Elements of Success

Success in all of its forms and varieties is a goal of every student who enrolls at the University. However, wanting to succeed and doing what is necessary to succeed are two very different things. This section details suggestions and ideas about how to bridge the gap between desiring and actually achieving success. We encourage you to read and make use of the ideas presented, because they are only as helpful as you make them. There are no quick fixes; no easy answers.

The first step in succeeding at something is realizing that wanting to succeed is just the starting place. Additional factors in any successful college experience include: (1) attitude about school and life; (2) prior academic experience and ability; (3) ability to effectively manage time and to discipline one's self; (4) ability to relate to and get along with others; and, (5) the learning environment.

ATTITUDE
Attitude is a combination of thoughts and feelings. Much of a student's attitude about college is determined by how and why the student chose to be here and how he or she feels about that choice. Some students find themselves in college but are not aware how they arrived at the decision to attend. Do you want to be here? Are you in school because someone said you had to come? Enrolling in college because someone else said you should may motivate you to enroll, but won't necessarily enable you to succeed. In order to succeed, you need to have your own reasons for attending; you need to "own" the decision to come to school.

There are many different (but no right) reasons for attending college. Some students pursue a degree in order to get a good job or to advance into a higher position in their current job. Others come to school for social reasons—high school was fun, so college will be even more fun! Some would rather go to school than work full-time. Others find it an easy way to move away from home and have their parents or others pay for it! Some students decide on a college education because they love learning and see college as an opportunity to pursue that love.

The reasons for choosing to go to college are as limitless as the persons attending. Reasons for attending also change over time as events and circumstances unfold. Be reflective, visit with yourself from time to time about why you are at USU. Are those reasons being fulfilled? What are you doing to fulfill them?

The thing to remember is that when the days are long and the nights are short, your attitude about school will determine how hard you are willing to work to make it work!

EXPERIENCE AND ABILITY
Prior academic experience and ability play an important role in success at USU. Students who arrive at the University with a strong academic background have an advantage. New ideas are more quickly assimilated when they can be associated with prior knowledge. Don't rest on your laurels, however, because professors expect a lot.

This is not to say that a lack of prior strong academic experience prohibits success, but it will take greater commitment and hard work to catch on in some of your classes. It is also a fairly common experience for "average" high school students to "catch fire" in the stimulating environment of the university.

Prior academic experience includes knowledge of basic learning and life skills. Do you know how to
study, how to manage time, how to set goals, and how to communicate effectively? Many students come to college unaware of the need for these skills. They register for classes, buy their books, attend the first day of class, and begin to “study.” They are quickly disillusioned with the university and their own abilities, as the old habits that worked in high school don’t seem to be working now, and the work piles higher and higher, while the probability of success sinks lower and lower.

Success is not a matter of studying more or studying harder, it is a matter of studying smarter. An average student in high school will probably need to work harder and smarter to be an average student in college. College is definitely more difficult than high school, and success in high school does not necessarily ensure success in college. Taking the time to learn some study strategies that are applicable in all of your classes is time well-spent.

Experiences are dynamic. Periodically take the time to stop and reflect on yours. What's going right? Wrong? What can you do to sustain or alter the experiences you are having at USU?

**SELF-DISCIPLINE**

Self-discipline and effective time management are vital keys to success. Students who are self-disciplined are better able to handle the increased freedom that comes with college. One of the first things that is discovered about university life is that in many classes attendance is not required. Unfortunately, some students interpret this to mean that attendance is not important. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Skipping class is a poor strategy for achieving success. Having decided to enroll at Utah State University and after having paid the tuition, deciding not to attend class is counter-productive and costly!

Self-discipline includes taking care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally. Many of these issues, including resources and ways to enhance and improve existing strategies for self-discipline and effective time management, are discussed in the Connections course.

**INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**

Another very important part of success at any university is the ability to relate to and get along with other people. This includes roommates, friends, other students, faculty, and family. Although satisfactory progress toward a degree is measured in grades, the sense of well-being and accomplishment may well be measured by the ability to make friends, relate to classmates, and interact with faculty.

Having significant people who support you in your decision to attend college is a big help in your success at the university. These are the people who remind you of your commitment and encourage you to continue on with your plans when you are tired and discouraged. They are the same people who share in your accomplishments and your success. These people comprise an important part of your support network. Although they cannot make you succeed, they can remind you of your goals and even help lighten some of the burden you carry. Recognize their support.

**ENVIRONMENT**

Finally, success in college is determined by the learning environment, which includes defining and setting-up an area for studying. By following a few basic suggestions, a supportive study environment can be created. Studying in the same place at the same time can be used as a signal to tell roommates and yourself that you are studying.
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Your learning environment also includes campus and community resources. The university has an entire division called Student Services whose function it is to serve and support students. Many of Logan City’s community resources are also available to students. The Chamber of Commerce is a good reference for information on the local community and surrounding area.

In summary, the university defines a successful college student as one who is making satisfactory progress towards his or her educational goals. The rate of progress (time it takes) and the qualitative measurement of that progress (grades received) are determined by individual circumstances. Understanding the factors that impact on that success—attitude, prior academic experience, self-discipline, relations with others, and the working/studying environment—helps to bridge the gap between wanting success and achieving success.