

**Achieving Academic Success
At Colgate University**

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Associate Dean of the College
For Administrative Advising, Retired**

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Introduction

Over a 35 year career in Student Affairs at Colgate University, I met with thousands of undergraduate students in my role as a dean of students and Administrative Dean to an assigned caseload of up to 1,000 students per year. Many of these students came to me seeking advice on how to improv s

- First, not all of the material that a student needs to know is covered in the readings and other assignments.

Further, faculty tend to test students on things that they believe are important, and these items are usually stressed in class lectures. Murphy's Law will suggest that a

taking the class seriously.

Prepare adequately for quizzes, exams, and other graded exercises

. If your professor uses Moodle or some other electronic interface, and/or has a class website, bookmark your computer browser and check these sites often for any changes in assignments, due dates etc. Then review all of your readings, notes and other material over a period of days leading up to the quiz or exam. “Review” literally means “see again” (rather than seeing the first time on the eve of a graded exercise!)

If the exercise will be in the form of essays, review the material looking for general concepts or ideas that you can weave into a narrative that you can support with specific facts and events. If the quiz or exam is going to be objective (true/false, multiple choice, identification or short answer, etc.) review the material looking for specifics with less regard for general concepts.

After you have completed your individual exam preparation, organize a study group of classmates. Agree to meet for an hour or so on the eve of the exam and agree to come to the review session with several questions that each student believes will be covered on the exam. When you meet, compare your questions. Where these questions overlap, there is a high

low grade on assignment with the comment: “This is ‘A’ material but I had to mark it down to a ‘C’ because of lateness.” If you have a valid reason to seek an extension (illness, family emergency etc.) request the extension the deadline comes due as professors are usually more inclined to approve an extension before the fact rather than after the fact. In some cases, the professor may refer

Procrastination generates an inordinate amount of stress for college students and may well be a student's primary time management challenge. Learning how to prevent procrastination is one of the most important life skills that can be achieved during the college years.

Take advantage of help and guidance offered by professors

Most Colgate faculty offer generous office hours and other opportunities to meet one-on-one with students seeking assistance. Some faculty also allow students to submit work in draft form and others may offer review sessions before mid-term and final examinations.

Always attend a professor's review sessions because the professor will usually indicate where to focus your review efforts and may note with favor that you made the effort to attend the session. Also check for on-line review sessions that the professor may post.

Devote enough time to the task

There are 168 hours in a seven day week, plenty of time to do your work and still have an enjoyable college experience. A typical class meets three or four times per week for about an hour per class session. Not counting labs, this means that the typical student has somewhere between 12 and 16 contact hours per week. Most faculty believe that students need to devote somewhere between two and three

Find an optimum place to study

Most successful students report that

(TV, computer games, friends popping in and out etc.) Consequently, it may be worth the effort to throw the materials you need into a backpack, leave your residence and find a less distracting area to do your work. The area should be well lit, not too cold or hot and offer a desk or study carrel where you can sit and do your reading and other class preparation work. Of the students I surveyed, the top study areas included the study carrels in the stacks of Case Geyer Library, the atrium of the Ho Center, or anywhere in the Cooley

Physiological factors

Sleep. Somewhere between seven and eight hours of sleep per night seems to be the optimum for most students

and ward off illness. While regular exercise helps a student sleep better, exercising too late at night may make it difficult to wind down and go to sleep at a desired time.

Alcohol and other drugs Alcohol (legal if you are 21 or older) and marijuana (not legal in New York State at any age) are the two main drugs of choice for college students.

illnesses with their classmates. Unless there are valid medical reasons to the contrary, get the meningitis vaccine before coming to college and get an annual influenza inoculation. Be sure your other doctor-recommended inoculations are current. If you are sexually active, adhere to established safe-sex practices to avoid sexually transmitted diseases or an unwanted pregnancy. Try hard to avoid contact with sick classmates and don't share eating utensils or cups under any conditions. Wash your hands frequently to avoid the most common cause of disease transmission. If you do become ill go to Student Health Services for proper diagnosis and treatment. Similarly, contact Counseling and Psychological Services if you have any mental health or emotional concerns that may be hindering your general sense well-being and/or academic achievement.

Have some fun!

. The college years are a wonderful opportunity to try new things and to develop new interests and hobbies. Successful students socialize, participate in sports or other enjoyable activities and have learned

- The staff at Student Health Services
- The staff at Counseling and Psychological Service
- Academic Department Offices (that often offer tutorial assistance)
- The staff of the Case/Geyer and Cooley Science Libraries
- The staff of the Shaw Wellness Institute

(Revised, 2015)