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Tips for Success

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By Tyler Wegleitner

The beginning of the school year can present numerous social and academic challenges. However, everyone should have the opportunity to be successful at completing their education.

Here are eight tips for success from Melissa Carpenter, director of foundations for student success at Mesa Community College.

1. MANAGE YOUR TIME

All college students should create a time management plan to stay organized and be successful. Carpenter said this is one of the most important things students can do to prevent future problems.

"I think that the biggest issue that I see freshmen facing is time management to make sure that they align the way they've allocated their time with the expectations of the professors," she says.

Carpenter says there are many ways to manage time, from planners and smartphone apps to websites and online calendars.

2. FORM A STUDY GROUP

"This is something that a lot of students at the community college don't take advantage of, but it's forming a study group," Carpenter says.

She recommends having study groups for each class, as these can be extremely helpful for difficult classes and subjects.



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"Your program of study is so unique and there's so many different math levels or science courses you might be involved in so I would definitely recommend that would be on a class-by-class basis and some subjects will lend themselves better to study groups than others," she says.

There are many types of study groups to accommodate various schedules. These can range from informal group chats to weekly meetings with set times and dates. Virtual study groups can also accommodate busier schedules.

3. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FREE TUTORING AT YOUR COLLEGE

Carpenter said all students should utilize free tutoring services provided by their college. Not only can alternative options be expensive, they also may not be tailored to your class, school or professor.

"The advantage of using internal tutoring services is that the tutors have more familiarity with the actual teachers their curriculum and their approaches," she says.

Some colleges also offer online assistance and tutoring services.

4. VISIT PROFESSORS DURING OFFICE HOURS

Students should also visit their professors during office hours to ask for help and to build meaningful relationships with their educators.

"It's one of the best steps they can take," Carpenter says. "Professors are human, and they care about students. They're concerned about how students are learning and they want to be available to help students."

She says office hours can be very helpful for students who may not have the confidence to ask questions in class. Building relationships with professors and staff may eventually lead to other opportunities.

5. GET INVOLVED

In addition to prioritizing classes, Carpenter says students should "get involved in at least one college club, organization or activity." Students can embrace a sense of belonging and will start to connect with like-minded people.

"There's a lot of enrichment and personal development that can come through interacting with peers, staff members, club advisors and faculty through these different mechanisms," Carpenter says. "It could be related to their career or program of study."

6. HOLD YOURSELF ACCOUNTABLE

Students should hold themselves accountable by making sure they complete assignments. Students should find someone to help them do so.

"Make sure you have someone you're accountable to, so it could be a family member, it could be a significant other, it could be a student in your class," Carpenter says. "But you need to have someone you're reporting back to, this will make you feel like you're not just on your own."

She recommends setting goals with this person and keeping them updated on any progress.

7. ASK FOR HELP

College can be difficult in many ways, and students shouldn't be afraid to ask for help. There are many resources available, and students should be taking advantage of them. These resources extend beyond academic help.

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“A lot of colleges have people that donate food and students can go and pick up something every week to take care of that need,” Carpenter says. “Or they don’t have a bus pass, and we might have some bus passes that we can give out for a very inexpensive rate.”

8. MANAGE STRESS AND ANXIETY

One critical thing to remember is the importance of mental health. Students should find ways to manage stress and anxiety that may develop throughout the school year.




“There are physiological reasons why your body reacts to moments of stress and that can be a negative thing, or it could also be positive for your performance,” Carpenter says.

She said it is important to have a positive mindset, so utilize the available resources, from counseling services to breathing exercises and smartphone apps. **CT**

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