

The First-Generation

College Experience

The First-Generation

College Experience



Amy Baldwin, M.A.
Pulaski Technical College

PEARSON

Boston ■ Columbus ■ Indianapolis ■ New York ■ San Francisco ■ Upper Saddle River
Amsterdam ■ Cape Town ■ Dubai ■ London ■ Madrid ■ Milan ■ Munich ■ Paris ■ Montreal ■ Toronto
Delhi ■ Mexico City ■ Sao Paulo ■ Sydney ■ Hong Kong ■ Seoul ■ Singapore ■ Taipei ■ Tokyo

Editor-in-Chief: Jodi McPherson
Development Editor: Jennifer Gessner
Editorial Assistant: Clara Ciminelli
Vice President, Director of Marketing: Margaret Waples
Marketing Manager: Amy Judd
Production Editor: Annette Joseph
Editorial Production Service: Omegatype Typography, Inc.
Manufacturing Buyer: Megan Cochran
Electronic Composition: Omegatype Typography, Inc.
Interior Design: Omegatype Typography, Inc.
Photo Researcher: Annie Fuller
Art Director: Linda Knowles
Cover Designer: Susan Paradise

Credits and acknowledgments borrowed from other sources and reproduced, with permission, in this textbook appear on appropriate page within text and on this page.

Chapter Opening Photos: p. 1: Thinkstock; p. 25: Shutterstock; p. 49: Fotolia; p. 71: Fotolia; p. 95: Shutterstock; p. 117: Shutterstock; p. 139: Thinkstock; p. 161: Thinkstock; p. 185: Alamy Images; p. 209: Fotolia; p. 231: Thinkstock; p. 255: Thinkstock

Copyright © 2012 Pearson Education, Inc., 501 Boylston Street, Boston, MA, 02116. All rights reserved. Manufactured in the United States of America. This publication is protected by Copyright, and permission should be obtained from the publisher prior to any prohibited reproduction, storage in a retrieval system, or transmission in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or likewise. To obtain permission(s) to use material from this work, please submit a written request to Pearson Education, Inc., Permissions Department, 501 Boylston Street, Boston, MA, 02116, or email permissionsus@pearson.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Baldwin, Amy

The first-generation college experience / Amy Baldwin.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-707123-4 (pbk.)

ISBN-10: 0-13-707123-X (pbk.)

1. College student orientation—United States. 2. First-generation college students—United States—Case studies. I. Title.

LB2343.32.B247 2012

378.1'98—dc22

2010052048

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 WEB 15 14 13 12 11



www.pearsonhighered.com

ISBN-10: 0-13-707123-X

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-707123-4

Amy's Story

The College Experience

I believe everyone has a story worth telling. My story is that I am a mother, a teacher, and a student. These three roles have been a part of who I am since my earliest memories. While other



little girls played house, I played school, giving homework and telling my “students” (either agreeable neighbors or silent stuffed animals) to be quiet and pay attention. When my older sister went off to her first day of school, I begged to follow, and I gathered my “school supplies” and stuffed them into a bag. Although I was the youngest child, I mothered the neighborhood kids as early as 10 years old when I started babysitting. My teaching career started a little earlier—in 3rd grade—

when I was asked to help my friend Jennifer master fractions. I continued my career throughout junior high and high school by tutoring in English, giving swimming lessons, and teaching art.

Nothing, though, prepared me for teaching at the community college. The first class I ever taught was both frightening and exhilarating. It was the first time in my life that I realized what I was doing was *exactly* what I should be doing with my life, but it was also the first time that I felt completely and utterly out of my league, ignorant, even downright dumb. I am sure my students have felt the same way—eager and excited to start a new chapter in their lives, but also concerned about the unknown. Speaking of unknown, I felt I knew nothing about how to be an effective teacher with first-generation students, and it was obvious that I needed to use what I knew about being a student to learn who my students were and what they really needed. Along the way, I discovered that being a nurturer for the abilities and talents that graced my classroom was a fitting role for me as well. How proud I am of the very ones who started their college career unsure of their abilities and who grew in confidence as they marked success after success.

Because I always love learning new things, I have now come full circle and am a student in a doctoral program. I am experiencing similar situations as my students—balancing a full-time job, a family, and college classes and worrying whether or not I can do it all. It’s sometimes a struggle to get everything done, but I have used my experience to learn more about how my students feel and what they need in terms of content and support. I have a greater appreciation of their previous experience, their time, and even their levels of frustration when they find themselves stressed out!

It is because of these experiences that I continue to provide what I believe is the best information in the most concise way to college students who fill a variety of roles themselves and who have to make it all work while they are pursuing a degree. I hope you find this book helps make your journey a little easier—at the very least, know that you are not alone in your experiences and that you can do it!



Brief Contents

Preface	xiv
Introduction to Faculty	xvi
Introduction to Students	xix
Finances First	xxi

PART I: MOVING IN

CHAPTER 1: You First	1
CHAPTER 2: Your College	24
CHAPTER 3: Relationships	48
CHAPTER 4: Time and Energy	70

PART II: MOVING THROUGH

CHAPTER 5: Learning, Memory, and Thinking	94
CHAPTER 6: Reading	116
CHAPTER 7: Listening and Note Taking	138
CHAPTER 8: Writing, Researching, and Presenting	160
CHAPTER 9: Studying and Tests	184

PART III: MOVING ON

CHAPTER 10: Stress and Health	208
CHAPTER 11: Next Semester	230
CHAPTER 12: A Career and a Life	254

Contents

Preface	xiv
Introduction to Faculty	xvi
Introduction to Students	xix
Finances First	xxi

PART I: MOVING IN

Chapter 1



YOU FIRST 1

JUANITA'S STORY 1

IN THIS CHAPTER 2

YOUR STORY 2

Your Background 3

Your Values 3

Your Dreams 5

YOUR GOALS AND MISSION STATEMENT 5

Your Mission Statement 5

Setting Goals 6

Managing Your Goals 7

Staying on Track 7

Managing Your Priorities 8

STAYING MOTIVATED 8

YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM 10

Your Family 10

Your Friends 11

Your Community 12

YOUR LEARNING STYLE

PREFERENCES 12

Learning Preference Inventory 14

Calculating Your Score 17

Learning Plan in Action 17

Learning Styles and Career Choices 19

From College to University: What You Know and How You Learn Will Change 20

From College to Career: Goals and a Mission Will Help You Succeed 21

First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates 22

Path of Discovery Journal Entry 22

Chapter Review Questions 22

Chapter 1 Case Scenarios 23

Research It Further 23

References and Recommended Readings 23

Chapter 2



YOUR COLLEGE 24

FOUR STUDENT STORIES: ORIENTATION 25

IN THIS CHAPTER 26

TRANSITION AND TRANSFORMATION 26

HIGHER EDUCATION, HIGHER EXPECTATIONS 28

Go for the Gold by Remembering SILVER 29

Controversial Content 34

HOW COLLEGE WORKS 34

Schedules 34

Grades 36

COLLEGE RESOURCES 39

The Campus 39

College Catalog 40

Student Handbook 41

College Newspaper 41

Bulletin Boards 42

It's in the Syllabus 42

Put It Online 42

Campus Organizations 43

From College to University: The Changes in Culture and College Services 43

From College to Career: How the Culture Will Change Again 44

First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates 45

Path of Discovery Journal Entry 46

Chapter Review Questions 46

Chapter 2 Case Scenarios 46

Research It Further 46

References and Recommended Readings 47

Chapter 3



RELATIONSHIPS 48

MICHAEL'S STORY 49

IN THIS CHAPTER 50

YOUR RELATIONSHIPS IN COLLEGE 50

Professors 51

Advisors, Counselors, and Learning Support Staff 52

Classmates 53

Family and Friends 54

EXPLORING DIVERSITY 55

Gender and Sexual Orientation Diversity 55

Sexual Harassment 56

Racial, Ethnic, and Cultural Diversity 57

Generational Diversity 57

Other Kinds of Diversity 58

Teaching Styles Diversity 59

FIGHTING HATE 59

Stereotypes 60

Prejudice 60

Discrimination 62

RESOLVING CONFLICT 63

Creating Boundaries 63

When a Problem Arises 64

Tips for Lasting Relationships 65

From College to University: The Relationships You Foster Now Will Open Doors after Transfer 65

From College to Career: Dealing with Diversity Is a Key to Success on the Job 66

First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates 67

Path of Discovery Journal Entry 68

Chapter Review Questions 68

Chapter 3 Case Scenarios 68

Research It Further 68

References and Recommended Readings 69

Chapter 4



TIME AND ENERGY 70

LAURA'S STORY 71

IN THIS CHAPTER 72

IS TIME ON YOUR SIDE? 72

- Getting Organized 73
- Supplies for Success 73
- Space Considerations 75
- Same Time, Same Place 76

IT'S TIME FOR COLLEGE 76

- Making Time for Classes 78
- But What Do I Do? 80
- Analyzing Your Time 81
- Back-Dating Time Management Plan 82

MANAGING YOUR ENERGY 84

- Identifying Time and Energy Zappers 84
- Running Low on Time and Energy 87

WHY WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW? 88

- Procrastination Pitfalls 88
- Procrastinator Types 88
- Eliminating Procrastination 89
- From College to University: How to Handle the New Pressures on Your Time* 90
- From College to Career: Improving Time Management on the Job* 91
- First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates* 91
- Path of Discovery Journal Entry 92
- Chapter Review Questions 92
- Chapter 4 Case Scenarios 92
- Research It Further 93
- References and Recommended Readings 93

PART II: MOVING THROUGH

Chapter 5



LEARNING, MEMORY, AND THINKING 94

MICHAEL'S STORY 95

IN THIS CHAPTER 96

THIS IS YOUR BRAIN IN COLLEGE 97

- The Learning Process 97
- Learning in College 98

THE MEMORY GAME 99

- Mnemonic Devices 100
- Memory Strategies 102

THINK ABOUT IT 103

- Creative Thinking 103
- Analytical Thinking 105
- Critical Thinking 106
- Problem Solving 107

- Putting Critical Thinking into Practice 110
- From College to University: Different Types of Thinking Will Be Needed to Continue Your Learning* 111
- From College to Career: How Critical Thinking Will Be Used on the Job* 112
- First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates* 113
- Path of Discovery Journal Entry 114
- Chapter Review Questions 114
- Chapter 5 Case Scenarios 114
- Research It Further 114
- References and Recommended Readings 115

Chapter 6



READING 116

EVAN'S STORY 117

IN THIS CHAPTER 118

COLLEGE READING EXPECTATIONS 118

- Information Literacy 119
- What to Do with a Reading Assignment 120
- Reading in the Disciplines 121
- Reading Difficulties 122

READING ACTIVELY AND CRITICALLY 123

- Skimming and Scanning 123
- Breaking Down the Material 124
- Questioning 127
- Evaluating 127

DEVELOPING YOUR READING SKILLS 128

- Building Your Vocabulary 129
- Increasing Your Reading Speed 130
- Checking Your Comprehension 131

- Improving Your Reading Attention Span 131

READING STRATEGIES 131

- Taking Notes While You Read 132
- SQ3R Reading Strategy 132
- Putting the Pleasure Back into Reading 133
- From College to University: How the Reading Load and Expectations May Change* 134
- From College to Career: How Reading Skills Will Help You Succeed* 134
- First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates* 135
- Path of Discovery Journal Entry 136
- Chapter Review Questions 136
- Chapter 6 Case Scenarios 136
- Research It Further 136
- References and Recommended Readings 137

Chapter 7



LISTENING AND NOTE TAKING 138

LAURA'S STORY 139

IN THIS CHAPTER 140

THE ART OF LISTENING 140

- The Listening and Note-Taking Connection 140
- Preparing to Listen 141
- Listening Critically 142
- Eliminating Listening Barriers 143
- Remembering What You Have Heard 144

NOTE-TAKING STRATEGIES 144

- How Information Is Presented 145
- Developing a Shorthand 146
- Outlining 147
- Taking Notes within the Textbook 148
- The Cornell System 149

ADAPTING NOTE-TAKING STRATEGIES 150

- Note-Taking Strategies in the Disciplines 150

- Note-Taking Strategies for Learning Preferences 151
- Finding Your Own Note-Taking Style 153
- Reviewing Your Notes 154
- Tips for Successful Note Taking 155
- From College to University: Improving Listening and Note-Taking Skills When There Are More Distractions* 155
- From College to Career: Practicing Critical Listening Skills Will Give You an Edge on the Job* 156
- First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates* 157
- Path of Discovery Journal Entry 158
- Chapter Review Questions 158
- Chapter 7 Case Scenarios 158
- Research It Further 158
- References and Recommended Readings 159

Chapter 8



WRITING, RESEARCHING, AND PRESENTING 160

JUANITA'S STORY 161

IN THIS CHAPTER 162

COLLEGE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS 162

- Understanding the Assignment 162
- Types of Writing Assignments 165
- Evaluation 167

GETTING HELP WITH WRITING 168

- Peer Review 169
- Tutoring 169
- How Much Is Too Much Help? 170

THE WRITING PROCESS 170

- Prewriting Techniques 170
- Creating a Thesis and Organizing Details 171
- Writing Paragraphs 172
- Incorporating Transitions 172
- Writing Essays 173
- Avoiding Plagiarism 173

THE RESEARCH PROCESS 175

- Choosing a Topic 175
- Finding and Evaluating Sources 175

- Incorporating Sources into Your Paper 176

MAKING SPEECHES AND PRESENTATIONS 176

- Planning a Speech or Presentation 176
- Vocal Delivery 177
- Physical Delivery 177
- Visual Aids 178

From College to University: How Writing Assignments and Expectations Will Change 179

From College to Career: Why Strong Speaking Skills Will Set You Apart at Work 180

First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates 181

Path of Discovery Journal Entry 182

Chapter Review Questions 182

Chapter 8 Case Scenarios 182

Research It Further 182

References and Recommended Readings 183

Chapter 9



STUDYING AND TESTS 184

FOUR STUDENTS' STORIES 185

IN THIS CHAPTER 186

TESTING 1, 2, 3 186

- A Place and Time for Studying 187
- How to Study Effectively 189

TYPES OF TEST QUESTIONS 193

- Multiple Choice 194
- Matching 194
- True/False 195
- Fill-in-the-Blank/Short Answer 195
- Problem Solving 196
- Essay Questions 197

TYPES OF TESTS 199

- Math and Science Tests 199
- Fine Arts and Literature Tests 199
- Open-Book and Take-Home Tests 199
- Online Tests 200
- Comprehensive Exams 200

TEST-TAKING STRATEGIES 200

- Preparing for the Test 200
- Taking the Test 201
- Maintaining Integrity during the Test 202
- Beating Test Anxiety 203

From College to University: How Studying and Testing May Differ after Transfer 203

From College to Career: Preparation Counts 204

First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates 205

Path of Discovery Journal Entry 206

Chapter Review Questions 206

Chapter 9 Case Scenarios 206

Research It Further 207

References and Recommended Readings 207

PART III: MOVING ON

Chapter 10



STRESS AND HEALTH 208

EVAN'S STORY 209

IN THIS CHAPTER 210

UNDERSTANDING STRESS 210

- What? Me Worry? 210
- Stress in College 212
- Stress at Home 212
- Stress at Work 213
- Stress-Related Illnesses 214

HANDLING STRESS 214

- Reducing the Negative Effects of Stress 214
- Staying Flexible 216
- Knowing When to Get Help with Stress 216

WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU 216

- Eat Well 217
- Get Moving 218
- Sleep Soundly 219
- Drugs and Alcohol 220
- Sex 222

- Depression and Suicide 222

HEALTHY LIVING FOR LIFE 223

- Living a Balanced Life 223
- Maintaining Healthy Relationships 224
- Getting Help When You Need It 226
- From College to University: How Your Stress Will Change and How to Handle the New Pressures* 226
- From College to Career: Making Healthy Lifestyle Changes Is a Good Long-Term Strategy* 227
- First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates* 228
- Path of Discovery Journal Entry 228
- Chapter Review Questions 229
- Chapter 10 Case Scenarios 229
- Research It Further 229
- References and Recommended Readings 229

Chapter 11



NEXT SEMESTER 230

JUANITA AND LAURA'S STORY 231

IN THIS CHAPTER 232

PLANNING FOR YOUR EDUCATIONAL FUTURE 232

- A Difference of Degrees 232

- Transferring to Another Institution 234
- Deadlines and Important Dates 234

COMPLETING THE SEMESTER 236

- Course Evaluations 236
- Preparing for Final Examinations 237

CHOOSING CLASSES FOR NEXT SEMESTER 237

- Course Formats 238
- Learning Formats 239
- Professors 239
- Building Your Schedule 239

FINANCING YOUR EDUCATION 242

- Scholarships 242
- Grants 243
- Student Loans 243
- Military and Veterans Financial Aid 245
- Work-Study 245
- Tuition Waivers for Employees 245
- Applying for Financial Aid 247
- Renewing Financial Aid and Paying It Back 247

QUESTIONING YOUR DECISION TO CONTINUE 248

- Is College Right for You? 248
- Benefits of Continuing Your Education 249
- Benefits of Taking a Break 249
- From College to University: Preparing for Unexpected Higher Costs* 249
- From College to Career: The Benefits of Returning to Work Before Continuing Your Education* 250
- First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates* 251
- Path of Discovery Journal Entry 252
- Chapter Review Questions 252
- Chapter 11 Case Scenarios 252
- Research It Further 252
- References and Recommended Readings 253

Chapter 12



A CAREER AND A LIFE 254

EVAN AND MICHAEL'S STORY 255
IN THIS CHAPTER 256

CAREER EXPLORATION 256

- Career Values and Goals 256
- Career Counseling 257
- Career Fairs 258
- Internships 258

JOB PREPARATION 260

- Writing a Résumé 260
- Creating a Cover Letter 262
- Interviewing 265
- Cyber Considerations 265
- Troubleshooting 266

NETWORKING 267

- Networking Online 268
- Networking Face to Face 268

- Recommendation Letters 268

CREATING A LIFE 269

- Mission, Values, and Goals Revisited 270
- Engaging in the Community 270
- From College to University: Hold Off on Starting Your Career Until You Have Met Your Educational Goal* 272
- From College to Career: Practicing What You Have Learned to Earn the Job* 273
- First Voices: Stories of Success from College Graduates* 274
- Path of Discovery Journal Entry 274
- Chapter Review Questions 274
- Chapter 12 Case Scenarios 275
- Research It Further 275
- References and Recommended Readings 275

Appendix: VARK Learning Styles 277

Glossary 281

Index 283



Preface

What Is a First-Generation Student Like?

What is a typical first-generation student like? Well, a “typical” student anywhere is hard to find; they are men and women, all ages, from all walks of life and with inspiring stories to tell about how they made their way to college. To see for yourself, walk into the student center or pass by a study area, and you may see students getting acquainted like the four new friends we are about to meet. They may be first-generation students—students who have formed a study group—talking about how they chose to attend the college.

For Laura, 31, the decision to enroll was not difficult despite the fact that she is the first person in her family to attend college. She does have a good friend who went to college while he raised a family and worked, and he served as a role model for her when she made the decision. She chose her local college because of the learning support they offer and the flexible scheduling. She shares with the group that after her youngest son started kindergarten, she enrolled because she envisioned something better for herself and her future. Not knowing what she wanted to do, she took classes that interested her and fulfilled the requirements for an associate of arts degree. At the end of last semester, she was inspired by her teachers to pursue social work, and she now has a “thirst for knowledge.” With the help of counselors and instructors and the learning support staff, she is managing a learning difficulty and enjoys the fact that she serves as a role model of her own to her children when she sits down to study and complete assignments.

Michael, 42, is also a first-generation college student. Although he served in the military and has a wealth of work experience and knowledge, he lacks a degree and a career that he could call his life’s purpose. Most of the men and women in his family have entered the military rather than go directly to college. Although they know from their work in the military that a college degree can be valuable to employers, none other than Michael have decided to try it out. Michael tells the study group that his girlfriend convinced him to check out the nursing program at the local college because graduates always find high-paying jobs and are known for being well prepared and successful. However, before Michael can gain acceptance into the nursing program, he has to complete a developmental math course, which is why he has asked his fellow students to form a study group. Michael has learned quickly that he can be more successful if he studies with others. His girlfriend has certainly provided the support he needs to make this huge step to change his life, and now he is realizing that so many others at his college have similar backgrounds and are willing to help him.

Juanita, 18, is the youngest of the group, but she is the most experienced first-generation student at the table, because she has been taking concurrent classes through her high school for over a year. Juanita’s high school counselor first told her about the program providing college-level classes for high school students to earn college credits while still in high school.

As Juanita explains to the study group, she chose to take concurrent classes because she wants to earn a master's degree, and the sooner she can reach her goal, the more time she will have for a family and a career. However, she admits that it has been challenging to keep up with the demands of her classes, and her parents, who are excited about being able to send their first child to college, don't always understand the kind of pressure she is under. She is expected to read, write, and study more than she did in her high school classes that were not taught at the college level. Luckily for her, she tells her new friends, her family is only a cell phone call away if she needs additional support.

Evan, 20, is by definition a first-generation student. Although his mother got a certificate in computer programming and his father attended one year of college, he is the first with the goal of a four-year degree. Always up for a challenge, Evan says he chose the local college because of its reputation for rigorous classes that will prepare him for an engineering career. He plans to complete his associate of science degree first, because he can apply for a scholarship when he transfers if he keeps his grades up. Evan also reveals that he made good grades in high school and could have attended a four-year university out of state. However, he likes what his college has to offer and prefers the thought of sitting in small classes that offer individual attention rather than getting lost in a sea of 200 students listening to a lecture.

These stories are representative of the backgrounds and challenging situations of first-generation students. What do all these people have in common with you? They have discovered that an education is key to realizing dreams and achieving goals even if they are the first in their families to make the decision to get a degree. They know, as you do too, that the first step to a satisfying career and a life filled with possibilities is enrolling in college.

No doubt, you have your own story as to why you are attending a college for the first time in a long time or as the first in your family, but the common denominator you share with your classmates and the students who share their stories in this text is that you all took an important step to improving your lives through education. With guidance, determination, and hard work, you will succeed in your quest to move from first in college to first in class. As you read the student stories that start each chapter, you will learn more about the challenges and triumphs that each student faces during the semester. You will also have the opportunity to reflect and write about your own story as you move from first in college to first success.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A very special thank-you to the following people for helping me during the process of writing this book: Kyle, Emily, and Will; Sande Johnson and Jennifer Gessner; Amy Judd; Peggy Valdez-Ferguson; and the instructors and administrators who provided valuable feedback during the process. Thanks also to the reviewers of this book: Sutonia Boykin, LaGuardia Community College; Mo Cuevas, West Texas A&M University; Jennifer Guerrier, Valencia Community College; James Mendoza, Tacoma Community College; Yolanda Reyna, Alto College; David Rodriguez, San Antonio College; Ethel Schuster, Northern Essex Community College; Karla Thompson, New Mexico State University; Peggy Valdez-Ferguson, Community College of Denver; and Robert Blu Vela, Austin Community College.



Introduction to Faculty

“Sí, se puede,” which means “Yes, you can” or “Yes, it can be done” in Spanish, was a phrase used by Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers almost 40 years ago, and it was also seen in campaign ads and billboards during the 2008 presidential election. It is a fitting message for the optimism that has recently taken hold of higher education, based in our realization that we can do something for students who have historically not been successful at college. These students are often referred to as first-generation or first-in-family students who need the basic information that is often missing from other books of tips for student success. They need, in other words, a textbook that helps them make those first steps that will turn into first successes.

According to Marcy (2004), “Contemporary students are more ethnically and racially diverse and come from a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds than at any time in history. They face more life pressures and bring with them a greater array of life experiences than our original systems ever imagined” (p. 207). Nonetheless, it is no secret that the American higher education system has not always adapted its learning methods and support systems to help the very students who have the most to gain from an academic credential. However, with recent studies that have focused on students of color, first-generation students, developmental students, and low-income students and with recent national, regional, and collegewide initiatives to narrow achievement gaps and improve the success of these students, the ones who were once labeled “at risk” are now able to reap the benefits of new ways of serving their unique needs.

We know, for instance, that when we intentionally engage African American and Hispanic students through active learning and cocurricular activities, they achieve

personal, social, and academic gains that were greater than their White counterparts’ as a result of putting more effort into class assignments, involving themselves in class discussions, and using college services such as the library and computer technology. (Greene, Marti, & McClenney, 2008, p. 517)


We also know from studies (Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, & Yeung, 2007) that first-generation students are more likely to work while in college and more likely to be influenced in their academic decisions by family. Armed with information from such studies, yes, we can improve the higher education experience for many students.

With these ideas in mind, you will notice that this book, *The First-Generation College Experience*, is not like any other student success text. It is for the student who needs a little extra attention and support to have a firm footing in the academic world. It is about helping those students who have felt disenfranchised, disengaged, and disappointed by the educational system to empower themselves with the knowledge and the skills necessary to imagine and realize a new future. It is also a book about change, specifically transformation, or the intentional process by which we help students change as individuals, as scholars, and as citizens of their communities.

To that end, each chapter contains the following features with the focus on basic information or the “what, when, and where” for being successful in college.

WHAT will support students

- **It's All Relative:** Acknowledging the enormous influence our students' families have on their academic success, these tips help students create ways to incorporate family support into their academic plans.



Smooth transitions and true transformations will affect your relationships. Your family and friends will either be supportive or worry that changes will mean they are less connected to you. It is very common for first-generation students to feel a little stress in their relationships as they grow because of their educational experiences.

Consider what it will take from your family for you to change into a college-educated person. Will you need their support 100%? Or will you be able to transition with minimal support or assistance? Recognizing who will be part of your "transition team" will help you determine whom to call when you need support.

YOUR TURN

Who are the people in your life who will embrace your transformation into a college-educated person? • How will they support you? • Who seems less supportive of you? • Why do you think their support is questionable?

- **It's in the Syllabus:** Examining aspects of a syllabus reminds students to review one of their most important documents in college—the "contract" between their instructors and themselves.
- **Your Terms of Success:** Because many first-generation students are unfamiliar with the terms that are unique to the college setting, this feature provides a handy overview of common words they will encounter as well as their meanings.

- **Think about It:** Famous quotes can help students consider another way to view the chapter's topic.
- **Integrity Matters:** Moving beyond just thinking about how integrity plays a role in a student's academic life, this feature also provides an opportunity to reflect on integrity issues.
- **Tech Tips:** Students need information about the immediate technological support their colleges offer as well as current technology that can assist students in their educational goals.

WHEN will students relate to the material

- **Student Stories:** Beginning each chapter and elsewhere throughout the book, the stories of four new students on the journey through college are presented to show how different types of first-generation students will benefit from this book.



Four Student Stories
ORIENTATION

YOUR COLLEGE

Reflection, discussion, and practice are essential to your success. This section is designed to help you understand the orientation process and the role of your family and friends in your college journey. This section includes activities, reflection questions, and a list of resources to help you prepare for college. It also includes a list of resources to help you prepare for college.

Photo of four students sitting on a lawn in front of a building, engaged in a discussion.

- **Reflection, Critical Thinking, and Collaboration Exercises:** Exercises appear after each section within the chapters to offer students opportunities to stop, think, and synthesize the information they have read.
- **PLUS Exercise:** The final in-chapter exercise asks students to reflect on the student story at the beginning of the chapter and to give advice for making good choices.

WHERE can students apply what is being learned

- **From College to University (with University Portfolio):** This connection for students who plan to transfer from a community college to a four-year university provides opportunities to apply concepts and plan for the move.
- **From College to Career (with Career Portfolio):** This connection for students who plan to move into the world of work right after college helps students plan for their careers.
- **Stories of Success:** Diverse success stories from first-generation graduates allow students to imagine themselves as empowered individuals after college.
- **Path of Discovery Journal Entry, Chapter Review Questions, Case Scenarios, and Research It Further:** These end-of-chapter activities allow students to think about concepts in depth, practice what they have learned, and apply their knowledge to new situations.

These features, as well as the practical and basic information within chapters, are designed with the first-generation student in mind to encourage reflection and critical thinking. We know that many first-generation students need help and support that traditional students may not need. This book gives them the foundation they need to build on their first successes.



REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READINGS

- Gabriel, K. F. (2008). *Teaching unprepared students: Strategies for promoting success and retention in higher education*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Greene, T. G., Marti, C. N., & McClenney, K. (2008). The effort-outcome gap: Differences for African American and Hispanic community college students in student engagement and academic achievement. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 79(5), 513–539.
- Kuh, G., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., Whitt, E. J., et al. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Marcy, M. B. (2004). When diversity and dollars collide: Challenges for higher education. *Innovative Higher Education*, 28(3), 205–218.
- Saenz, V. B., Hurtado, S., Barrera, D., & Yeung, F. (2007). *First in my family: A profile of first-generation college students at four-year institutions since 1971*. Los Angeles: HERI.
- Tinto, V. (1994). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Watson, L. W., Terrell, M. C., & Wright, D. J. (2002). *How minority students experience college: Implications for planning and policy*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.



Introduction to Students

You made it! You have taken the first steps to a college education, and for that, you should feel a sense of accomplishment. It is no easy task to apply for admission, enroll in classes, and find your way around campus, but you have obviously completed those steps successfully. Getting your course supplies, such as textbooks and notebooks, too, is a feat worth congratulations. Now is the time to take a moment and think about why you are here and what you hope to achieve.

W. Edwards Deming, professor and industrial consultant, once said, “It’s not enough to do your best. You must know what to do and then do your best.” Obviously, from your commitment to take the first step into college, you have the desire to do your best. Now you just need the tools to help you know what to do so that you can do your best in college, in a career, and in your life.

With that thought in mind, this book is designed to help you learn what you need to do to accomplish your goals by providing you with basic information about college expectations, academic strategies, and life management skills. This book is intended for the students who are the first in their families to go to college and for the students who are thinking for the first time in their lives that they want something better for themselves, something that includes getting a college education. If that is you, then you will find this book to be a valuable resource as you take those first steps.

To help first-time students like you on the path to success, this book is arranged around three sections that focus on getting somewhere: “Moving In,” which provides information about transitioning into college smoothly; “Moving Through,” which offers strategies and tips for getting through your academic requirements successfully; and “Moving On,” which helps prepare you for the life you want after completing your education. You will also find, before the chapters begin, a quick primer on financial planning, titled “Finances First.” It is never too early to start thinking about paying for college and managing your money while you are here.

The student stories that begin each chapter allow you to consider what life will be like for you now that you are in college. You will get to know Juanita, 18, who is dependent on her family for support; Laura, 31, a single parent who has a learning disability; Michael, 42, who has an accomplished military career but no previous college education; and Evan, 20, who has many ambitions but no clear path to success. These stories will help you see others meet the same challenges you will surely face as a new student, and it will also help you see how others may experience college for the first time.

Other features that you may find helpful as a first-time student include “It’s All Relative,” which provides information about issues related to family and gives you the opportunity to

create a plan for managing your family relationship. Studies have shown that for many students, family is their first priority, and recognizing the role it plays in students' lives is important to helping those students achieve success. "Your Terms of Success" provides a list of terms you may not be familiar with as a first-time student that will help you navigate your way through college. Likewise, "Tech Tips" explains how to easily access information about how technology can and will be used in college. Whether you are technologically savvy or a beginner, you will benefit from seeing how technology can be applied to help you succeed.

"Integrity Matters" will remind you of one of the core values of higher education, doing what is right even if no one is watching, and will offer opportunities to explore ways to act with integrity, a good habit to build on during college. "From College to University" (with Portfolio) and "From College to Career" (with Portfolio) will help you create a plan for life after college, whatever path you take after your current college experience. Finally, each chapter ends with a story of success, a story about a real person who, much like you, started college with dreams of big things and made those dreams come true. Use their stories for inspiration when you need it.

The entire book has been written with your best interests in mind. May it serve you well as you take those first steps toward your future!



Finances First

One of the greatest challenges for first-generation students isn't meeting the academic expectations of college; it is handling the financial issues that come into play when you get there. Some students choose to go to school full time and not work whereas others juggle a job—either part time or full time—while going to school. No matter what their financial situations, many are adding the expense of going to college to their other obligations, or they are using grants, loans, or scholarships to cover costs.

As you know by now because you successfully enrolled in college, investing in your future takes more than courage; it also takes some cash or at least access to funds to cover the costs. Unfortunately, as Catherine Rampell (2009) recently reported for the *New York Times*, the costs of college continue to rise and will likely increase with each passing year. So what can you do? The first step, and the reason this section precedes the actual chapters in the book, is to become financially literate. There are many resources available that can help you learn more about how to become financially fit. The next step is to create a plan for staying on a budget and for anticipating expenses in the future. The following section provides you with a brief overview of both steps.

ESTIMATING College Costs

Estimating what you are going to spend for your college education is a great first step to understanding your financial situation, and it will help you with budgeting. Because this is your first time in college, it will be helpful to see what you can expect to spend as you work on and complete your degree. Unfortunately, college tuition and fees are only part of the costs involved in earning a degree. No matter what you pay for tuition and fees, you will pay only a fraction of the actual costs of educating one student. Colleges make up the difference through taxes, state and federal money, and gifts and donations.

To determine your estimated costs, you will need to get very specific about what you will need during the semesters you plan to attend. The following list is only a suggestion of possible supplies (because specialized programs may require other materials): textbooks, notebooks/binders, computer/laptop, backpack, paper (for notes), paper (for printing), pens/pencils, calculator, computer software, thumb drive, stapler, hole puncher, ruler, and supplies for labs or certain classes such as drawing. Create a list of what you know you will need and then write down how much you think each item will cost. You will use this estimation when you create a budget.

In addition to supplies and tuition, you may also find other costs associated with going to college. For example, your transportation costs may increase as you go from home or work to campus and back. You may also discover that you need regular, reliable Internet access that will create an additional monthly cost. Costs for parking or day care may also have to be factored in. Especially for first-generation students, unexpected costs such as these can be an awakening to investments of money and time that weren't covered during new student orientation. There may well be additional expenses that you may encounter. You will want to talk with students who have been at your college for a few semesters or recent graduates to determine what else may be needed. These same students may also provide you with some cost-saving ideas as well.

CREATING a Budget

In order to manage these costs while balancing your other financial obligations, creating a budget will help you stay on track. A budget doesn't have to be a headache. In fact, it is relatively easy to make a budget. The hard part is following it. First, you need to establish a customized budget sheet. Figure 1 shows a sample budget form that you can start with. In the first column, you will estimate your income and expenses. The middle column will be used to record actual amounts for income and expenses. Record any differences in the marked column by subtracting the actual amount from the estimated amount. For example, if you estimate that you earn about \$1000.00 a month, but this month you earn \$1092.56, the difference is \$92.56. If you earned \$997.36, then the difference is -\$2.64.

Once you determine the categories that fit your lifestyle, you will need to gather all the bills and paystubs that you have and add up your expenses and income. It is a good idea to review at least three months' worth of bills to get an accurate picture of your expenditures. If you have any bills that are paid less frequently than once a month, then you will need to convert them to a monthly expense. For example, if you pay \$240 for car insurance every six months, your monthly expense is \$40 (\$240 divided by six months).

One key to an accurate budget that helps you track your spending is to be honest about your expenses. That means you must write down everything you spend, even the money for snacks or supplies. You may find that you spend \$25 a week (\$100 a month) on items that are unnecessary. The more you can track unnecessary items, the better you can control your spending.

After you get an accurate picture of your income and expenses, you can start setting short-term and long-term financial goals. Because you are in college and probably trying to keep expenses to a minimum, you may think that creating and working toward financial goals will be a difficult undertaking until you have a job with a steady income and secure future. However, you can start setting small short-term goals now. For example, your first short-term goal could be keeping a monthly budget and making adjustments periodically.

FIGURE 1 Sample Budget Form

Category	Estimated Amount per Month	Actual Amount per Month	Difference
Income			
Source 1 (wages/salary)			
Source 2 (scholarship, financial aid, etc.)			
Source 3 (alimony, employee tuition reimbursement, child support)			
Total Income			
Expenses			
Mortgage/rent			
Utilities			
Car payment/transportation			
Insurance			
Groceries			
Household items			
Clothing			
Gas			
Car maintenance			
Cellular phone/pager			
Eating out			
Entertainment			
Health care (medications, doctor's visits, etc.)			
Credit cards or loans			
Total Expenses			
Net Income (Total Income minus Total Expenses)			

Another short-term goal could be to gather all the documents about your financial aid and keep them organized until after you graduate. Meeting these two goals will help you reach larger goals down the road.

You should also write down your long-term financial goals. One of these goals could be financial freedom and security. However, in order to reach that long-term goal, you will need to make a list of other goals and start working toward them. Be sure to include long-term goals that prepare you for retirement and the unlikely event of disability and unemployment.

Don't Take Credit

Credit cards can be very tempting when you are in college because they are so easy to use and the offers pour in just about every day. The reality of credit cards, however, is that they can

TABLE 1 Credit Card Payments

Month	Previous Balance	Interest	Balance + Interest	Payment	Remaining Balance
Month 1	\$1,000.00	\$14.17	\$1,014.17	\$20.00	\$994.17
Month 2	\$ 994.17	\$14.08	\$1,008.25	\$20.00	\$988.25
Month 3	\$ 988.25	\$14.00	\$1,002.25	\$20.00	\$982.25
Month 4	\$ 982.25	\$13.92	\$ 996.17	\$20.00	\$976.17
Month 5	\$ 976.17	\$13.83	\$ 990.00	\$20.00	\$970.00
Month 6	\$ 970.00	\$13.74	\$ 983.74	\$20.00	\$963.74

cause big financial problems, leading to debts that are sometimes difficult to pay off. Think about this: You don't want to start a new career after college that pays a good salary only to send a substantial portion of it to a credit card company.

In case you are still enticed to use a credit card, think about this sobering information. If you were to charge \$1000 on a credit card that charges 17% interest and only pay \$10 a month, you will be accruing more in interest than you will be paying each month. And that is only if you do not charge anything else!

Table 1 shows that paying twice as much—\$20—each month for six months only reduces the balance by \$36.26—after paying \$120. Unfortunately, some students have many more thousands of dollars of credit card debt, and with the current interest rates, it is no wonder that students can find themselves in an endless cycle of charging and paying minimums. If it is at all possible, put the cards away until you are out of college, and then use them wisely.

Practice Good Financial Habits

A good financial plan is only as good as the degree that you stick to it. The following tips can help you increase your financial literacy muscles, especially if you exercise them regularly:

- Read all financial statements each month.
- Compare financial statements with your recording of expenses and income.
- Separate bills from other mail.
- Create a schedule for paying bills.
- Sign up for online payment plans if available and if it is easier to pay in this way. Unreliable Internet access and various email addresses will make it difficult to keep up with online bills.
- If you have a credit card, use it for emergencies only.

- Try to put back a small percentage of your income each month for unexpected expenses. For example, for every \$100 you earn, put \$5 (5%) in an emergency savings account. Create a goal to increase your savings percentage.
- Keep up with the changes in tuition and fees at your college.

Protect Yourself

Budgeting and creating a plan are not enough to make sure that you are on firm financial foundation because you will also need to protect yourself from the various scams that can do more harm than just draining your bank account. If anyone you do not know contacts you through email or by phone to ask you to send money or provide a bank account number, delete the email or hang up the phone. Thousands of well-meaning people get scammed this way by providing access to their bank accounts, only to find out that their money is gone and their credit is ruined. If the information sounds too good to be true or doesn't seem "right," it quite possibly is a scam.

LEARN More

There are numerous resources available for you to explore financial matters further. There are many local, state, and federal government programs that can provide free information and counseling if you are interested in getting your finances on track. The best defense is good information about your situation and your possibilities. For starters, you can—and should—request a free credit report. A request form from the Federal Trade Commission is available at www.ftc.gov/credit. You can also find a local (and usually free) financial help center that provides workshops and counseling for people who want to know more about their financial situation. You can find these agencies online or in the phone book. Don't forget that your local library and bookstore offer many good resources on money management and financial matters. Start with a good book, such as *Personal Finance for Dummies* (Tyson, 2009), that defines common terms and provides basic information. Remember that the best way to protect your financial future—and to secure the hard work that you are doing in college to get a better job—is to empower yourself with knowledge about what you have and what you want to do with it in the future.

REFERENCES

Rampell, C. (2009, October 20). The skyrocketing costs of attending college. *New York Times*. Retrieved November 24, 2009, from <http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/10/20/the->

[skyrocketing-costs-of-attending-college/](http://economix.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/10/20/the-skyrocketing-costs-of-attending-college/)

Tyson, D. (2009). *Personal Finance for Dummies* (6th ed). New York: Wiley.

For Students!

Why is this course important?

This course will help you transition to college, introduce you to campus resources, and prepare you for success in all aspects of college, career, and life. You will:

- Develop Skills to Excel in Other Classes
- Apply Concepts from College to Your Career and Life
- Learn to Use Media Resources

How can you get the most out of the book and online resources required in this class?

Purchase your book and online resources before the First Day of Class. Register and log in to the online resources using your access code.

Develop Skills to Excel in Other Classes

- Helps you with your homework
- Prepares you for exams

Apply Concepts from College to Your Career and Life

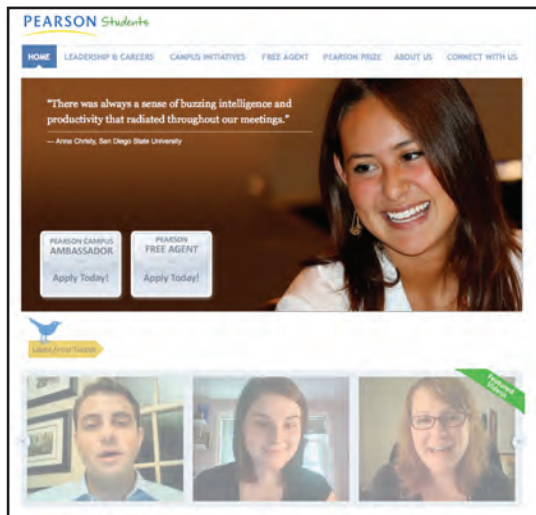
- Provides learning techniques
- Helps you achieve your goals

Learn to Use Media Resources

- www.mystudentsuccesslab.com helps you build skills you need to succeed through peer-led videos, interactive exercises and projects, journaling, and goal setting activities.
- Connect with real students, practice skill development, and personalize what is learned.



Want to get involved with Pearson like other students have?



Join www.PearsonStudents.com

It is a place where our student customers can incorporate their views and ideas into their learning experience. They come to find out about our programs such as the **Pearson Student Advisory Board**, **Pearson Campus Ambassador**, and the **Pearson Prize** (student scholarship!).



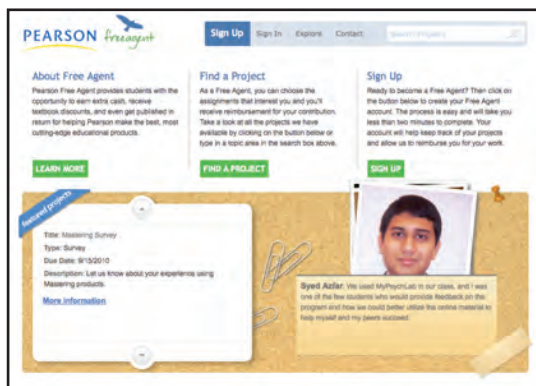
Here's how you can get involved:

- Tell your instructors, friends, and family members about **PearsonStudents**.
- To get daily updates on how students can boost their résumés, study tips, get involved with Pearson, and earn rewards:

 Become a fan of **Pearson Students on Facebook**

 Follow **@Pearson_Student** on Twitter

- Explore **Pearson Free Agent**. It allows you get involved in the publishing process by giving student feedback.



See you on **PearsonStudents** where our student customers live. When students succeed, we succeed!



Succeed in college and beyond!
Connect, practice, and personalize with MyStudentSuccessLab.

www.mystudentsuccesslab.com



MyStudentSuccessLab is an online solution designed to help students acquire the skills they need to succeed. They will have access to peer-led video presentations and develop core skills through interactive exercises and projects that provide academic, life, and career skills that will transfer to ANY course.

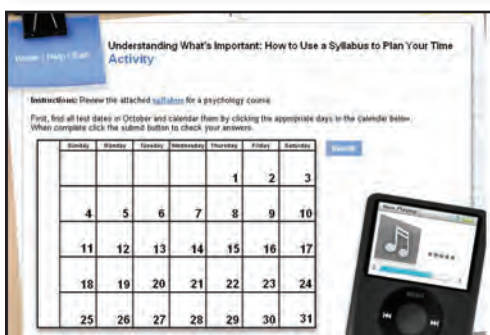
It can accompany any Student Success text, or be sold as a stand-alone course offering. To become successful learners, students must consistently apply techniques to daily activities.

How will MyStudentSuccessLab make a difference?



Is motivation a challenge, and if so, how do you deal with it?

Video Presentation — Experience peer led video ‘by students, for students’ of all ages and stages.



How would better class preparation improve the learning experience?

Practice activities — Practice skills for each topic — beginning, intermediate, and advanced — leveled by Bloom’s taxonomy.



What could you gain by building critical thinking and problem-solving skills in this class? Apply (final project) — Complete a final project using these skills to create ‘personally relevant’ resources.

MyStudentSuccessLab Feature set:

Topic Overview: Module objectives.

Video Presentation – Connect: Real student video interviews on key issues.

Practice: Three skill-building exercises per topic provide interactive experience and practice.

Apply – Personalize: Apply what is learned by creating a personally relevant project and journal.

Resources: Plagiarism Guide, Dictionary, Calculators, and Assessments (Career, Learning Styles, and Personality Styles).

Additional Assignments: Extra suggested activities to use with each topic.

Text-Specific Study Plan (available with select books): Chapter Objectives, Practice Tests, Enrichment activities, and Flashcards.

MyStudentSuccessLab Topic List –

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Time Management/Planning | 8. Problem-Solving |
| 2. Values/Goal Setting | 9. Information Literacy |
| 3. Learning How You Learn | 10. Communication |
| 4. Listening and Taking Class Notes | 11. Test Prep and Test Taking |
| 5. Reading and Annotating | 12. Stress Management |
| 6. Memory and Studying | 13. Financial Literacy |
| 7. Critical Thinking | 14. Majors and Careers |

MyStudentSuccessLab Support:

- **Demos, Registration, Log-in** – www.mystudentsuccesslab.com under “Tours and Training” and “Support.”
- **Email support** – Send an inquiry to MyStudentSuccessLab@pearson.com
- **Online Training** – Join one of our weekly WebEx training sessions.
- **Peer Training** – Faculty Advocate connection for qualified adoptions.
- **Technical support** – 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at <http://247pearsoned.custhelp.com>

The First-Generation

College Experience