

Three Tips for Students to Achieve College Success and Long-term Success

By Trung Le

Academic-Services.com

Saturday, October 11, 2008

Many students dread college because they see it as only a means to help them achieve a future career, and therefore they will not see an immediate return in their investment at the present time. Other concerns for many college students are that many do not know what they should major in, what four-year university they should attend, and how to motivate themselves to achieve academic excellence during their college years to help them achieve success in their future careers and in life. This article offers three fundamental and important tips for college students to help them achieve academic success and to enjoy their academic career while preparing while preparing them for their future careers.

The first advice is for students to clearly recognize their end goals in life and how their academic career will help them achieve these goals. The second is to take the time to discover and pursue their passions. The third is aiming not only for excellent grades, but to aim for academic prestige as well.

Keep the end goal in mind

The majority of students dread going back to school each year. Why is this the case? It is due to the mentality that a college education is primarily a means to an end, and that end is to use a college degree to obtain a stable and good paying career. What students really want is the money to obtain the “good life” – to have a nice car, to have a nice home in a decent neighborhood, to take vacations abroad, to be able to pay the necessary bills (like food, housing, insurance), to support a future family, and many other things that are part of the “good life”. Life cost money, and to achieve the ultimate life in which people can fulfill their human potential will cost even more.

When students fully realize their end goals in life, they will take education much more seriously, rather than having the mentality of “wanting just to get by in college”. Clearly knowing the end goal is extremely important because it will lead to a strong desire to pursue the end goal and ultimately to achieve success. Whether it is in education, or in making money, or in pursuing a relationship, a strong desire and motivation is required to achieve the end goal. This will lead to the mentality of “I want the ‘A’ and I will do whatever is necessary to achieve it!”

Once again, education for most students is a means to an end. What they really want is the “good life”. Therefore, the underlying mentality is really, “I want financial success to achieve the good life and everything that it has to offer, therefore I will do whatever it takes to get the ‘A’!” When people want something really badly, they will go out there and find ways to achieve the desired goal. “I want financial freedom, therefore I want a stable and high paying job!” “I want the liberty to do things my way, therefore I want to be self-employed or at least be in a position in which the boss is not constantly looking over my shoulder!” “I want people to respect me in my field of

expertise, therefore I want to graduate from a prestigious school!” Once again, a strong motivational desire is vital in achieving success. The end goal – our wants, our dreams, our desires, must be crystal clear, and students must realize this for themselves. It should not be imposed on by other people, like parents.

Discover and pursue your passion

Achieving long-term success also requires that students pursue their passions. Not pursuing a passionate major is another reason why so many students do not like going to school and why many fail to do their best. A lack of passion in the learning process will inhibit students from having the success mentality. People who succeed and are well respected in their field, whether it is business, or medicine, or teaching, are passionate about what they do. People who are only in it for the money are not as successful as people who have an authentic passion for what they do. Passion is a significant variable leading to overall success, including financial success and happiness.

A business person who has an authentic passion for the field is in not in it just for the money. That person is in it perhaps because he or she enjoys management and the process of creating a business and making it thrive. A business that thrives is a business that is successful, which equates to profit. A doctor who has a genuine interest in curing people of sickness and diseases will put the patient’s interest first. A doctor who performs his or her function well – healing people, will be well respected and will be referred, and this eventually leads to financial success. A doctor who is in it for the money can do very unprofessional things such as over charging for services or overbooking patients. In this case, profit comes before the patient. Will this doctor be highly respected and referred to by their patients? It is very unlikely that patients will come flocking to the door of the greedy and disrespectful doctor. For the same reason, a greedy and selfish politician, whose function is to serve the people, will not be respected and will not get re-elected the next term if he or she does not fulfill his or her function well, and therefore not achieving long-term success.

There are many high school students and college students in their first two years that are totally lost when it comes to their career passions. Our media driven, consumer society is partly to be blamed for this. People are constantly being told what to do, what to buy, what to think, and how to live their lives. Society tells us that the good life is the life of status, fame, fortune, and material consumption. This is why many people go shopping at 5 o’clock in the morning the day after Thanksgiving. The American society does not encourage people to examine their human potential and their talents. Students are, for the most part, educated and conditioned to be future productive working and consuming citizens. It is no wonder that many students are in school for the sake of making money, and therefore are not enjoying it because it is only a means to an end.

College students should take the time to explore their interests and develop their talents in the first two years of college. The liberal arts general education within these years will aid in this process of self exploration and in the understanding of society and the rest of the world. Once students realize this, they can plan out their academic path and future career accordingly. This will save a lot of time and money, and it will increase long-term success. It is okay to be a little lost at first. It is of utmost importance that students first achieve an understanding of themselves, about humanity, and about the world that they live in, in order to achieve a higher lever of consciousness. Being in a higher level of consciousness will enable students to better realize their human potential and what life has to offer. And by this point, students will see their goals in life clearer, and the path to pursue them.

Aim for the good grades and aim for academic prestige

Passing every course with a “C” average will indeed enable the common student to eventually obtain a Bachelor’s degree. But a 2.0 student is likely to be in the mentality of “wanting just to get by in college,” which has a spill over effect in other areas of life such as career, relationships, and family. Does it make sense for people to pursue a 2.0 relationship as well? No, of course not. Nor does it make sense to pursue a 2.0 career, or a 2.0 car, or 2.0 quality foods, or 2.0 quality children. What is superior in quality is better. This is self explanatory, and this is why we should pursue excellence in life.

It is possible for students to graduate with a “C” average, but opportunities will be limited, especially if students want to advance their career with a graduate or professional degree. Most universities will require a bare minimum of a 3.0 to get into graduate school. Getting below this will disqualify most students, unless they have a father who is a highly wealthy and influential politician. The simple fact is that most students do not have this kind of wealthy and influential family background.

Benjamin Barber in his book *Jihad vs. Mc World* describes how our economy has evolved from a “hard-goods” economy into a “soft-goods” economy. The latter type of economy requires more specialized skills, which requires a higher degree of knowledge and less physical labor. More specialized skills will often require a higher degree of education, and this is why students should excel in their undergraduate years just in case they pursue a graduate or professional degree. Even a virtuous person wanting to become a college counselor will require, at the minimum, a master’s degree in education or psychology at most colleges and universities. There are many careers out there in which formal requirements, like this one, are required for the job.

Being able to perform extremely well in school is a sign that students are taking their education seriously. Teachers will value and respect these students more, and are more likely to work and aid these students in their future academic and personal endeavors, another variable in achieving success. Standing out of the crowd and being an excellent student can lead to letters of recommendation in the future. Showing that you are a serious student by achieving excellent grades, speaking up in class, and doing extra-curricular on and off-campus activities will prove to other colleges and universities that you are indeed a serious student who wants to learn and to excel in your field of interest. Prestigious universities are more likely to admit you if you are one of these students. Why in the world would UC-Berkeley want to admit 2.0 students who just want to get by?

Why is it important to pursue academic prestigious? The reason is because we live in a society where people make their first impressions of you from the clothes that you wear, the way you talk, the color of your skin (yes, discrimination still exist), your credentials, and your educational background just to name a few. Coming from a prestigious university will help students to earn the respect that they deserve in a highly competitive economy.

Let us use the following example to help us understand the nature and importance of prestige. Let us say that there is one student that graduated from Stanford University, a highly prestigious university. The second student graduated at a non-prestigious, public university. For the sake of argument, let all other variables be equal. They are both suitable for the job. Which student is more likely to be hired? The employer is more likely to employ the Stanford graduate, because in the eyes of the employer, graduating from Stanford means that not only are you smart, you are also very hard working, very disciplined, and very reliable. These sorts of things are highly valued among employers because they want productive employees that can add to the prosperity

of the company. They do not want people who are lazier, less smart, less reliable, and who are less disciplined. This is the same reason why prospective employees come into the interview with a firm handshake and in professional business attire. The first impression is a very important one.

What else do students gain besides achieving higher status by graduating from a prestigious university? Is there any significant difference among various colleges and universities? Many teachers will say that there is not much difference in terms of education at the undergraduate level, especially the lower division courses, from prestigious university and less prestigious one. Is there a significant difference in the quality of teachers? The answer is simply that good teachers, and qualified teachers, are found all over the place, in addition to the bad ones. Not all professors who graduated with their Ph.D. at a very prestigious university are excellent teachers, and not all professors and instructors at less prestigious colleges and universities are less-qualified and not as good. Students should do their research to find the best teachers. There are several ways of doing this. They can ask their peers for recommendations, ask their current instructors, and go to online instructor ranking sites such as Ratemyprofessor.com. Doing research on instructors and picking the right ones who will challenge and discipline the student, which will add to a higher quality of education.

There are several things other things to be gained my going to a bigger, more prestigious university. These universities, due to their size and prestige, have more resources and better facilities, which will further add to the student's quality of education. For example, bigger universities will have bigger libraries, and therefore more books to choose from when doing that research project or term paper. More prestigious universities will have a high-profile collection of faculty members, respected in their field of expertise for their accomplishments, whose passion is to advance and share their field of expertise. This implies that there are more opportunities students can engage in, such as attending a public lecture given by a resident faculty or a visiting faculty. Often times, these faculty members are also the authors of the leading books out there. Wouldn't it be great to talk to and to learn under these highly regarded scholars? Another way students gain from these universities is by having access to a greater social network. Departments have partnerships with local and non-local institutions and businesses that students can take part in. Taking up this opportunity will also add to the qualifications of the students.

There are many things that a student must do to gain admission to a prestigious university. Some are outlined in this article, but many are not. Students should ask their instructors, college advisors, and even a professional academic coach for further advice. Information to achieve success is out there, and they are often available for free. It is up to the students to seek it if they are serious about their education.

About Mr. Trung Le

Mr. Le is a college philosophy instructor who helps students to achieve academic success and helps them realize their potential in life. He was educated at San Jose State University and at the University of California at Berkeley, and has taught philosophy at San Jose State University, CA, De Anza College in Cupertino, CA, Diablo Valley College in Pleasant Hill, CA, and San Jose City College, CA. He is the founder of Academic-Services.com and the Le Foundation.

E-mail: Le@Academic-Services.com