ACTIVITY



Try “The Five Whys” yourself in the table below to help you get a better sense of your purpose and to give you a worthy answer for anyone who asks you “Why are you in college?”

<sup>1</sup> Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: The Power and Passion of Perseverance*. NY: Simon & Schuster.

<sup>2</sup> Burrow, A.L. & Hill, P.L. (2013). Derailed by diversity? Purpose buffers the relationship between ethnic composition on trains and passenger negative mood. *Personality and Psychology Bulletin*, 39 (12), 1610-1619. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167213499377>.

<sup>3</sup> Weir, K. (2013). More than job satisfaction: Psychologists are discovering what makes work meaningful--and how to create value in any job. *American Psychological Association*, 44 (11), 39.



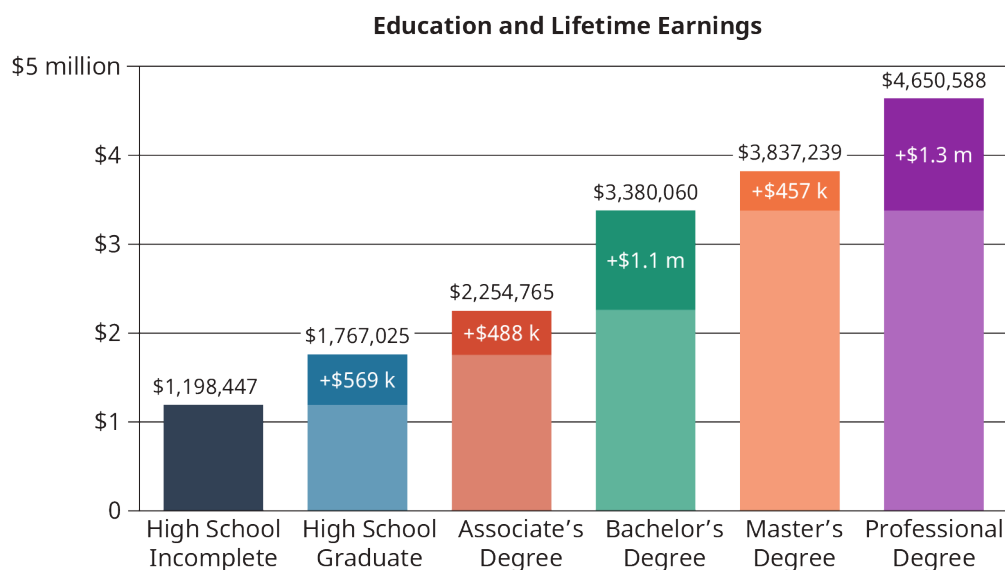
### The Five Whys: Your Turn

<i>Why are you in college?</i>	I am in college to . . .
<i>Why do you . . .</i>	I . . .
<i>Why do you . . .</i>	I . . .
<i>Why do you . . .</i>	I . . .
<i>Why do you . . .</i>	I . . .

## What Are the Rewards and Value of a College Degree?

Once you have explored your “why” for enrolling in college, it may be worth reviewing what we know about the value of a college degree. There is no doubt you know people who have succeeded in a career without going to college. Famous examples of college dropouts include Bill Gates (the cofounder and CEO of Microsoft) and Ellen DeGeneres (comedian, actor, and television producer, among her many other roles). These are two well-known, smart, talented people who have had tremendous success on a global scale. They are also not the typical profile of a student who doesn’t finish a degree. For many students, especially those who are first-generation college students, a college degree helps them follow a career pathway and create a life that would not have been possible without the credential. Even in this time of rapid change in all kinds of fields, including technology and education, a college degree is still worth it for many people.

Consider the following chart that shows an average of lifetime earnings per level of education. As you can see, the more education you receive, the greater the increase in your average lifetime earnings. Even though a degree costs a considerable amount of money on the front end, if you think about it as an investment in your future, you can see that college graduates receive a substantial return on their investment. To put it into more concrete terms, let’s say you spend \$100,000 for a four-year degree (*Don’t faint! That is the average sticker cost of a four-year degree at a public university if you include tuition, fees, room, and board*). The return on investment (ROI) over a lifetime, according to the information in the figure below, is 1,500%! You don’t have to be a financial wizard to recognize that 1,500% return is fantastic.



Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Census Bureau; Help Wanted, The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Figures are in 2008 dollars.

**Figure 1.3** Every education level brings with it potential for greater lifetime earnings. These are simply averages and may not apply to all career types and individuals. For clarity, the “professional degree,” attaining the highest earnings, refers to degrees such as those given to doctors or lawyers. Monetary values are in 2008 dollars. (Credit: based on data provided by Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce)

Making more money over time is not the only benefit you can earn from completing a college degree. College graduates are also more likely to experience the following:

- **Greater job satisfaction.** That’s right! College graduates are more likely to get a job that they like or to find that their job is more enjoyable than not.
- **Better job stability.** Employees with college degrees are more likely to find and keep a job, which is comforting news in times of economic uncertainty.
- **Improved health and wellness.** College graduates are less likely to smoke and more likely to exercise and maintain a healthy weight.
- **Better outcomes for the next generation.** One of the best benefits of a college degree is that it can have positive influences for the graduate’s immediate family and the next generations.

One last thing: There is some debate as to whether a college degree is needed to land a job, and there are certainly jobs that you can get without a college degree. However, there are many reasons that a college degree can give you an edge in the job market. Here are just a few reasons that graduating with a degree is still valuable:

- More and more entry-level jobs will require a college degree. According to Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce, in 2020, 35% of jobs will require a college degree.<sup>4</sup>
- A credential from a college or university still provides assurance that a student has mastered the material. Would you trust a doctor who never went to medical school to do open-heart surgery on a close relative? No, we didn’t think so.
- College provides an opportunity to develop much-needed soft skills. The National Association of Colleges and Employers has identified eight career-readiness competencies that college students should develop: critical thinking/problem solving, oral/written communication, teamwork/collaboration, digital technology, leadership, professionalism/work ethic, career management, and global/intercultural fluency.<sup>5</sup> There are few occasions that will provide you the opportunity to develop all of these skills in a low-stakes environment (i.e., without the fear of being fired!). You will learn all of this *and* more in your classes. Seems

4 Carnevale, A.P., Smith, N., & Strohl, J. (2013). Recover: Job growth and education requirements through 2020. Georgetown University’s Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved from <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/recovery-job-growth-and-education-requirements-through-2020/>.

like a great opportunity, doesn't it? If you find yourself asking the question "What does *this* course have to do with my major?" or "Why do I have to take *that*?" challenge yourself to learn more about the course and look for connections between the content and your larger educational, career, and life goals.

### ANALYSIS QUESTION



In what ways will earning a college degree be valuable to you now and in the future? Be sure to describe the financial, career, and personal benefits to earning a college degree.

## Why This Course?

Now that you have considered why you are in college and why a college degree may be valuable to you, it's time to focus on why you are reading this book. Most likely, you are enrolled in a course that is helping you learn about college and how to make the most of it. You may be asking yourself "Why am I taking this course?" or even "Why do I have to read this book?" Answers to the first question may vary, depending on your college's requirements for first-year students. Nevertheless, you are probably taking this course because your college believes that it will *help you succeed in college and beyond*. Likewise, the reason your professor has assigned this book is because it has been designed to give you the best information about how to make your transition to college a little smoother. If you are not convinced just yet of the value of this course and its content, consider the following questions that you will be encouraged to answer as you learn about how to succeed in college:

- What will college expect of me in terms of skills, habits, and behaviors, and how can I develop them to ensure that I am successful?
- What do I need to know about how to navigate the process of completing a college degree?
- How can I ensure that I develop worthy long-term goals, and how best can I meet those goals?

These questions are designed to assist you in the transition from high school, or the workforce, to the new world of college. And this won't be the last monumental transition that you will experience. For example, you will experience a new job more than once in your life, and you may experience the excitement and challenge of moving to a new house or a new city. You can be assured that transitions will require that you identify what you need to get through them and that you will experience some discomfort along the way. It wouldn't be such a great accomplishment without a little uncertainty, doubt, and self-questioning. To help you, the next section speaks specifically to transitions for the purpose of making your next steps a little smoother.

## 1.2 The First Year of College Will Be an Experience

Estimated completion time: 14 minutes.

### Questions to consider:

- How will you adjust to college?
- What are the common college experiences you will have?

<sup>5</sup> National Association of Colleges and Employers. (2019). Career readiness defined. Retrieved from <https://www.nacweb.org/career-readiness/competencies/career-readiness-defined/>.



## Adjustments to College Are Inevitable

College not only will expand your mind, but it may also make you a little uncomfortable, challenge your identity, and at times, make you doubt your abilities. It is hard to truly learn anything without getting messy. This is what education does: it transforms us. For that to happen, however, means that we will need to be open to the transformation and allow the changes to occur. *Flexibility*, *transition*, and *change* are all words that describe what you will experience. Laurie Hazard and Stephanie Carter (2018)<sup>6</sup> use the word *adjustment*. Hazard and Carter (2018) believe there are six adjustment areas that first-year college students experience: academic, cultural, emotional, financial, intellectual, and social. Of course, you won't go through these adjustments all at once or even in just the first year. Some will take time, while others may not even feel like much of a transition. Let's look at them in brief as a way of preparing for the road ahead:

- **Academic adjustment.** No surprises here. You will most likely—depending on your own academic background—be faced with the increased demands of learning in college. This could mean that you need to spend more time learning to learn and using those strategies to master the material.
- **Cultural adjustment.** You also will most likely experience a cultural adjustment just by being in college because most campuses have their own language (*syllabus*, *registrar*, and *office hours*, for example) and customs. You may also experience a cultural adjustment because of the diversity that you will encounter. Most likely, the people on your college campus will be different than the people at your high school—or at your workplace.
- **Emotional adjustment.** Remember the range of emotions presented at the beginning of the chapter? Those will likely be present in some form throughout your first weeks in college and at stressful times during the semester. Knowing that you may have good days and bad—and that you can bounce back from the more stressful days—will help you find healthy ways of adjusting emotionally.
- **Financial adjustment.** Most students understand the investment they are making in their future by going to college. Even if you have all your expenses covered, there is still an adjustment to a new way of thinking about what college costs and how to pay for it. You may find that you think twice about spending money on entertainment or that you have improved your skills in finding discounted textbooks.
- **Intellectual adjustment.** Experiencing an intellectual “a-ha!” moment is one of the most rewarding parts of college, right up there with moving across the graduation stage with a degree in hand. Prepare to be surprised when you stumble across a fascinating subject or find that a class discussion changes your life. At the very least, through your academic work, you will learn to think differently about the world around you and your place in it.
- **Social adjustment.** A new place often equals new people. But in college, those new relationships can have even more meaning. Getting to know professors not only can help you learn more in your classes, but it can also help you figure out what career pathway you want to take and how to get desired internships and jobs. Learning to reduce conflicts during group work or when living with others helps build essential workplace and life skills.

The table Six Areas of Adjustment for First-Year College Students provides a succinct definition for each of the areas as well as examples of how you can demonstrate that you have adjusted. Think about what you have done so far to navigate these transitions in addition to other things you can do to make your college experience a successful one.

<sup>6</sup> Hazard, L., & Carter, S. (2018). A framework for helping families understand the college transition. *E-Source for College Transitions*, 16(1), 13-15.

	Academic	Cultural	Emotional	Financial	Intellectual	Social
What Is It?	Students will take a more active role in their learning than they had to in high and have the ability to meet the increasing demands of change.	Students will interact with others of various cultures, religious beliefs, sexual identities and orientations, ages, and abilities.	Students will need to be prepared for the stressors of college and develop habits and behaviors to cope with these changes.	Students will need to demonstrate basic financial literacy, an understanding of the cost of college, and methods of paying for those costs.	Students will have the opportunity to join an academic community that includes classmates, faculty, support personnel, and administrators.	Students will be faced with shifts in their relationships, finding a new peer group and handling the pressure of fitting in.
Students exhibit it when they:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take an active role in learning.</li> <li>• Attain college-level learning strategies.</li> <li>• Are open to feedback and change.</li> <li>• Make adjustments to learning strategies as needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept and welcome differences in others.</li> <li>• Recognize their own cultural identity.</li> <li>• Seek opportunities to explore other cultures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readily handle the stressors of college life.</li> <li>• Develop emotional coping strategies.</li> <li>• Seek support from campus resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage money independently.</li> <li>• Recognize the costs of college.</li> <li>• Explore job and aid opportunities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in intellectual discussions.</li> <li>• Are open to new ideas, subject areas, and career choices.</li> <li>• Integrate new ideas into belief systems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join a club or organization.</li> <li>• Form supportive, healthy relationships.</li> <li>• Understand the impact of peer pressure.</li> <li>• Manage conflict in relationships.</li> </ul>

**Figure 1.4 Six Areas of Adjustment for First-Year College Students** Based on work by Laurie Hazard, Ed.D., and Stephanie Carter, M.A.

**"Experiencing an intellectual 'a-ha!' moment is one of the most rewarding parts of college, right up there with moving across the graduation stage with a degree in hand."**

### ANALYSIS QUESTION

Which of the six areas of adjustment do you think will be the least challenging for you, and which do you think will be most challenging? What can you do now to prepare for the more challenging transitions?

### WHAT STUDENTS SAY

- How confident are you that your high school and/or work experience have prepared you academically for college?
  - Extremely confident
  - Confident
  - Somewhat confident
  - Not very confident
- When you experience a college-related challenge and are not really sure how to solve it, what best

describes the action you're likely to take?

- a. I will likely persist and persevere until I figure it out.
  - b. I will likely try to solve the problem, but if it is really difficult, I will simply move on to something else.
  - c. I will likely ask my parents or friends for advice.
  - d. I will likely seek help from resources on campus.
3. Rank the following in terms of how much stress you feel in these situations (1 being the least amount of stress and 6 being the most amount of stress):
- a. The amount of work required in all of my courses
  - b. The fact that I know hardly anyone
  - c. My ability to handle all of my obligations
  - d. Making good grades so I can continue to stay in college
  - e. My concern that I may not belong in college
  - f. All of the above are equally stressful

You can also take the anonymous [What Students Say \(https://openstax.org/l/collegesurvey1-5\)](https://openstax.org/l/collegesurvey1-5) surveys to add your voice to this textbook. Your responses will be included in updates.

Students offered their views on these questions, and the results are displayed in the graphs below.

How confident are you that your high school and/or work experience have prepared you academically for college?

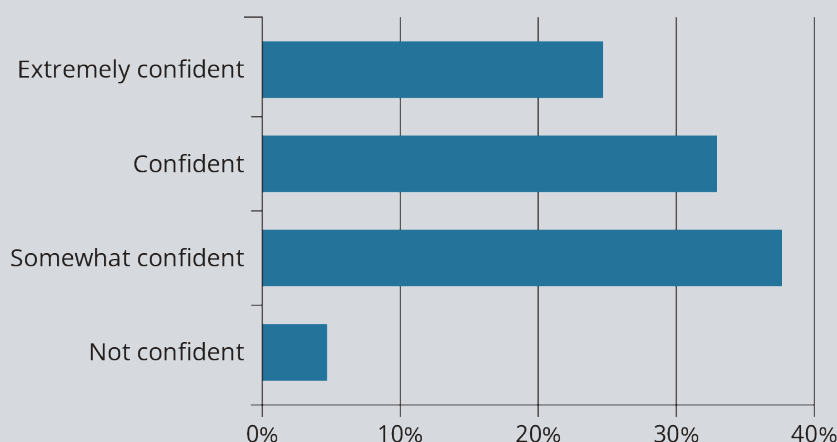


Figure 1.5

When you experience a college-related challenge and are not really sure how to solve it, what best describes the action you're likely to take?

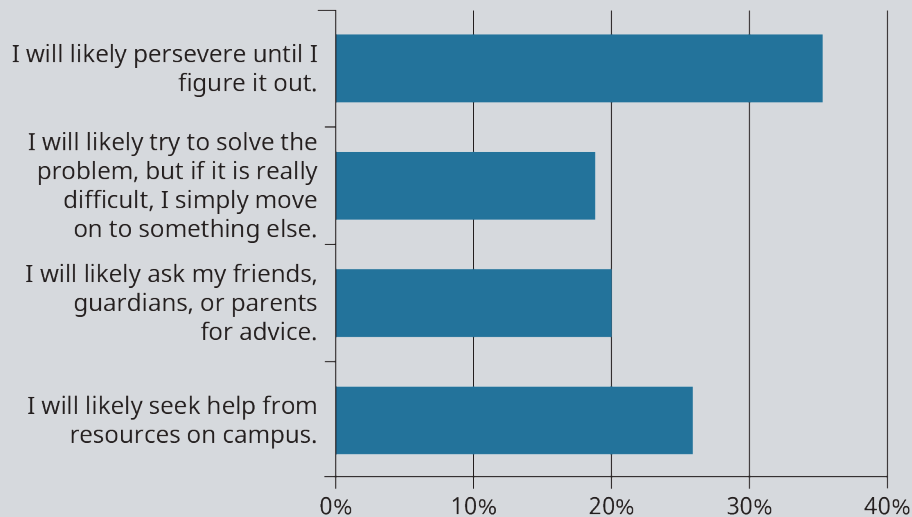


Figure 1.6

Rank the following in terms of how much stress you feel in these situations (1 being the least amount of stress and 6 being the most amount of stress). (Graph displays the percentage of students who ranked the choice highest, indicating the most amount of stress.)

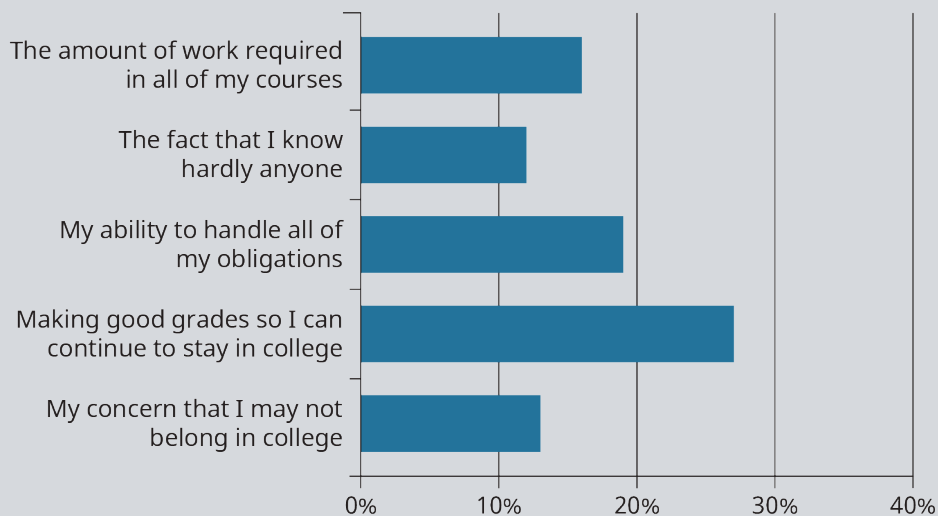


Figure 1.7

### 1.3 College Culture and Expectations

Estimated completion time: 32 minutes.

#### Questions to consider:

- What language and customs do you need to know to succeed in college?
- What is your responsibility for learning in college?
- What resources will you use to meet these expectations?
- What are the common challenges in the first year?

## College Has Its Own Language and Customs

Going to college—even if you are not far from home—is a cultural experience. It comes with its own language and customs, some of which can be confusing or confounding at first. Just like traveling to a foreign country, it is best if you prepare by learning what words mean and what you are expected to say and do in certain situations.

Let's first start with the language you may encounter. In most cases, there will be words that you have heard before, but they may have different meanings in a college setting. Take, for instance, "office hours." If you are not in college, you would think that it means the hours of a day that an office is open. If it is your dentist's office, it may mean Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. In college, "office hours" can refer to the specific hours a professor is in her office to meet with students, and those hours may be only a few each day: for example, Mondays and Wednesdays from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m.

"Syllabus" is another word that you may not have encountered, but it is one you will soon know very well. A syllabus is often called the "contract of the course" because it contains information about what to expect—from the professor and the student. It is meant to be a roadmap for succeeding in the class. Understanding that office hours are for you to ask your professor questions and the syllabus is the guide for what you will be doing in the class can make a big difference in your transition to college. The table on Common College Terms, has a brief list of other words that you will want to know when you hear them on campus.

**Common College Terms, What They Mean, and Why You Need to Know**

Term	What It Means	Why You Need to Know
Attendance policy	A policy that describes the attendance and absence expectations for a class	Professors will have different attendance expectations. Read your syllabus to determine which ones penalize you if you miss too many classes.
Final exam	A comprehensive assessment that is given at the end of a term	If your class has a final exam, you will want to prepare for it well in advance by reading assigned material, taking good notes, reviewing previous tests and assignments, and studying.
Learning	The process of acquiring knowledge	In college, most learning happens <i>outside</i> the classroom. Your professor will only cover the main ideas or the most challenging material in class. The rest of the learning will happen on your own.
Office hours	Specific hours professor is in the office to meet with students	Visiting your professor during office hours is a good way to get questions answered and to build rapport.
Plagiarism	Using someone's words, images, or ideas as your own, without proper attribution	Plagiarism carries much more serious consequences in college, so it is best to speak to your professor about how to avoid it and review your student handbook's policy.

**Table 1.1**

Term	What It Means	Why You Need to Know
Study	The process of using learning strategies to understand and recall information	Studying in college may look different than studying in high school in that it may take more effort and more time to learn more complex material.
Syllabus	The contract of a course that provides information about course expectations and policies	The syllabus will provide valuable information that your professor will assume you have read and understood. Refer to it first when you have a question about the course.

Table 1.1

## ACTIVITY



The language that colleges and universities use can feel familiar but mean something different, as you learned in the section above, and it can also seem alien, especially when institutions use acronyms or abbreviations for buildings, offices, and locations on campus. Terms such as “quad” or “union” can denote a location or space for students. Then there may be terms such as “TLC” (The Learning Center, in this example) that designate a specific building or office. Describe a few of the new terms you have encountered so far and what they mean. If you are not sure, ask your professor or a fellow student to define it for you.

In addition to its own language, higher education has its own way of doing things. For example, you may be familiar with what a teacher did when you were in high school, but do you know what a professor does? It certainly seems like they fulfill a very similar role as teachers in high school, but in college professors’ roles are often much more diverse. In addition to teaching, they may also conduct research, mentor graduate students, write and review research articles, serve on and lead campus committees, serve in regional and national organizations in their disciplines, apply for and administer grants, advise students in their major, and serve as sponsors for student organizations. You can be assured that their days are far from routine. See the Table on Differences between High School Teachers and College Professors for just a few differences between high school teachers and college professors.

## Differences between High School and College Faculty

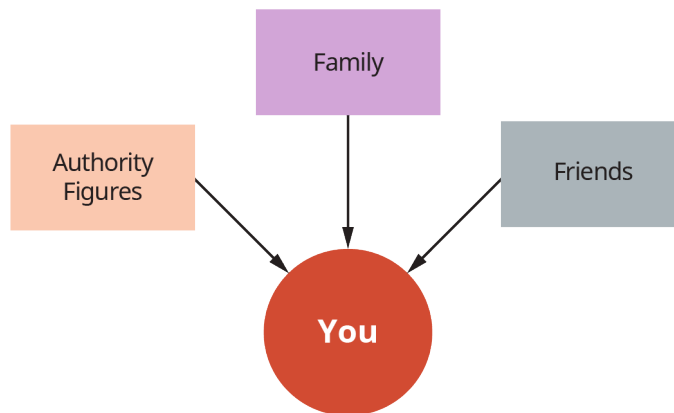
High School Faculty	College Faculty
Often have degrees or certifications in teaching in addition to degrees in subject matter	Most likely have not even taken a course in teaching as part of their graduate program
Responsibilities include maximizing student learning and progress in a wide array of areas	Responsibilities include providing students with content and an assessment of their mastery of the content



High School Faculty	College Faculty
Are available before or after school or during class if a student has a question	Are available during office hours or by appointment if a student needs additional instruction or advice
Communicate regularly and welcome questions from parents and families about a student's progress	Cannot communicate with parents and families of students without permission because of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

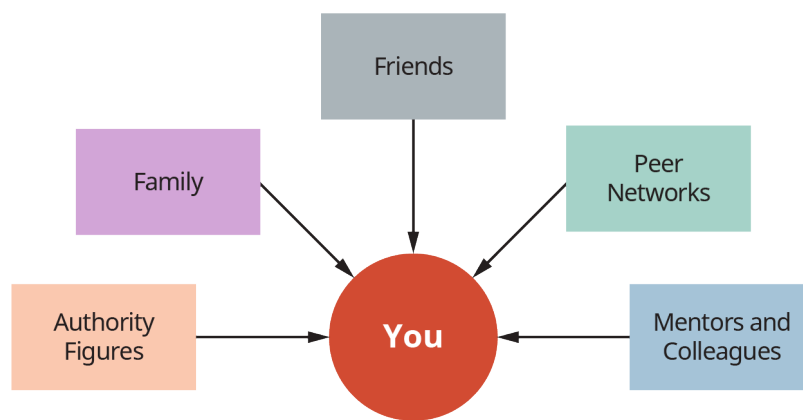
The relationships you build with your professors will be some of the most important ones you create during your college career. You will rely on them to help you find internships, write letters of recommendation, nominate you for honors or awards, and serve as references for jobs. You can develop those relationships by participating in class, visiting during office hours, asking for assistance with coursework, requesting recommendations for courses and majors, and getting to know the professor's own academic interests. One way to think about the change in how your professors will relate to you is to think about the nature of relationships you have had growing up. In Figure 1.X: You and Your Relationships Before College you will see a representation of what your relationships probably looked like. Your family may have been the greatest influencer on you and your development.

**"The relationships you build with your professors will be some of the most important ones during your college career."**



**Figure 1.8** You and Your Relationships Before College.

In college, your networks are going to expand in ways that will help you develop other aspects of yourself. As described above, the relationships you will have with your professors will be some of the most important. But they won't be the only relationships you will be cultivating while in college. Consider the Figure on You and Your Relationships during College and think about how you will go about expanding your network while you are completing your degree.



**Figure 1.9** You and Your Relationships During College

Your relationships with authority figures, family, and friends may change while you are in college, and at the very least, your relationships will expand to peer networks—not friends, but near-age peers or situational peers (e.g., a first-year college student who is going back to school after being out for 20 years)—and to faculty and staff who may work alongside you, mentor you, or supervise your studies. These relationships are important because they will allow you to expand your network, especially as it relates to your career. As stated earlier, developing relationships with faculty can provide you with more than just the benefits of a mentor. Faculty often review applications for on-campus jobs or university scholarships and awards; they also have connections with graduate programs, companies, and organizations. They may recommend you to colleagues or former classmates for internships and even jobs.

Other differences between high school and college are included in the table about Differences between High School and College. Because it is not an exhaustive list of the differences, be mindful of other differences you may notice. Also, if your most recent experience has been the world of work or the military, you may find that there are more noticeable differences between those experiences and college.

**Differences between High School and College**

	High School	College	Why You Need to Know the Difference
Grades	Grades are made up of frequent tests and homework, and you may be able to bring up a low initial grade by completing smaller assignments and bonuses.	Grades are often made up of fewer assignments, and initial low grades may keep you from earning high course grades at the end of the semester.	You will need to be prepared to earn high grades on all assignments because you may not have the opportunity to make up for lost ground.
Learning	Learning is often done in class with the teacher guiding the process, offering multiple ways to learn material and frequent quizzes to ensure that learning is occurring.	Learning happens mostly outside of class and on your own. Faculty are responsible for assigning material and covering the most essential ideas; you are responsible for tracking and monitoring your learning progress.	You will need to practice effective learning strategies on your own to ensure that you are mastering material at the appropriate pace.

**Table 1.2**

	High School	College	Why You Need to Know the Difference
Getting Help	Your teachers, parents, and a counselor are responsible for identifying your need for help and for creating a plan for you to get help with coursework if you need it. Extra assistance is usually reserved for students who have an official diagnosis or need.	You will most likely need help to complete all your courses successfully even if you did not need extra help in high school. You will be responsible for identifying that you need it, accessing the resources, and using them.	Because the responsibility is on you, not parents or teachers, to get the help you need, you will want to be aware of when you may be struggling to learn material. You then will need to know <i>where</i> the support can be accessed on campus or where you can access support online.
Tests and Exams	Tests cover small amounts of material and study days or study guides are common to help you focus on what you need to study. If you paid attention in class, you should be able to answer all the questions.	Tests are fewer and cover more material than in high school. If you read all the assigned material, took good notes in class, and spent time practicing effective study techniques, you should be able to answer all the questions.	This change in how much material and the depth of which you need to know the material is a shock for some students. This may mean you need to change your strategies dramatically to get the same results.

Table 1.2

## Some of What You Will Learn Is “Hidden”

Many of the college expectations that have been outlined so far may not be considered common knowledge, which is one reason that so many colleges and universities have classes that help students learn what they need to know to succeed. The term, which was coined by sociologists,<sup>7</sup> describes unspoken, unwritten, or unacknowledged (hence, *hidden*) rules that students are expected to follow that can affect their learning. To illustrate the concept, consider the situation in the following activity.

### ACTIVITY



Situation: Your history syllabus indicates that, on Tuesday, your professor is lecturing on the chapter that covers the stock market crash of 1929.

This information sounds pretty straightforward. Your professor lectures on a topic and you will be there to hear it. However, there are some unwritten rules, or hidden curriculum, that are not likely to be communicated. Can you guess what they may be? Take a moment to write at least one potential unwritten rule.

1. What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing before attending class?

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<sup>7</sup> P.P. Bilbao, P. I. Lucido, T. C. Iringan and R. B. Javier. (2008). *Curriculum Development*.

2. What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing in class?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What is an unwritten rule about what you should be doing after class?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What is an unwritten rule if you are not able to attend that class?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Some of your answers could have included the following:

*Before class: Read the assigned chapter, take notes, record any questions you have about the reading.*

*During class: Take detailed notes, ask critical thinking or clarifying questions, avoid distractions, bring your book and your reading notes.*

*After class: Reorganize your notes in relation to your other notes, start the studying process by testing yourself on the material, make an appointment with your professor if you are not clear on a concept.*

*Absent: Communicate with the professor, get notes from a classmate, make sure you did not miss anything important in your notes.*

The expectations before, during, and after class, as well as what you should do if you miss class, are often unspoken because many professors assume you already know and do these things or because they feel you should figure them out on your own. Nonetheless, some students struggle at first because they don't know about these habits, behaviors, and strategies. But once they learn them, they are able to meet them with ease.

## Learning Is Your Responsibility

As you may now realize by reviewing the differences between high school and college, learning in college is your responsibility. Before you read about the how and why of being responsible for your own learning, complete the Activity below.

### ACTIVITY



For each statement, circle the number that best represents you, with 1 indicating that the statement is least like you, and 5 indicating that the statement is most like you.

Most of the time, I can motivate myself to complete tasks even if they are boring or challenging.				
1	2	3	4	5
I regularly work hard when I need to complete a task no matter how small or big the task may be.				
1	2	3	4	5
I use different strategies to manage my time effectively and minimize procrastination to complete tasks.				
1	2	3	4	5

Table 1.3

I regularly track my progress completing work and the quality of work I do produce.				
1	2	3	4	5
I believe how much I learn and how well I learn is my responsibility.				
1	2	3	4	5

Table 1.3

Were you able to mark mostly 4s and 5s? If you were even able to mark at least one 4 or 5, then you are well on your way to taking responsibility for your own learning. Let's break down each statement in the components of the ownership of learning:

- **Motivation.** Being able to stay motivated while studying and balancing all you have to do in your classes will be important for meeting the rest of the components.
- **Deliberate, focused effort.** Taking ownership of learning will hinge on the effort that you put into the work. Because most learning in college will take place outside of the classroom, you will need determination to get the work done. And there will be times that the work will be challenging and maybe even boring, but finding a way to get through it when it is not exciting will pay in the long run.
- **Time and task management.** You will learn more about strategies for managing your time and the tasks of college in a later chapter, but without the ability to control your calendar, it will be difficult to block out the time to study.
- **Progress tracking.** A commitment to learning must include monitoring your learning, knowing not only what you have completed (*this is where a good time management strategy can help you track your tasks*), but also the quality of the work you have done.

Taking responsibility for your learning will take some time if you are not used to being in the driver's seat. However, if you have any difficulty making this adjustment, you can and should reach out for help along the way.

## What to Expect During the First Year

While you may not experience every transition within your first year, there are rhythms to each semester of the first year and each year you are in college. Knowing what to expect each month or week can better prepare you to take advantage of the times that you have more confidence and weather through the times that seem challenging. Review the table on First-Year College Student Milestones. There will be milestones each semester you are in college, but these will serve as an introduction to what you should expect in terms of the rhythms of the semester.

First-Year College Student Milestones for the First Semester

August	September	October	November	December
Expanding social circles	Completing first test and projects	Feeling more confident about abilities	Balancing college with other obligations	Focusing on finishing strong
Experiencing homesickness or imposter syndrome	Earning “lower-than-usual” grades or not meeting personal expectations	Dealing with relationship issues	Staying healthy and reducing stress	Handling additional stress of the end of the semester
Adjusting to the pace of college	Learning to access resources for support	Planning for next semester and beyond	Thinking about majors and degrees	Thinking about the break and how to manage changes

**Table 1.4** While each student’s first semester will differ, you will likely experience some of the following typical college milestones.

The first few weeks will be pretty exhilarating. You will meet new people, including classmates, college staff, and professors. You may also be living in a different environment, which may mean that a roommate is another new person to get to know. Overall, you will most likely feel both excited and nervous. You can be assured that even if the beginning of the semester goes smoothly, your classes will get more challenging each week. You will be making friends, learning who in your classes seem to know what is going on, and figuring your way around campus. You may even walk into the wrong building, go to the wrong class, or have trouble finding what you need during this time. But those first-week jitters will end soon. Students who are living away from home for the first time can feel homesick in the first few weeks, and others can feel what is called “imposter syndrome,” which is a fear some students have that they don’t belong in college because they don’t have the necessary skills for success. Those first few weeks sound pretty stressful, but the stress is temporary.

After the newness of college wears off, reality will set in. You may find that the courses and assignments do not seem much different than they did in high school (more on that later), but you may be in for a shock when you get your graded tests and papers. Many new college students find that their first grades are lower than they expected. For some students, this may mean they have earned a B when they are used to earning As, but for many students, it means they may experience their first *failing or almost-failing grades* in college because they have not used active, effective study strategies; instead, they studied how they did in high school, which is often insufficient. This can be a shock if you are not prepared, but it doesn’t have to devastate you if you are willing to use it as a wake-up call to do something different.

By the middle of the semester, you’ll likely feel much more confident and a little more relaxed. Your grades are improving because you started going to tutoring and using better study strategies. You are looking ahead, even beyond the first semester, to start planning your courses for the next term. If you are working while in college, you may also find that you have a rhythm down for balancing it all; additionally, your time management skills have likely improved.

By the last few weeks of the semester, you will be focused on the increasing importance of your assignments and upcoming finals and trying to figure out how to juggle that with the family obligations of the impending holidays. You may feel a little more pressure to prepare for finals, as this time is often viewed as the most stressful period of the semester. All of this additional workload and need to plan for the next semester can



seem overwhelming, but if you plan ahead and use what you learn from this chapter and the rest of the course, you will be able to get through it more easily.

## Don't Do It Alone

Think about our earlier descriptions of two students, Reginald and Madison. What if they found that the first few weeks were a little harder than they had anticipated? Should they have given up and dropped out? Or should they have talked to someone about their struggles? Here is a secret about college success that not many people know: successful students seek help. They use resources. And they do that as often as necessary to get what they need. Your professors and advisors will expect the same from you, and your college will have all kinds of offices, staff, and programs that are designed to help. This bears calling out again: *you need to use those resources*. These are called “help-seeking behaviors,” and along with self-advocacy, which is speaking up for your needs, they are essential to your success. As you get more comfortable adjusting to life in college, you will find that asking for help is easier. In fact, you may become really good at it by the time you graduate, just in time for you to ask for help finding a job! Review the table on Issues, Campus Resources, and Potential Outcomes for a few examples of times you may need to ask for help. See if you can identify where on campus you can find the same or a similar resource.

**Issues, Campus Resources, and Potential Outcomes**

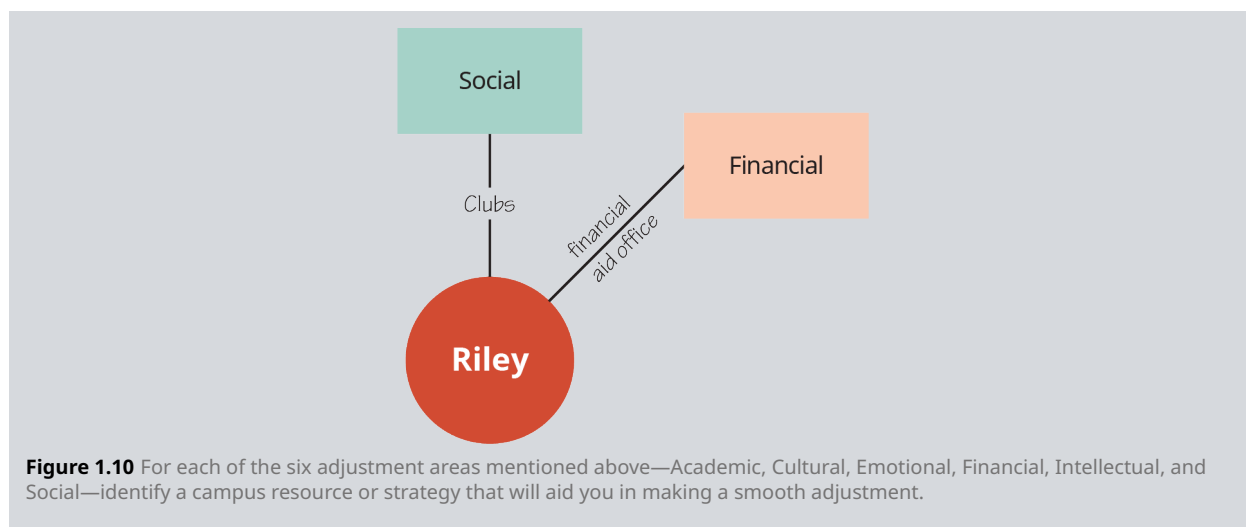
Type	Issue	Campus Resource	Potential Outcome
Academic	You are struggling to master the homework in your math class.	The campus tutoring center	A peer or professional tutor can walk you through the steps until you can do them on your own.
Health	You have felt extremely tired over the past two days and now you have a cough.	The campus health center	A licensed professional can examine you and provide care.
Social	You haven't found a group to belong to. Your classmates seem to be going in different directions and your roommate has different interests.	Student organizations and interest groups	Becoming a member of a group on campus can help you make new friends.
Financial	Your scholarship and student loan no longer cover your college expenses. You are not sure how to afford next semester.	Financial aid office	A financial aid counselor can provide you with information about your options for meeting your college expenses.

**Table 1.5**

### APPLICATION



Using a blank sheet of paper, write your name in the center of the page and circle it. Then, draw six lines from the center (see example in the figure below) and label each for the six areas of adjustment that were discussed earlier. Identify a campus resource or strategy for making a smooth adjustment for each area.



## Common Challenges in the First Year

It seems fitting to follow up the expectations for the first year with a list of common challenges that college students encounter along the way to a degree. If you experience any—or even all—of these, the important point here is that you are not alone and that you can overcome them by using your resources. Many college students have felt like this before, and they have survived—even thrived—despite them because they were able to identify a strategy or resource that they could use to help themselves. At some point in your academic career, you may do one or more of the following:

1. **Feel like an imposter.** There is actually a name for this condition: imposter syndrome. Students who feel like an imposter are worried that they don't belong, that someone will "expose them for being a fake." This feeling is pretty common for anyone who finds themselves in a new environment and is not sure if they have what it takes to succeed. Trust the professionals who work with first-year college students: *you do* have what it takes, and you *will* succeed. Just give yourself time to get adjusted to everything.
2. **Worry about making a mistake.** This concern often goes with imposter syndrome. Students who worry about making a mistake don't like to answer questions in class, volunteer for a challenging assignment, and even ask for help from others. Instead of avoiding situations where you may fail, embrace the process of learning, which includes—is even dependent on—making mistakes. The more you practice courage in these situations and focus on what you are going to learn from failing, the more confident you become about your abilities.
3. **Try to manage everything yourself.** Even superheroes need help from sidekicks and mere mortals. Trying to handle everything on your own every time an issue arises is a recipe for getting stressed out. There will be times when you are overwhelmed by all you have to do. This is when you will need to ask for and allow others to help you.
4. **Ignore your mental and physical health needs.** If you feel you are on an emotional rollercoaster and you cannot find time to take care of yourself, then you have most likely ignored some part of your mental and physical well-being. What you need to do to stay healthy should be non-negotiable. In other words, your sleep, eating habits, exercise, and stress-reducing activities should be your highest priorities.
5. **Forget to enjoy the experience.** Whether you are 18 years old and living on campus or 48 years old starting back to college after taking a break to work and raise a family, be sure to take the time to remind yourself of the joy that learning can bring.

## GET CONNECTED



Which apps help you meet the expectations of college? Will you be able to meet the expectations of being responsible for your schedule and assignments?

- [My Study Life \(https://www.mystudylife.com\)](https://www.mystudylife.com) understands how college works and provides you with a calendar, to-do list, and reminders that will help you keep track of the work you have to do.

How can you set goals and work toward them while in college?

- [The Strides \(https://www.stridesapp.com\)](https://www.stridesapp.com) app provides you with the opportunity to create SMART (Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time bound) goals and track daily habits. These daily habits will add up over time toward your goals.

What can you do to develop your learning skills?

- [Lumosity \(https://www.lumosity.com/en/\)](https://www.lumosity.com/en/) is a brain-training app that can help you build the thinking and learning skills you will need to meet learning challenges in college. If you want to test your memory and attention—and build your skills—take the fit test and then play different games to improve your fitness.

How can you develop networks with people in college?

- [LinkedIn \(https://www.linkedin.com\)](https://www.linkedin.com) is a professional networking app that allows you to create a profile and network with others. Creating a LinkedIn account as a first-year college student will help you create a professional profile that you can use to find others with similar interests.
- [Internships.com \(https://www.internships.com\)](https://www.internships.com) provides information, connections, and support to help your career planning and activities. Even if you are not planning an internship right away, you may find some useful and surprising ideas and strategies to motivate your approach.

## 1.4 How Can This Book And This Course Help?

Estimated completion time: 6 minutes.

### Questions to consider:

- How will you be able to develop your purpose?
- In what ways will you be able to create strategies for your success?
- What other resources can you use to help you succeed?

As Reginald and Madison go through their college experiences and create a balance between their academic and personal lives, their stories, no doubt, will diverge. But you can be assured that each of them will demonstrate grit, the ability to stay focused on a goal over the long-term, along the way. As Duckworth (2016) has said, it takes passion and perseverance to be gritty. It also takes resilience, or the ability to bounce back from adversity. The challenges you face will certainly stretch you, but if you have these three things—purpose, strategies, and resources—you will be more likely to bounce back, even become stronger in the process. This book has been designed with these things in mind.

### Develop Your “Why”

This chapter began with the suggestion to explore why you are in college or, more simply, what your purpose is. This course—and this book—will help you continue to refine your answer and create a map for your journey.

to fulfill your purpose. The features in this book that help you develop your purpose include the following:

- **Student Survey Questions:** Each chapter opens with several questions that provide you with a snapshot on how you feel about the chapter content. How does this feature help you develop purpose? It allows you to develop better self-awareness, which will in turn help you build an awareness of your purpose.
- **Analysis Questions:** These questions are included throughout each chapter. Consider them “pauses” to help you reflect on what you have read and how to incorporate the information into your own journey.

## Refine Your Strategies for Success

Purpose by itself may illuminate the pathway forward, but it will take strategies to help you complete your journey. Think of the strategies you will learn in this course as tools you will need along the way to completing your degree. The following features provide you with an opportunity to practice and refine strategies for success:

- **Application Questions:** Any time you are asked to *apply* what you are learning in the chapters, you are improving your skills. Look for them throughout and take some time to stop, think, and use the skill.
- **Activities:** As you read, you will also have the opportunity to interact with the content. They give you the chance to refine the strategies that will help you succeed in college.
- **Career Connection:** This feature allows you to consider how the skills you are developing for college connect to your future career. Making these connections will help you appreciate the deeper importance of them.

## Use Your Resources

In addition to developing strategies for succeeding in your academic and future professional career, you will find that this course will point out the resources you may need to obtain more tools or refuel your desire to continue along the pathway. No one succeeds at anything by oneself. The features related to resources will certainly help you find ways to fill up your toolkit of information.

- **Get Connected:** Despite its ability to distract us from the work we need to do, technology can help you accomplish your day-to-day tasks with relative ease. This feature offers suggestions for apps and websites that can help you build skills or just keep track of due dates!
- **Where Do You Go from Here?:** The skills and habits you are building now will serve you well in your future endeavors. This feature is designed to help you dig deeper into the chapter content and refine your research skills. It also asks that you find ways to connect what you are learning now to your life and career.

All of these features, in addition to the content, will help you see yourself for who you are and provide opportunities to develop in ways that will make reaching your goal a little easier. Will it be challenging at times? Yes, it will. Will it take time to reflect on those challenges and find better ways to learn and reach your goals? Most definitely. But the effort you put into completing your college degree will result in the confidence you will gain from knowing that anything you set your mind to do—and you work hard for—can be accomplished.



## Summary

This chapter provides an introduction to the transition to college by first asking “Why?” Understanding why you are in college and what a college degree can do for you is the foundation of making a smooth transition. These transitional experiences are part of being in college, and this chapter provides you with information about what to expect and how to handle the changes you will go through. Next, the chapter discusses college culture and how to understand the customs and language of higher education. The chapter ends with resources throughout the text that can help you practice skills and dive deeper into the topics.



## Rethinking

Revisit the questions you answered at the beginning of the chapter, and consider one option you learned in this chapter that might change your answer to them.

1. I am fully aware of the expectations of college and how to meet them.
2. I know why I am in college and have clear goals that I want to achieve.
3. Most of the time, I take responsibility for my learning new and challenging concepts.
4. I feel comfortable working with faculty, advisors, and classmates to accomplish my goals.



## Where do you go from here?

Making the transition into college smoother for you can have long-term benefits. What have you learned about in this chapter that you want to know more about that could help you? Choose topics from the list below or create your own, and then create an annotated bibliography of three to five reliable sources that provide information about your topic.

- What is the long-term value of a college degree?
- What is the “hidden curriculum,” and how can knowing about it help you succeed in college?
- What learning strategies are the most effective?
- What kinds of resources and services do colleges now offer that help students’ personal development?