

## How to Succeed in College--Start with High School

*By Jenn Schatz, Binghamton University senior interning at Newark Valley High School*

For many high school juniors and seniors, this is the season to start thinking about the future. Besides changing leaves and falling temperatures, autumn brings the start of a new school year, and for some students, the beginning of their college searches. It is certainly easy to get caught up in the excitement of college visits, fairs, and meetings, and put high school work on the back burner. However despite the importance of planning ahead, it is crucial during these last two years of high school to focus on schoolwork and develop the necessary study habits that lead to success in college.

What so many teenagers simply aren't told is that getting accepted into a good undergraduate school does not mean they should sit back and rest on their laurels. In order to thrive in a college atmosphere and graduate on time, students need to make the most of high school. Slacking off and developing the all too common "senioritis" makes it much more difficult to adjust to the academic demands of college. Taking a full course load, although not the most relaxing way to spend senior year, is truly a great way to get ahead. By taking complex classes, and learning how to handle a challenging program, students will be better prepared for their freshman year. If given the opportunity, taking college level or advanced placement classes is an excellent way to earn college credits in high school. This is not only wonderful preparation for the future, but also is a lot cheaper than having to pay the full price for each credit at a university. Taking advantage of what your high school has to offer can save considerable money as well as time. In fact, it is possible to place out of some of the freshman introductory courses by doing so. Plus, coming into college with credits may allow you to take a lighter course load freshman year, or take an elective that most first years don't have time for. Many

colleges, especially SUNY's, will look at regents and other standardized test scores to determine placement. Getting an 85 or better on a regents exam can place a student out of a foreign language or math requirement completely.

Making the initial adjustment to college life is extremely important, and knowing that you have met even just one or two of the requirements through your high school curriculum can bring relief and increased confidence. In addition to taking rigorous courses, it is also essential to learn basic study habits and time management skills in high school. College is a time of independence and choice, and for many students, it is the first time to be completely on their own. Learning effective study methods is something each student needs to do for themselves. There are no guidance counselors, parents, or coaches who will monitor your time and homework for you in college. It is your responsibility alone to take initiative and accomplish whatever needs to be done. Those first few weeks of college classes can be a bit confusing, and having already developed a study system that works for you can make the transition that much smoother.

Succeeding in college classes can be made easier by practicing good work habits early on and testing different methods to see which ones are compatible with your lifestyle. Because students usually have only four or five courses each semester, there is greater flexibility in planning a schedule. Knowing the environment that you work best in is important to keep in mind when planning your program for freshman year. Determine whether you work better early in the morning or at night. If you are a morning person, it might make sense to take early classes. Do you work best under pressure or do you need to do things ahead of time? If you know procrastinating makes you stressed and unproductive, try and get things done the week before they are due. Get a planner and

write down all major assignments, and make sure to check it daily. Keeping track of what needs to be done is crucial. Because there are many distractions in the dorms, such as loud music, parties, and meetings, leaving things to the last minute can become quite difficult. Become familiar with the campus library, as it will probably be the only quiet place on campus to do work. Also, think about whether you prefer larger lecture style classes or smaller classes with more individual attention. Figuring out which classes better suite your needs, and what upperclassmen have to say about professors can eliminate a lot of frustration early on. Creating a schedule based on your personal preferences will make it much easier to assimilate into your new college setting.

Although it may sound intimidating and demanding, college truly is a wonderful experience. It is a time to plan for the future, make new friends, and most of all, learn about yourself. There are such a vast number of clubs, activities, social events, teams, Greek organizations and religious groups, that it is almost impossible not to find your niche on any college campus. The sooner you can learn to manage time properly and study effectively, the easier it will be to balance school and a social life and truly enjoy your four years of higher education. Because even though college is designed to increase your academic abilities, it also is about finding a healthy medium between education and leisure that makes you happy. As Robert Fulghum once said, “Be aware of wonder. Live a balanced life - learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day.”