

Advice for Success in Community College

Editorial provided by Masaru Kibukawa, Director of International Programs, Cascadia Community College.

Community colleges are an excellent choice for students who seek an affordable pathway to a bachelor's diploma at a university. This article highlights a few strategies for your success at community college.

First, keep an open mind and an open heart as you meet a diverse student population. More than at many universities, community colleges tend to have a very diverse student population. You can expect students of many different national origins, different abilities, different races and ethnicities, different ages and backgrounds. This is a great opportunity to learn about differences and diversity, and in the process make new friends who can enrich your life with different ways of thinking about life and success.

Second, learn to take personal responsibility for your own success. Unlike in high school, college is a time and place for you to begin making your own decisions and taking personal action to achieve specific results. Your success is ultimately in your own hands. A simple place to begin taking personal responsibility is to ask questions whenever you need to know some information. Sometimes it can feel a little scary to speak up and talk to someone about your questions, and that's okay, but push yourself to talk and to ask and to find the answers to your questions. When you have the answers, then make your decisions, and then take the next step toward your success. Success results from taking one step at a time, and each step is your own responsibility.

Third, plan for what you would like to do after graduating from community college. Many students will either transfer to a university and complete a bachelor's diploma, or many students will participate in Optional Practical Training and work for up to a year. In either situation, remember that you have two years to prepare for the next step, and those two years can pass very quickly. I recommend you meet as soon as possible with your academic advisor to discuss your goals and plans for after your graduation from community college. Ask them for advice. Make a plan and follow that plan, and change it if your goals change. It's okay to change your goals, but then you must change your plans. Plans are best developed in consultation with experienced advisors, and so be sure to contact your college advisors and cooperate with them to develop your plans.

Fourth, think beyond the classroom for your development and personal enrichment. While it is very important to succeed in your classroom-based learning, you will experience far more enrichment if you participate in opportunities outside the classroom. Many colleges have wonderful student clubs and sports opportunities that allow you to make new friends and enjoy new things. Community colleges also can offer internships and volunteer opportunities in the local community, where you can gain valuable experience. I like to recommend students begin with exploring opportunities in college student leadership.

These are some helpful strategies that will help to enrich your community college experience and will enhance your opportunities for a successful transfer to a university or transition to a successful Optional Practical Training work experience. I wish you the very best in your studies.