
The 10 Things you Need to Start doing for Guaranteed Success in College

Tuesday, 27 March 2012

Today's featured guest writer is Isa Adney, author of *Community College Success: How to Finish with Friends, Scholarships, Internships and the Career of Your Dreams*. She is a \$110,000 Jack Kent Cooke scholarship winner, the first in her family to graduate with a Bachelor's degree, and will complete her M.Ed this June. Isa is also a national college speaker.

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Know any recent college grads having trouble finding work? Any who are still living at home or working an hourly job in food or retail? It's more common than you might think. This is the reality nowadays as the job market is a tough one and getting a degree alone just isn't enough anymore.

You have to do more if you want to succeed in college and beyond.

The good news is doing more is actually fun and will make your college experience memorable, exciting, and worthwhile.

The choices you make in college really can have a tremendous effect on the course of your life. College is the one investment you have the most control over. It is up to you how much you choose to be involved in it and how engaging you make the whole experience. You have control as to how much you want to get out of it, and if you do this right, you will reap the benefits for years to come.

Success in college is more than just going to class and getting good grades. To get ahead, you need to get more out of the experience. The energy level required for a successful college experience is intense, but with the proper dedication you can take advantage of all that is available to you on a college campus.

If you are currently in college, you need an action plan for success. You need to separate yourself from your peers by making the most of your time there. Print this list out and check it against what you're doing right now. Fulfilling each task will solidify your college experience and set you up for post-college success.

Your time in college is limited, so it is imperative you make the right choices. Follow these 10 steps to guide yourself towards a successful college experience.

1. Make new friends in class

The key word here is new. It's easy and comfortable to stick to the same crowd – and in many ways it's wonderful to have that solid group of support. However, it is important that you expand your social horizons in college.

Up until college, most of us have lived our entire lives in our small bubble of high school, interacting with people who, though they may have seemed wildly different, were generally very similar (e.g. lived in the same place, often of similar

socio-economic status, etc.).

It's vital to step outside your comfort zone and get to know new people. They will open your mind and help you become a more well-rounded student who is able to understand a variety of perspectives. (Making new friends is also important if you find yourself currently surrounded by negative people. The friends you have rub off on you more than you realize.)

2. Sit in the front row of every class

I once heard that if you didn't change anything about your study habits but simply started sitting in the front row, your grades would improve. I believe it. The best way to know? Try it out. In short, the professor will notice you, it will be much more difficult to zone out, and you might just find yourself being much more engaged.

3. Visit the career center often

It's vital to figure out what major and career interests you the most as soon as possible. Having direction will give new life to your college experience. The best way to find this out is through your college's career center. Take all the career tests they have. Read at least three books about career discovery. Do a resume review. The career center is one of the most underutilized resources in college and yet it is one of the most valuable.

4. Get a professorial mentor

Professors know the college landscape better than anyone, and getting to know one very well will help you manage the college world and possibly get nominated for awards and opportunities you would never have known about otherwise.

Get to know all of your professors and ask them for help in class; then, meet more often with and ask advice of the one you feel you connect with the most. My professorial mentor helped me win over \$5,000 in awards, helped me get free trips to New Orleans and England, and nominated me to be the commencement speaker. Professors you know well will also be able to write you killer recommendation letters.

5. Be a leader in a club

Being a part of clubs is crucial to expand your social network and your professional skills. However, being a leader is where the real magic happens. When you're a leader, you have an important stake in something. It feels great to see how much others rely on you, and what you can accomplish as a team. Club leadership positions are also very important to helping you win scholarships – and they look great on resumes for internships and jobs. Leaders in clubs also often get to travel to amazing conferences.

6. Do something you never thought you could do

College offers many opportunities that often only a handful of students take advantage of because the others are too scared, too apathetic, or too wrapped up in the day-to-day to make a big leap.

Study abroad. Join a club that scares you. Go on a road trip with friends. Start a small business. Go on a service trip. Skydive. Speak publicly. Be the president of a large club.

Whatever it is that you don't actually think you could do because you couldn't afford it or don't have the skills – just do it! These are the experiences that make college incredible, and offer astounding personal growth. For me, those experiences included joining a college dance team, traveling to England, being president of a club, and presenting a research paper in New Orleans. I was scared of every single one, and yet they changed me for the better.

7. Get a professional mentor

The entire third section of Community College Success is dedicated to teaching you how to find professional mentors that will change your life. As the first in my family to graduate college, the professional world was daunting. Professional mentors helped ease me into the transition, gave me invaluable advice, and led me to job opportunities. Ask professionals who have jobs that interest you for their advice. You'd be amazed at who will talk to you, and where it will lead.

8. Get a fascinating internship

Internships can open doors and help you learn about the professional world more than anything else. Whether it is paid or unpaid, in a large company you'd die to work for or a small start-up, find one that fascinates you. Get an internship doing something or being very close to something you really, really want to do with your life. This is where internships have the most benefit, because you'll have the opportunity to see if it's something you actually want to do. It will either show you the career is not what you expected it to be, or it will give you a great experience and contacts in the career you want to go into.

9. Write down your goals

Writing down your goals changes everything. It feels like magic. That magical feeling comes from the incredible results of being focused. The most common thread in all successful college students I've ever met is the ability to focus.

When you write down your goals and read them every day, your mind is suddenly focused on what you need to do that day and what opportunities to seize in order to make those goals a reality. Write down your goals today and put them all over your room. Trust me.

10. Develop a morning routine

One of the most transformative things I did when I had to manage writing a book, having a full-time job, and getting a Master's degree was developing a morning routine that helped me focus every single day. When we start the day rushed, we will have a hurried, seemingly unproductive day. Develop a morning routine that works for you, doing things such as journaling, reading your goals, eating a healthy breakfast, reading a non-fiction book, etc. You can read more about my current morning routine on my blog.

If you're the kind of person who reads Campus Grotto and reads a post like this to the end, I know you are the kind of amazing college student who will find great success. You are the kind of student who looks for more, is willing to rise above the norm, and will take action on everything you've read above. Thank you for investing in yourself and for sharing your talents with the world through your education.

You can connect with Isa on Facebook, Twitter, her speaking website, and her blog. You can also get the first chapter of her book for free instantly.