

Seven Habits of Highly Effective College Students:

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The successful completion of a college degree at Florida Tech provides a strong foundation to reach your goals of obtaining a career that will meet a variety of needs (e.g., financial status, self-esteem, personal/academic identity). However, as you advance educationally, the coursework becomes more intensive and demanding of your abilities. Past studies have revealed that intelligence accounts for only approximately 25% of a student's academic performance. A variety of other factors (motivation for learning, persistence in study habits, emotional well-being, interpersonal skills) have been delineated in the research as key determinants of academic success. Unfortunately, these other factors are frequently not acknowledged or remain "mysterious" to many students. The goal of this article is to reduce the mystique surrounding success in college and to provide you with a structure to assist you in succeeding at Florida Tech and in your career following graduation.

1. Develop Your Own Educational Goals

In order to effectively invest your energy and passion into the learning process, you need to develop your own internal goals. By taking responsibility for and "ownership" of your academic goals, your aspirations and strivings become internally generated. If your educational plan is motivated by family demands and expectations, your own investment in the process decreases dramatically. Take some time to reflect and self-examine why you have enrolled at Florida Tech, why you have chosen a certain academic major, and how this major will help you to meet your long term goals. If through this process you determine that your educational goals are passionately your own, not someone else's, these goals will result in a vital and powerful academic attitude. If they are not your own, initiate a process of educational/career exploration to develop your own passion and internally-guided focus.

2. Become an Active Participant In Your Education:

In order to succeed academically, you must take on an active, dynamic role in your educational journey. Successful students recognize that their choices and efforts will result in control of their academic destinies. "Becoming active" extends beyond your choice of a college major. Active participation includes interacting with professors, teaching assistants, classmates, and more importantly, participating in the classroom environment. Active classroom participation results in the improvement of grades without increasing study time. Actively listen, question, think, take notes, and be in charge of your learning experience. By actively processing the information that you are taking in, you lay down extensive memory tracks that improve your understanding and retention of the material. If you fail to do this in the classroom, the amount of study time required outside of the class to learn the material will increase dramatically. The choice in this process is clearly yours.

3. Develop Effective Study and Work Habits:

As you leave high school and enter college, you will find that your work demands will increase, time availability will decrease, and any "structure" previously provided by family and school will decrease. Problems can arise when you are required to impose your own structure on your

education and associated demands. Successful college students develop efficient note-taking habits, time management/organizational skills, as well as overall study skills. Successful students realize that dividing their work and studying into regular, manageable periods of time is far more effective than “cramming” for exams.

4. Understand How Your Feelings and Emotions Affect the Learning Process:

Your attitude towards the learning process, in and out of the classroom, will often become a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you approach a project or task with a bored, disinterested, or closed mind, then you will likely have difficulty investing positive energy into the learning process. Challenge your negative beliefs and preconceptions regarding a course, class project, or a professor. Even the most mundane or insignificant event or project may become more meaningful to you at a later point. When you feel disinterested in the classroom, make a conscious effort to “act as if” you are interested. Make eye contact with your lecturer, interact with “alert” body language, ask questions, and take notes. If you find that a “roadblock” exists in your learning process, step back and examine the potential negative feelings or emotions that are contributing to this block and are causing you to “tune out”.

5. Accurately Assess Your Strengths and Weaknesses

Successful students view their time in college as a period of transition. You will be much more successful in college if you have realistic expectations for yourself and if you set reasonable and timely goals for your academic performance. You will want to be careful not to overload yourself with work. Every person has a different limit as to how many hours he or she can handle in one semester, and you must discover what your personal limit is. You will also want to know which classes required by your major are usually the most difficult and demand the most time and effort. Successful students try not to take all of their tough courses during the same semester. It is also good to be open to any constructive criticism that you receive from your professors. It is important that you do not become defensive or view their suggestions as personal attacks. Their feedback is usually meant to be helpful and to point out your strengths, as well as areas for possible improvement. It is always a good idea to follow up on any remediation that your professors recommend. Finally, you may want to take a self-inventory to assess your personal development. Ask yourself: “What qualities do I need to succeed in my chosen field and in my personal life?” and “How can I develop these qualities in myself?” The answers to these questions will take you a long way toward achieving your goals.

6. Develop a Respectful Working Relationship with Your Professors

Successful students view their professors as working partners and not as “the enemies.” Believe it or not, most professors want exactly what you want: They would like you to learn the material presented in class, earn a good grade, and grow intellectually and emotionally. Yes, your professors are the ones who eventually evaluate your work, but they can also be available to you in a variety of capacities. Most professors are happy to supply you with extra references, discuss complex issues that may be confusing you, or help guide your intellectual and emotional development, in general. You have a great deal of control over what kind of relationship you will have with faculty members. Remember, professors have many students in their classes, so you may need to be the one who takes the initiative in developing this type of mentoring relationship with a faculty member.

7. Become Involved In University Life at Florida Tech

Successful students will recognize that their involvement in university life is just as important as classroom attendance, taking exams, and preparing reports. Becoming involved in student organizations and groups will provide you with ample opportunities to develop leadership skills and to relate to peers, adults, and your campus community. The interpersonal skills gained through such involvement are highly desirable and are transferable to future career positions and activities. On a more personal level, your involvement in university life can be invaluable when you encounter personal or academic problems. If you have made a commitment to people or organizations on campus, you are more likely to try harder to overcome your problems. Your involvement in your college community can provide you with a base of support to draw from when you are feeling overwhelmed.