

BETSY: What are the key things to keep in mind as you begin your college career?

JOHN: Well, do better than I did, that's for sure. And if you take the advice you get in this course, you will do much better than I did. Very simply, Woody Allen is believed to have said that 80% of success is simply showing up. So you need to show up. Even if you can record classes that you miss, it's not the same as being there. So going to class.

Secondly, you've got to get help. And this is very hard for some people to do. To acknowledge that they need it, or they think it may be invasive, or they may have to pay for it. And no, it's not going to violate your privacy. And it's free. You've got to get assistance. One thing we know is that the best students, the highest performing students, are more likely to go get help than the students who need it the most. So we've got to get more students getting help.

Spending time with outstanding students, upper class students, the ones that have figured out how to play this game. You have to do that. You've got to join something. You've got to be a member of at least one group. If I could choose any group that would be most influential, it's a study group. There's very compelling research that getting in groups with other students preparing for exams is very, very adaptive and helpful.

Going early in your college experience to a career center and taking some of the testing inventories, getting those interpreted, learning about how people go about planning career decision making. Finding a good academic advisor. You've got to have chemistry with your adviser. And you have a right to change advisers and keep searching for an adviser until you get the one that you really click with.

We know that students who go see professors outside of class are influenced in a number of very important ways. So try and do that. Another suggestion would be to take this college success class very seriously. If you practice what we're trying to teach you in this course, the evidence is overwhelming that you are going to be more successful than students who did not take this course and who did not apply the lessons of this course.

Go your tutoring center, your academic support center. Get that form of help. If you have to work, and of course, most of us do, don't work more than 20 hours a week. And if possible, work on campus. There's a lot of good research that's found that students who work on campus stay enrolled longer and are more likely earn degrees.

When we interview the most successful students, we do focus groups with them, we ask them, what's your number one success strategy, they tell us two words-- time management. And time management is a skill. There are lots of tricks to the trade. You'll learn that in this course. You've got to develop your own system on time management.

Getting more sleep, proper dietary habits, moderating alcohol, no tobacco, getting exercise-- those all make a difference on academic performance. And so we need to think about those too. So in a word, this all comes down to your choices.

You make lots of choices every day. What time you get up, if you have breakfast, how much do you eat, what you eat, how much you study, with whom do you study, who do you spend time with, how do you allocate childcare, housework, commuting time, all of that. When you get a handle on managing that, and literally, you take more control of your life, you will be more successful academically.

Obviously, ladies and gentlemen, I recognize that some of our students, they're not living on trust funds. They have to work a great deal to make ends meet. So if you have to work more than 15 to 20 hours a week, ideally, you need a partnership. You need a partnership with your significant other, your partner, your children, your roommates. You've got to negotiate fair division of time so that they let you have the time you need to do what you need to do.

Just like the students who don't have to work, you've got to develop a time management system. You've got to organize that. You have to use an electronic or a paper calendar. You have to schedule yourself. You have to monitor your time. You have to actually do time inventories. You can't control your time until you see how you're actually spending it.

So in this course, we're going to have a lot of strategies about time management. And even larger than that, self management. Going along with time management is the management of your energy. And we've all only got limited quantities and qualities of energy. And you leverage energy, again, by what you eat, and how much you sleep, and how you take care of your body. And those are examples of other skills over the decisions about how you use the time that determine how effective you are in your overall life management, time management, energy management.

BETSY:

John, I'd like to add that if students who find that they really must work many hours, more hours than the recommended 20, that they consider cutting back the number of courses that

they're trying to take in any given term. Now, I know there may financial aid implications to that. So you have to be careful to take enough hours so that you can continue to qualify for financial aid if you're dependent on that. But it makes a great deal of sense not to overload your schedule.

Also, another idea is to try to find ways to link what you're learning in class with what you're learning on the job. And especially if you're taking a psychology class, you may find situations in the workplace that remind you of strange and unusual behavior on the job. And so any time you can make a connection between what you're learning in the classroom and what's happening to you on the job, I think it will make your education and your work more meaningful.

JOHN:

Betsy, I would like to do a point counterpoint here. I think the strategy you just suggested is most appropriate for some students. But from all the research that's been done on the relationship between how many credit hours you take and the time it takes you to earn a degree, one thing we're very clear on. And that is, the more rapidly you accumulate college credits towards a degree, the more likely you are ever to receive that degree.

And that's an argument. I'm going to say something my father would never have said to me and I didn't used to say to students. But there's evidence that there is value to borrowing money to increase the number of credit hours you take so that you finish college faster. It's a kind of way of saying better living through debt.

And I know debt terrifies me, even at my advanced point in life. And debt is something we all should be concerned about. But if your goal is degree completion as soon as possible, you do need to consider the merits of borrowing more money to take more credits to finish sooner.

BETSY:

John, another strategy for students to consider is summer school. And we know that students who actually go to summer school at some point in their undergraduate years-- it doesn't have to be before the first year, or even after the first year, but at some point-- are more likely, ultimately, to graduate. So a strategy to make more progress more quickly is to just go to college or university, essentially, 12 months a year.

And believe me, it's not as unbearable as it may sound. In fact, I went to summer school between my first and second year. And that's what turned me around. After my first year, my summer school experience told me that, in fact, I could make an A. OK, it was just one A, but I could make an A. And that really gave me the confidence to come back and do much better

my second year.

INTERVIEWER: So John has some great suggestions. Betsy, tell us what your key takeaways are as you begin your college career.

BETSY: Well, I think I would challenge students to take advantage of very early opportunities to meet people who are different. If they have come to college with high school friends, again, I would suggest that they make a pact with their high school friends to all go out and meet new people and expand their networks.

Another, I think, really, really important strategy for getting off to a good start is to go to class and be there on time. And to make sure that you have everything you need. If they haven't bought their books in the first day or two, they need to be sure that by the end of the first week, they have all their books and all the materials they need.

And there is no excuse for forgetting a class or sleeping through a class. In fact, there's no excuse for missing a class at all unless you're sick. Remember, and tell your students, that at this point in their lives, going to college is their job. And it's actually a job that they're paying for. And depending on what kind of tuition they're paying, they could be paying several hundred dollars for every class they take, or every class they miss.

Also, students need to be aware of drop/add dates, the dates that they can either drop a class that's just really not appropriate for them or add a class, again, understanding financial aid implications. And of course, to understand what's going on with drop/add dates, they need to check in with their academic advisor.

Another piece of advice for students is not to be afraid of their instructors, and to remember that the instructors are actually at the college or university because the students are there. And students will find some instructors are very introverted. And students may believe that the instructors just don't like them. But actually, that's probably not the truth at all. But to be sure to take advantage of office hours.

Finally, to keep up with their work. To study some at least six days a week. That may sound hard. I think you do need a day off. But to study some amount at least six days a week.