



**CUNY EARLY COLLEGE INITIATIVE
COLLEGE SUCCESS PROGRAM
CURRICULUM & RESOURCE GUIDE**

Written and Developed by Denise Harding for CUNY Early College Initiative

Introduction

The Early College Initiative (ECI) College Success Program was designed to help struggling early college students, in grade 9-14 schools, address and remedy key issues related to college readiness and success, including self-knowledge, academic and career planning, study skills, success minded attitudes, and goal-oriented motivations. Since the format (frequency, total hours, instructor profile, etc.) has yet to be determined by participating schools, will vary, and likely evolve over time, the curriculum is presented in unit form so that instructors may have the liberty of taking an “a la carte” approach to program delivery, dependent on student need and institutional constraints. While the program was created to assist struggling students, almost every element of the curriculum can, and perhaps should be taught, prior to beginning college coursework so as to mitigate potential challenges to college success.

The Challenges to Success

The ECI College Success pilot program was conducted in the summer of 2016 with students from two ECI high schools with cumulative GPAs below 2.0 after at least two semesters of college work. Based on general observations, it appeared that a significant percentage of the students faltered because their interests and aptitudes were a mismatch for the associate degree program options offered at their high schools. This resulted in persistent disinterest and poor academic performance in their courses of study. The hope is that by being exposed to informal interest assessments and guided career research, students will emerge from this program with a better understanding of where their true interests, skills, and values lie, leading to increased motivation and more educated decisions about whether they should continue with their current course of study. For some, pursuing other academic or training programs may be more gratifying, leading to greater success.

Deficient academic skills in the areas of literacy and/or mathematics is a significant issue for the majority of students who struggle with college level work. Despite having passed Regents and CUNY proficiency exams, many students lack the academic knowledge and skills to succeed in higher education, and have often not taken the initiative to seek supports to remediate their deficiencies. It is therefore recommended that the College Success Program for struggling college students be accompanied by consistent, mandatory supports in mathematics and/or literacy (reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and writing) specific to the needs of individual students.

It is clear from our work in the pilot program that the majority of those who met the criteria for enrollment in the College Success Program did not fully understand how the expectations for students change from high school to college. Clarifying the differences between secondary and post-secondary educational approaches; addressing issues of perseverance and overcoming

adversity; and emphasis on the importance of self-knowledge, self-advocacy, and utilization of available resources are therefore very important to the process.

Finally, there are the issues of goal setting, belief in the inherent value of high achievement, and the understanding and application of study skills. For many, simply passing their high school classes, regardless of the grade earned, was enough of an achievement. Those attitudes must change if students are to maintain the GPA required to obtain their associate's degree, potentially move on to a bachelor's program, and acquire the knowledge necessary to be successful in the workforce. Some students simply do not appreciate or understand how the process of learning works, the compounding effect of incremental learning and knowledge acquisition, and how significantly grades and hard work ultimately impact their ability to fulfill their dreams. Course instructors must therefore take a systematic approach to helping students understand and implement strategies that will improve their ability to set goals and incorporate essential study skills into their academic lives.

The recommended student text is *Study Smarter, Not Harder*, a study skills guide by Kevin Paul that is both rich in content and student accessible. Additionally, some units will require that each student be provided copies of reading material found in the course Appendix.

Building the Foundation for Change

Our students should be engaged in consistent self-reflection both in and out of the classroom throughout the course, at intervals determined by the instructor. This should form the basis for understanding the specifics of why they may be on academic probation and what changes they will need to make to move forward. It is important that we challenge students to “dig deep,” self-question, challenge their own assumptions and norms, and develop the capacity to be empathetic and open to the viewpoints and experiences of others. This is a challenge for many and requires that teachers do a great deal of initial team building and guidance to improve and foster strong verbal communication skills, norms for group interactions, and a sense of shared purpose in order to ensure the feeling of safety and comradery among cohort members. Though not included in the curriculum, instructors should focus *at least* 25% of instructional time during the first month to building these skills and emphasizing their importance for growth and transformation.

The work of building engaged, supportive student communities can be difficult, but it is essential for this program's success. Students must build trust among themselves and with the instructor facilitating this work. It is therefore imperative that the teachers selected be those who have already established strong relationships with members of the student body or have the personality and drive to do so quickly. The instructor must have experience with advisement protocols, understand the research on college readiness, and be well-versed in

strategies for creating a college going culture and good college decision-making. Since both verbal and written communication play such a large part in the course and students' college success, it is also an asset for instructors to have a strong literacy background.

Preparation for teaching the class must include dedicated time for learning and understanding the needs of the cohort group. We strongly recommend that teachers carefully review students' high school and college transcripts prior to the beginning of the course. Meetings with both students and parents help to firmly establish the intent and expectations of the course, and also serve to better understand students' needs and attitudes.

While teaching the course, it is not necessary to engage in only one unit a time. In fact, it might be advantageous at certain points in the course to expose students to material involving two or three concepts at a time. For example, lessons on goal setting and career exploration can prove to be complementary. Instructors might find it helpful to use videos from the *We Are Marcus* curriculum (discussed below) to supplement those lessons. Similarly, continuing work on note taking skills while delving into the section on "[Reading to Learn](#)" would make a strong combination. Please note that while unit one and the first four sections of unit two are divided into clearly defined parts, the remaining sections covering the Process of Learning are less delineated. Therefore, the concepts listed in the Table of Contents for those sections simply identify the main ideas discussed in each section.

We Are Marcus

We Are Marcus is a virtual character development program uniquely designed to appeal to young men of color who sometimes have difficulty seeing themselves as scholars and too often underperform in the classroom, despite intelligence and aptitude. ECI chose to make this character development program available to all of our schools because we saw the impact of these short videos during the summer pilot program. The stories shared by the three men featured encouraged students to share their own challenges to success, open up about their painful experiences, and discuss their perspectives about the path forward. The speakers discuss five specific themes – Overcoming Adversity, Knowing Yourself, Perseverance, Strengths and Areas of Development, and Keys to Success. Unlike many other similarly purposed efforts, these individuals, though very different from each other and in perspective, are relatable and inspiring to a variety of students. We strongly advise instructors to watch all of the video segments and review the accompanying Facilitator Guide and Student Takeaways so that they can incorporate this resource in ways that best meet their students' needs and curriculum timeline. Both the video links and the guides are part of the course Appendix. We hope you find these and the other suggested videos helpful in fostering student engagement and discourse.

Culminating Career and Academic Plan (C.A.P.)

For students mandated to the College Success Program in order to resume college coursework, creating a culminating project that identifies their academic and career plans will serve as an excellent measure of their understanding of the curriculum elements and their ability to successfully resume their studies in early college programs. The culminating Career and Academic Plan (C.A.P.) should include clear, well thought-out S.M.A.R.T. goals; a demonstration of the student's ability to be self-reflective and introspective about his/her current academic status; the understanding and application of study skills concepts taught during the course; and the articulation of academic and career plans based on the results of job research, interest assessment tools, and self-reflections that participants underwent during the course.

We recommend that students be required to produce extended written responses that answer in detail the following questions:

- How did I get here?
 - o Personal challenges
 - o Study skills
 - o Academic proficiency
- What have I learned?
 - o Interest assessment results
 - o Newly learned study skills
 - o Job research
 - o New insights
- Where am I going?
 - o Academic plans
 - o Potential career paths

The results of the College Success pilot program demonstrated that when students prepared these responses and delivered a presentation to fellow students, instructors, and high school and college administrators advocating for college re-entry, they were more focused on a success mindset. Instructors should of course set their own parameters and expectations for the culminating project. However, we strongly suggest that the different sections of the C.A.P. be completed incrementally, with instructor scaffolds (particularly in the early stages), to ensure that students benefit from their support and feedback. Building in delivery deadlines for each section will help students to better manage the project. Instructors may also find it helpful to refer to the scoring rubric utilized during the pilot program (included in the course Appendix) as a guide to content and evaluation.

We look forward to hearing about your work with the College Success curriculum and welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Denise Harding and the ECI College Success Development Team

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Unit 1 – Know Yourself

Section 1: Your College Experience So Far (Impressions, Performance & Outlook)

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Reflect and discuss their perceptions regarding preparedness for college level work, their professors, and support received to date
- Discuss the differences in expectations between high school and college and the challenges to adapt
- Understand how individual course grades affect cumulative GPA and the importance cumulative GPA has on their academic opportunities
- Discuss and reflect on challenges they have had with specific subjects

Materials:

[You and Your College Experience – Where Are You Now?](#) creating (Appendix)

[You and Your College Experience – Where Do You Want to Go?](#) (Appendix)

[You and Your College Experience – Perceptions So Far?](#) (Appendix)

[You and Your College Experience – What Is Your Current College Plan?](#) (Appendix)

Dry erase board *or* chart paper & appropriate markers

College's grading policy (excerpt from college online catalogue)

College's tuition and fees (excerpt from college online catalogue)

Access to laptop computer (with Internet) or manual GPA calculator worksheet

Explain:

In order to emerge from a challenging situation (academic probation) it is important to fully understand how and why you got there and where you want to go. Reflection plays an important part in helping us learn from our experiences so we can move forward.

Key Points:

- Every experience is an opportunity for learning.
- Our experiences are not isolated, unrelated events. They are very often linked. We can therefore see big ideas when we view them as a whole.
- Reflection and discussion allows us to better understand, acknowledge other perspectives, and grow from our experiences.
- Sharing our reflections as a group helps us to problem solve, recognize similarity in our experiences, and foster a better understanding of each other.

- Students must take control of their education in order to succeed. They must fully understand what courses are required to complete their degree, how their performance in each class so far has impacted their path towards graduation, and what must be achieved going forward in order to earn their associate’s degree.
- Students should recognize that their ECI college credits and degree has an actual dollar and must be earned.

Process:

Part 1 – Where Are You Now?

(15 minutes)

Distribute the *Where Are You Now* questionnaire, asking students to thoughtfully complete the 20 questions *(5-7 minutes)*. Once completed, divide students into discussion groups of 3-4 *(8-10 minutes)*. To foster discussion, encourage students to compare their responses. For example:

- Which questions resulted in similar responses?
- Which questions were the most difficult to answer?
- Which questions challenged you to think about something you had not necessarily thought about before?

Part 2 – Where Do You Want to Go?

(15-20 minutes)

Distribute the [*Where Do You Want to Go?*](#) questionnaire. Have students complete it independently, again encouraging them to give the questions real thought before responding *(5 minutes)*.

Upon completion of questionnaire, ask students to share their three most important areas for improvement. Keep tally of student responses as they share their areas in need of development, including skills that were not included on list (write in responses). Encourage students to notice and discuss the most popular answers, why they made those particular choices and their common goals so that they can support each other to improve in these areas *(10-15 minutes)*.

Part 3 – What Are Your Perceptions of College So Far?

(15-20 minutes)

Students complete the three questions on the *“Your Perceptions So Far”* survey, again emphasizing the importance of thoughtfulness and truthfulness in response. Instruct students to share their responses in a whole or small group setting (depending on class size, etc.)

- Are feelings about college faculty generally positive or negative? Why?

- Are feelings about the institution (high school and/or college) generally positive or negative? Why?

Instructor should consider collection and review of student responses for “[Perceptions](#)” survey in particular, but for other parts as well. This will help gauge students’ starting points and areas for further discussion.

Part 4 – What Is Your Current College Plan?

(5-10 minutes)

Students complete the “[What Is Your Current College Plan](#)” survey based on their current thinking about their academic performance and aspirations.

Part 5 – What Are Your ECI College Credits and Degree Worth and What Will Be Your Path to Graduation?

(1.25 hours)

Discuss the current cost for a two-year (60 credit) degree at students’ college, clarifying the financial, academic, and career benefits of students’ early college scholarship (instructor may want to consider review of recent news articles or videos discussing the benefits and opportunities a college degree provides). Explain the academic probation policy of the college and the reason for its enforcement.

Distribute students’ current college and high school transcript for student review and reference. Using the pages on grading policy from the college’s catalogue as a reference, review and explain the following: letter grades and their quality points (QPA), how GPA is calculated, incomplete grades, the impact of repeating courses in which D and F grades were earned, the impact of course credit load on semester GPA, semester GPA vs. cumulative GPA, and implications of GPA on acceptance to competitive four-year colleges.

Using an online GPA calculator (suggested, <https://advising.wisc.edu/gpacalculator>), students enter current cumulative GPA to determine what course load (credits) and grades they need to earn in order to be removed from academic probation and to set realistic grade goals for classes they will take in the upcoming semester.

After exploring a variety of scenarios using the GPA calculator, students should complete a **written reflection** on their experience examining their transcripts and using the calculator tool.

Questions for reflection:

- What were the reasons for poor performance in certain subjects?

- Based on high school grades, were you prepared to take the college courses for which you were enrolled?
- What supports were offered to you to improve your academic performance? Which supports did you actually use and to what degree?
- What were your academic successes? Why were you successful in those courses?
- After using the GPA calculator are you more or less optimistic about completing your degree?
- Do you now have a better understanding of your path to graduation?
 - How does your reflection compare with the responses you gave in the *What Is Your Current College Plan* survey?
- Encourage students to share their reflections with classmates
 - Provide opportunity for constructive student feedback and validation

Section 2: Which Area of Study and/or Career Should You Pursue?

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Examine their work related values and skills, personality type, and academic preferences through informal interest assessments and reflection
- Comprehend the importance of attempting to correlate career choice with their academic interests, values, skills, and personality
- Explore the reasons *why* they may have certain dreams and aspirations and recognize that they are as important as the dreams themselves
- Understand the difference between a job and a career
- Apply what they have learned about themselves to compose a list of viable career options based on suggestions from the System of Integrated Guidance and Information (SIGI³) and other assessment tools, existing interests, or other sources
- Investigate possible career areas and job options
- Identify specific steps other individuals have taken to make decisions about career paths
- Discover that career paths can be planned and that a job in one area can lead to another higher level position in the same field or in a different career cluster

Materials:

Laptop computers (or computer lab) with Internet access

SIGI³ user guide (or other subscribed assessment tool) and FAQs for each of the online surveys

Loose-leaf paper

[A Journey Begins](#) (Appendix) – Adapted from Saylor Academy

[Rebecca's Letter to Students](#) (Appendix) – From CUNY Career Kit for HSE & ESL Learners – Career Fundamentals

Suggested Video:

The Future of Work, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5JNzAmWG2Fs>

Explain:

To make a wise choice about your course of study (major), and ultimately a career, there should first be some focus on understanding who you are as a person (values, interests, personality, skills, and aptitudes). It is important to fully explore what is required to get jobs in the field of interest, what the job/career is like on a day-to-day basis, and what the opportunities are for

advancement, etc. Effort, self-reflection, and investigation are necessary to make sound choices.

Process:

Part 1 – What Do You Expect From Your Working Life?

(20-30 minutes)

Begin a discussion with students about work including: what jobs their parents or other immediate families have, what messages (conscious or unconscious) they have received about work, what types of jobs have they been encouraged to pursue, the perceived value or prestige they associate with certain types of jobs, what jobs they have had, and what expectations they have for their adult working lives. Students should be asked to spend *at least* 15 minutes engaging in a short written reflection that encourages thought on this topic.

Prompt: What do I expect from my working life?

Part 2 – What Will Be Your Life’s Mission?

(30-35 minutes)

Define a personal mission statement, and instruct students to write one of their own. For example:

“A personal mission statement is a statement, put in writing, which clarifies who you are as an individual, how you want to live, and what your purpose in life will be.”

Distribute the [A Journey Begins](#) readings. Students read (shared or independently) *A Journey Begins* packet, complete the “My Dreams for the Future” chart, and work on their first draft of a personal mission statement as directed in package. Teachers are encouraged to provide examples of student mission statements as models for this exercise. Students share the first draft of their mission statement with at least one classmate.

Part 3 – Factors to Consider When Choosing a Career

(1.0-1.25 Hours)

To introduce students to the concept of career choice, consider reading the following statement to students and elicit feedback.

“A job: yes, it’s something you would like to have, especially if you want to pay your bills. A job lets you enjoy a minimal level of financial security. A job requires you to show up and do what is required of you; in exchange, you get paid. A career involves holding jobs, but it is more a means of achieving personal fulfillment. In a career, your jobs follow a sequence that leads to increasing mastery, professional development, and personal and financial satisfaction. A career

requires planning, knowledge, and skills. If it is to be a fulfilling career, it requires that you bring into play your full set of analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills to make informed decisions that will affect your life in both the short term and the long term.” – Saylor Academy

Engage students in discussion about all the factors that one should consider when deciding on a career, including concerns about what income they would be comfortable making, what type of lifestyle they hope to pursue, how much time they want to spend on educational pursuits, what impact they want to make in the world, how they want to spend their day, what do they do well, etc. These factors for consideration are their interests, values, skills and personality. Explain that computer programs like SIGI³ (available at some CUNY colleges), and other online career planning tools, can help them uncover, confirm and reflect on the factors that can affect career choice and suitability.

Explain that these websites can help students explore possible career options based on their responses in each category or the combination of their responses in each area. Review user guides (if available) and discuss interests, values, skills and personality types and how each might influence job choices. Ensure that students have a good understanding of the categories and what they measure. Encourage them to use the definitions provided on the websites as reference.

Guide students to access chosen career counseling website and the set-up of student accounts. Instructor should encourage students to complete at least one type of survey for each of the assessed areas.

Part 4 – Reflection on Informal Survey Assessment Results

(15-20 minutes)

Break students into small groups of 3-4 for discussion and sharing of their inventory assessment results. Possible questions:

- Did anything in your results surprise you?
- Was it difficult to answer the questions? If so, why?
- Were there questions posed that you had not previously considered?

Groups should assign one person to share their overall reactions and responses with the class.

Part 5 – Career Areas, Job Exploration, and Research Assignments

(Time allotted will vary dependent on instructor preferences, computer accessibility, etc.

Multiple sessions are recommended.)

Students should explore the Occupational Info and Virtual Job Library available on SIGI³ or other selected online tools. Point out that occupations may be categorized in 12 different ways. Encourage them to explore the website on their own to gain information about a variety of

professions that might be of interest. Also encourage exploration of <https://www.mynextmove.org/> for further job/career research.

To help focus students, instructors are strongly encouraged to assign students the task of researching and composing information sheets on 3-5 possible potential professions for presentation to the class. Instructors should create their own parameters for work product. However, info sheets should contain information about education requirements, the outlook for employment, skills required, etc. Students should be encouraged to utilize the online career counseling tool, the virtual job library and other resources for major and job research throughout the course of this program.

Note: *Following discussion and career map exercise in Part 6 – Rebecca’s Career Path, instructor should consider assigning students the task of creating 3-5 detailed career maps for researched careers to be included as part of the course culminating project.*

Part 6 – Rebecca’s Career Path*

(30-40 minutes)

**Taken from CUNY Career Kit for HSE & ESL Learners – Career Fundamentals*

Explain to students that individual career paths differ and people enter jobs in a variety of ways. Encourage students to discuss ways in which they or others they know have come to be hired for positions. Sometimes career paths are unplanned, and sometimes a great deal of research and planning is involved.

Introduce *Rebecca’s Letter to Students* where a former teacher writes a letter to her students explaining why and how she decided to leave her teaching career to pursue a career in medicine. Distribute Rebecca’s letter to class. Students should read the letter independently and take notes as to what specific steps Rebecca took to be hired for specific jobs. Instructor should engage class in a discussion about Rebecca’s process, creating/illustrating a career map as students provide steps that were taken towards job attainment.

Note: *Instructor should point out that this type of mapping is something students should consider employing for examining their own career paths and for completing the course’s culminating project.*

Unit 1 – Know Yourself

Section 3: How Do We Learn?

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Explain the ways in which the brain can be developed and how individuals can grow their intelligence
- Understand the concept of multiple intelligences and how our dominant intelligences might affect our preferred tasks and activities, career choices, and best methods for study and learning
- Discover their dominant learning styles and intelligences based on responses to assessment tools

Materials:

Study Smarter, Not Harder (SSNH) by Kevin Paul (Reference Book)

[Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic \(VAK\) Learning Style Questionnaire](#) (Appendix)

Gardner's [Multiple Intelligences](#) Rebecca Survey (Appendix)

Howard Gardner's [Theory of Multiple Intelligences](#) Handout (Appendix)

[The Seven Styles of Learning](#) Handout (Appendix)

Pre-Class Assigned Reading:

Chapters 1-3 of course reference book, *Study Smarter, Not Harder* (SSNH)

Explain:

Our prior experiences as learners, in and out of the classroom, have a significant influence on our current attitudes towards learning and how we engage in the classroom and in independent study. While some of us have had mostly positive learning experiences, many of us have had negative experiences that challenge our beliefs about what and how we can learn and what we can achieve academically. Regardless of our prior experiences, we all have infinite capacity for learning and expanding our knowledge and skills. Because we all learn differently, understanding *how* we learn can help make learning an easier process.

Key Points:

- The human brain is a powerful supercomputer that holds tremendous ability to process and synthesize information, be creative and engage in higher thought.
- We all have the potential to achieve academically with proper training, practice, and persistence.

- Our ability to learn is based on how the brain functions. The brain is like a muscle. If we don't use that muscle, it eventually becomes weaker. However, we can restore that strength with renewed effort and retraining, even after prolonged periods where the muscles have not been used.
- *Neuroplasticity* is the term used to describe the brain's ability to change its inner workings. While the number of neurons in the brain are fairly consistent from person to person, it is the number of dendritic connections made that increases brain density and our intelligence. You have the ability to change your brain and to increase your intelligence.
- Challenging your mental capacity by learning new things and going beyond your comfort zone forces the creation of new dendrites and connections in the brain, thereby increasing intelligence.
- There are three areas of the brain (reptilian, limbic and cortical) each working in partnership with the other but with responsibility for very different functions. Understanding how each part works in conjunction with the other helps us understand the brain's inner workings and our own responses to stimuli.
- Because we live in a society where there is rapid change due to the developments in technology and increased access to information, we are constantly forced to learn new things in order to survive. It is important to know how to become a lifelong learner in order to consistently adapt to change.
- Learning new things can, and should be, fun and exciting. Learning also involves making mistakes and sometimes failing before achieving success.
 - o Being willing to make mistakes and risking failure are the only ways to progress in something new.
 - o If you aren't making mistakes, you are probably not being sufficiently challenged, not exercising the brain sufficiently, and therefore not meeting your learning potential.
- We process information differently and must adjust our strategies for retaining new information based on our learning styles.
 - o Individuals must ultimately take responsibility for their learning.

Process:

Part 1 – Ways in Which We Are Already Good Learners

(5-7 minutes)

Introduce students to the concept of learning styles through discussion about ways in which we are already good learners. Questions for discussion:

- What is an activity that you have learned to do well?
- How did you become skilled in that particular activity?
- What caused you to devote time to learning to do that activity well?
- Have you ever taught someone else to do something you already know how to do well?
 - o What advice did/would you give them?
- What is something you've had trouble learning?
 - o Why do you think you've struggled to learn it?

Help students to recognize that what they have become good at came as the result of making a conscious decision to learn and practice and that they can learn anything they set their minds to.

Part 2 – Parts of the Brain and How the Brain Works

(30-40 minutes)

Facilitate discussion with students about pages 1-24 of *Study Smarter, Not Harder* (SSNH) with focus on ensuring understanding the responsibilities of each part of the “triune” human brain, in particular: the importance of the limbic brain as the primary site of long-term memory and emotional associations, the two-sided cortical brain’s responsibility for higher brain function, and the concept of neuroplasticity.

Suggested Video:

Brain-Based Learning Model - Neuroplasticity (3:21)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvZ-9ofM7Go>

Part 3 – Learning Styles & Howard Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences

(45-50 minutes)

Distribute copy of VAK Learning Styles Questionnaire and the Gardner’s [Multiple Intelligences](#) Questionnaire. Student should complete and record the results of their assessments within 15-20 minutes. Encourage students to share their results with classmates.

Reiterate to students that although we are all capable of learning, we all learn differently, and our strengths are varied. Learning strategies that might work well for one student, may not work as well for another.

Discuss different modes of learning, referring to SSNH pages 25-26 and the explanation page that accompanies the questionnaire. Explain that although we *initially* tend to have a preferred mode, our ability to acquire knowledge from different modes of learning is fairly equal. Students must engage in different modes of learning in order to strengthen their understanding and become more effective learners. Emphasize that more than anything, we need to derive

meaning from what we learn so that we are more likely to retain the information and be able to apply what we learn to situations and to problem-solve.

Ask students to share their understanding of Howard Gardner’s Eight Multiple Intelligences and what their surveys revealed. Do they think that the survey accurately reflected their dominant intelligences? Discuss how identifying one’s dominant intelligence might affect the choices one makes with regard to learning and studying. As part of class discussion, compile a tally of students’ top three “intelligences,” allowing students to compare their results.

Review SSNH pages 27-31 or the [Seven Styles of Learning](#) handout in the Appendix, and discuss ways that people with different dominant intelligences might attempt to learn the same material and maximize their ability to achieve mastery. Ask students to consider examples of strategies or activities they might try to in order maximize their own learning, considering their assessment results.

Unit 2 – Study Skills & Academic Skills

Section 1: What Are Your Study Skills Strengths and Areas for Improvement?

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Complete and analyze a study skills diagnostic
- Identify and reflect on areas for improvement in study skills

Materials:

ECI College Success Program Study Skills Diagnostic (Appendix)

Key Points:

- In order to achieve academic success students must achieve some level of proficiency in each of the key study skills categories:
 - o Time management
 - o Concentration and memory
 - o Note taking
 - o Test-taking strategies
 - o Information processing and critical thinking
 - o Motivation and attitude
 - o Reading comprehension and writing skills
- By completing and reflecting on a diagnostic, students will have the ability to consider their strengths and challenges and identify areas in need of improvement.

Process:

Explain to students that the purpose of the diagnostic is to help them think about the study and learning habits and routines they have developed over the years. Be sure to emphasize that this is not a judgment tool. Rather, it is a tool for identifying areas of strength and areas that may need to be developed in order to improve their educational outcomes. It is crucial that students are honest in their responses and that they are given the opportunity to reflect on the results. Doing so will help them better their chances for improvement.

Complete Student Skills Diagnostic

(20-30 minutes)

Distribute diagnostic for completion. Students are asked to rank their score in each study skill area from highest to lowest. The highest scores reflect areas that, from the student's

perspective, are areas of strength or where they are confident. Lower scores indicate less confidence and areas in need of improvement. Advise students that a score of six (6) or less in any area indicates that it is an area in need of improvement.

Encourage student discussion (small group and whole class) about the results of their diagnostic.

- Do the results match their own perceptions?
- What feelings arose as they responded to the questions?
- Is there a lot of commonality in strengths or areas of weakness?

Unit 2 – Study Skills & Academic Skills

Section 2: Preparing the Mind and Space for Studying

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Recognize that both their mental state and environment play a large part in their ability to learn effectively
- Critique their current study space(s), and implement a plan for improvement of space(s) if needed
- Identify three alternative spaces for study - one in their homes and the others outside the home (e.g., the college library)
- Reflect on perceived challenges that have hampered study efforts in the past and current attitudes that might affect their success
- Discuss negative perceptions about their academic ability, limiting beliefs, and attitudes that may be hampering their chances for success
- Understand and embrace a growth mindset, and adopt a positive outlook on success

Materials:

Study Smarter, Not Harder (Reference Book)

Video presentations on success, limiting beliefs, and growth mindsets

Suggested Videos:

The Power of Belief – Mindset & Success by Eduardo Briceno

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN34FNbOKXc>

Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are by Amy Cuddy

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ks-_Mh1QhMc

Explain:

Our state of mind (stress, happiness, depression, etc.) and the physical space in which we study have a significant impact on how effectively we work. It is therefore important for students to pay attention to their state of mind when they are in class or preparing to study. It is very helpful to implement strategies that promote a positive state of mind. Where students choose to study is also an important factor in study success.

Key Points:

- The location in which you study should be one you consistently associate with studying. Places at home where the family routinely gathers, like the kitchen table, or the

student lounge at school where your friends gather to socialize are generally poor choices. Study spaces should be free of distractions. It is a good idea to have one study location at home, one at school, and one other area such as a public library or work centered café.

- Decide what type of environment really works for you. If the space is too hot, too cold, too silent, too dark, or too crowded, you'll be distracted. You may be inspired by being in a space where others are also studying, or you may prefer a space away from everyone else. Experiment to find out which environment works best for you.
- It is important to make sure that the study area selected meets all study needs (i.e.: desk/table, comfortable chair, power outlet for laptop, good lighting, pens, highlighters, etc.).
- Limit distractions. Turn off cell phone notifications and social media, and have a plan for how you might put off friends asking you to do something other than study.
- Plan the amount of time you will study at each interval. Be realistic about the amount of time that makes sense for each sitting and plan for periodic breaks.
- Be specific about what needs to be accomplished during each study session. Tasks should be broken into chunks so that progress can be celebrated.
- In order to study effectively, it is helpful to be relaxed. Anxiety and stress inhibit learning and concentration, so it is helpful to begin by employing relaxation strategies like slow, deep breathing, visualization, etc. (You may want to try doing this during one of your sessions.)
- A positive "can-do" attitude and a belief in your ability to grow, learn, and thrive are essential for success in any arena.

Student Assigned Reading:

SSNH Chapter 3, pages 33-56

Process:

Part 1 – A Place for Study

(20-25 minutes)

Engage students in discussion about where they typically study and what elements they look for in a good study space. Discussion should include sharing about the personal challenges they have experienced finding spaces to study. Encourage students to share their experiences, challenges, and what they've learned about which study spaces work well for them.

Encourage student reflection to:

- Consider the environmental factors that are important to them when choosing a study space

- Critique their current work spaces
 - o What works? What needs to be altered or improved? Can this space be improved or should you find a different space?
- Identify and record, in writing, two to three locations (ideally one each at home, school, and in public space) they will consistently use for study.
 - o They should explain why the spaces were chosen and the potential challenges that might be presented.

Explain to students that they should hold themselves and each other accountable for using the spaces selected. Encourage students to be consistent and to develop a routine that would foster use of the identified spaces.

Part 2 – Preparing the Mind for Study

(30-40 minutes)

Engage students in discussion about the techniques suggested in SSNH (pages 40-49) about preparing the mind for studying. Ensure discussion includes conversation about:

- The importance of setting realistic, concrete, significant objectives or series of objectives before sitting down to study so that a positive, goal-oriented mindset is established from the beginning.
- Strategies for relaxation and stress reduction, visualization, and building a positive self-image through visualization and/or affirmations.
 - o How many of the students actually tried a few of the suggested techniques after reading the chapter?
 - What were their feelings as they tried the exercises?
 - Had they tried these techniques before?
 - What is the value of positive or negative thinking? Can either really have an impact on outcomes?
 - Students should identify two strategies they will immediately employ to improve their study mindsets.
- Explain that although much of the way we function today involves multitasking, it is important that this is not the case when attempting to study.
 - o We must train our minds to focus solely on understanding and retaining the information being learned. Multitasking does not support the necessary concentration for a successful study session.
 - Turn off laptops (unless absolutely needed for study)
 - Log off of social media for the duration of study time (this is one of the most common challenges that students face; instructors may want to dedicate additional time to discussing why it is hard to disconnect and the advantages to doing so)

Part 3 – Overcoming Limiting Beliefs and Embracing a Growth Mindset

Show suggested videos, or other appropriate videos, that discuss the concept of limiting belief or fixed mindsets. Facilitate conversation about the content in video presentations. Encourage students to question what limiting beliefs they might have and how those beliefs might subconsciously influence their behavior, choices, goals, and attitudes. Encourage students to share experiences either as a class, in partnerships, or in small groups (3-4).

Note: *This is an ideal opportunity for follow up with students producing written reflections.*

Section 3: Goal Setting

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Visualize where they expect to be within intervals of 2, 5, 10, and 15 years
- Recognize the importance of having clearly articulated written goals in order to progress forward
- Determine areas of life for which developing goals would be beneficial
- Demonstrate an understanding of the components of S.M.A.R.T. goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely/Time-Based)
- Apply their understanding of goal setting to create short, medium and long term goals

Explain:

Developing, articulating, and writing clear goals can be essential in helping us organize our lives so that we can successfully and deliberately progress in a positive direction, be held accountable, and plan many aspects of our lives. This includes our education, career, finances, health, family relationships, social, and spiritual life.

Key Points:

- Lacking clear goals can be a major cause of study problems like procrastination, poor concentration, and lack of motivation.
- Goal setting is a skill that requires an understanding of what goals are, practice and the ability to adjust goals when necessary.
- Goals should be in alignment with *your* values (not those of peers or family) so that you are able to enjoy the journey and have the will to overcome inevitable challenges or failures when they come up. If your goals are *not* truly *yours*, you are less likely to work towards success.
- Goals must meet the criteria of being S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measureable, attainable, realistic, and timely/time-based).
- Putting goals in writing makes them easier to review, prioritize, and adjust when necessary. Additionally, finding just the right words to describe what you want to achieve makes goals clearer to you.
- The physical act of writing goals better engages your intelligences. You are more likely to brainstorm, connect ideas, and remember them.
- Although your goals should be reasonable, you should also challenge yourself.

- dAGoals should be divided into immediate (today, next week, within a few months), short-term (6 months - 2 years), intermediate (2-5 years), and long term (5-10 years, and beyond) intervals.
- Goals should be linked – your immediate and short term goals should all have a direct relationship to longer term aspirations.

Process:

Part 1 – What Is Your Vision for the Future?

(50-60 minutes)

Materials:

Poster board

Scissors

Glue

Calming music (optional)

About 3-5 days before this class, ask students to collect images from magazines, online websites, etc. that represent the life they hope to lead within the next 15 years. Images may include words, quotes, images of locations or homes, people involved in activities of any kind in which they hope to participate, work situations, or any image that inspires a positive, aspirational feeling and connection with the mission statements they created in Unit 1. Students should bring these images to class so they can engage in creating and sharing vision boards in class.

Refer students back to their mission statements. Explain that in addition to a mission statement, creating a vision board can be a powerful visualization tool that can help individuals move towards their goals, dreams, passions, and purpose. Students should complete their vision boards in class, in a relaxed atmosphere. Calming music may be helpful in establishing a reflective atmosphere. Students should share their vision boards with the class, discussing the reasons they chose the images they did. They should be encouraged to hang their vision boards somewhere in their homes where they can see them regularly and add to them as their visions evolve over time.

Part 2 – Understanding S.M.A.R.T. Goals

(30-40 minutes)

Materials:

SSNH Reference Book (Chapter 8)

Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals Handout (Appendix)

Assign reading of Chapter 8 of SSNH prior to class to encourage students to contemplate their goals for the future. Engage in classroom discussion about making goals, referring to and clarifying the key points stated above. Review the *Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals* handout ensuring that students comprehend what each letter of the acronym means and specifically what needs to be considered in order to create goals that meet the criteria.

Discuss the differences between immediate, short-term, intermediate, and long term goals. Emphasize that intermediate and long term goals—e.g. “graduate summa cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in mathematics” or “earn a salary of \$60,000 by 2020”, can only be achieved if they can stick to immediate and short-term goals, e.g. “create notes from Chapter 8 of physics book using the Cornell method by Tuesday, October 8”, “use Cornell notes and class notes to study material in Chapter 8 of physics textbook for 2.5 hours on Saturday morning”, “earn a minimum grade of B+ in physics this semester.”

Part 3 – Creating S.M.A.R.T. Goals

(30-40 minutes)

Materials:

[S.M.A.R.T. Goals Template](#) (Appendix)

[Short and Long-Term Goals Worksheet](#) (Appendix)

Distribute two copies of the S.M.A.R.T. Goals Template to each student. Assign the task of creating one short to intermediate term S.M.A.R.T. goal using the template. Students should receive instructor guidance to ensure that the final goal developed meets the S.M.A.R.T. criteria. Instruct students to share their process and final S.M.A.R.T. goal with a partner or small group (3-4 students). Encourage students to provide each other with constructive feedback.

Assign a second task of independently crafting 3-4 short to intermediate term S.M.A.R.T. goals to be reviewed by the instructor and/or classmates.

Remind students that these types of goals can, and perhaps should be created for planning their educational progress, development of extracurricular activities, relationships, career, etc. They should revisit and adjust these goals regularly to ensure they are still relevant to their long term goals. Students then complete the *Short and Long-Term Goals Worksheet* using S.M.A.R.T. criteria with the understanding that these goals can be adjusted over time and should always be top of mind.

Section 4: Time Management and Setting Priorities

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Demonstrate the ability to set appropriate priorities
- Utilize strategies for staying focused and motivated
- Identify and apply techniques for combating procrastination
- Complete an analysis of how their time is spent on a weekly basis
- Choose a reliable tool for planning schedules and to-do lists
- Understand their “time personality” and how it might affect how they schedule and use their time and adapt to conflict and changes
- Construct a daily, weekly, and monthly calendar that includes important events and schedules for school, work, family, friends, and hobby activities
- Develop systems and routines for updating and using a calendar, and developing and using a “to-do” list

Explain:

Discuss with students that although they may have excellent goals and the best of intentions, it is very easy to become distracted and to lose track of their goals unless they are able to arrange their lives around set priorities. It is easier to stick to goals when their time is managed wisely. Daily, weekly, and monthly calendars (for recording important due dates, events, and academic deadlines), and “to-do” lists are important time management tools. This section of the course will provide them with opportunities to learn how to successfully schedule their lives around articulated priorities in order to better meet their goals.

Key Points:

- Setting priorities on a daily basis is necessary to staying on track to accomplish both short and long term goals.
- A positive attitude, being open to change, and overcoming fears are essential to changing negative habits and making positive change.
- It is important to understand how you spend your time now in order to determine whether you are spending your time well and how you might be able to better use your time.
- Being properly prepared for study, setting study goals, and keeping focused on the reward you feel when study goals are accomplished, can lessen the amount of wasted study time.

- Understanding the importance of having and sticking to a schedule is at the heart of time management.
- There are many options for calendars and planners. Use the format that works best for you.
- Having a master calendar with important dates (exams, quizzes, school breaks, assignment due dates, academic deadlines, etc.) is useful as a reference point for planning your daily/weekly work and priorities.
- Scheduling fractions of time for study (commuting time, between classes, during meals, etc.) and making sure to schedule leisure time is helpful for balancing your time.

Process:

Part 1 – Staying On Track and Motivated

(1-1.25 Hours)

Materials:

SSNH Reference Books (Chapter 9)

[Staying On Track & Motivated Handout](#) (Appendix)

Engage students in conversation about how well they make and stick to priorities they have set for themselves. What are the challenges to staying on track? What do they currently do to keep themselves on track? Assign students the task of reading SSNH Chapter 9 and the *Staying On Track & Motivated* handout prior to the class. Instructor should facilitate discussion during the class on the strategies suggested in both readings. Based on the readings and discussion instruct students to identify (in writing) a minimum of three strategies they will employ to address their challenges to staying on track.

Part 2 – Where Does the Time Go?

(Two Sessions 0.75-1.0 Hour each)

Materials:

[How to Manage Your Time](#) Handout (Appendix)

[Daily Time Log](#) (Appendix – 7 copies per student)

Give students the task of completing [How to Manage Your Time](#), Activity 1 (pages 1-2), encouraging them to be as honest and thoughtful as possible in their responses. After they have completed Activity 1, discuss student realizations about how their time is actually spent. Discuss what, if anything, was surprising when they reflected on how they spend their time.

Assign students the task of tracking a full week of their actual daily activities in the Daily Time Log. After one week of tracking, students should repeat Activity 1, this time with actual numbers taken from their Daily Logs. Encourage students to fully analyze their results. Are they spending their time the way they would like to spend it? Is how they spend their time helping them to reach their academic goals? What adjustments can be made?

Part 3 – How Should You Spend Your Time?

(40-45 minutes)

Materials:

[How to Manage Your Time](#) Handout (Appendix)

Suggested Video:

How to Stop Procrastinating - Watchwellcast (5:12)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qvcx7Y4caQE>

Using the *How to Manage Your Time* handout, students should read and discuss the sections on Time Management, Time Management Strategies for Success, and Battling Procrastination (pages 3-10). Instructors should ensure that discussions include conversation about how much time students are expected to study independently for each hour of actual class time (2-3 hours for every hour of class time), discovering which time of day might be the best for them to study, using unscheduled time, breaking projects into smaller/less overwhelming tasks, and the importance of setting their own firm deadlines in which to complete tasks.

Following discussion about the reading material, strategies for managing their time, and clarity about expectations, assign students the task of completing Activity 2, *Where Should Your Time Go?* (pages 4-5). Discuss students' discoveries and observations:

- Did they actually have more free time than they initially believed?
- What adjustments do they need to make in how they spend their time in order to fulfill their goals?
 - o Less work or sports hours?
 - o Reduced credit/course load?
 - o Better management of free time?

Part 4 – Using Calendars and To-Do Lists to Stay on Track

(40-45 minutes)

Materials:

How to Manage Your Time Handout (Appendix)

Weekly Planners
Monthly Planners

Discuss the numerous ways that calendars and to-do lists can help students ensure they are spending their time productively. Review the sample to-do lists and calendar in the readings, and assign students the task of finding or creating their own using tools they have researched and selected (paper calendars/planners, digital calendars through Google or Outlook, time management apps, etc.).

Instructor should guide students through the process of weekly/daily planning using syllabi, course calendars, and school calendars to populate their planners with important events (holidays, midterm and final weeks, etc.), assignment due dates, quiz and exam dates, scheduled meetings, and reminders for the entire semester where possible. To encourage student participation and to create a “habit” of mind, students should be *required* to keep an updated calendar of their activities for at least a month. Ideally, these calendars are to be periodically reviewed by instructor and/or peers for accountability.

Unit 2 – Study Skills & Academic Skills

Section 5: The Process of Learning – Information Gathering

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Understand what professors expect from college students
- Identify and understand the four steps of the learning cycle
- Explain the steps necessary to be physically and mentally prepared for lecture classes
- Identify and apply the habits of an active listener
- Recognize the importance of taking strong class notes
- Recognize the benefits and limitations of different types of note taking
- Practice constructing Cornell Notes as a primary method of “*note-making*”
- Improve their ability to summarize information in order to ensure more productive note taking and efficiency in study

Materials:

Pictures of students in classroom setting demonstrating varying levels of engagement
Diagram illustrating the four steps in the learning cycle – Prepare, Absorb, Capture, & Review
SSNH Reference Book, Chapter 11

[Got Notes](#) (Appendix)

Suggested Video:

UBC Chapman Learning Commons – Note taking Skills (L.I.S.T.E.N.)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gCrslHx7xA>

Explain:

In college, academic success depends on you and your engagement in your coursework. The actions you take *before* class and *during* class will have a tremendous impact on your overall academic success. Teachers will generally not provide the types of supports they did in high school (such as study guides, repeating information, etc.). Developing good listening skills, participating in classroom discussions, and strengthening note taking skills are key to maximizing academic success. These are the most important skills in the “capturing” phase of the learning process.

Key Points:

Prior to class, **prepare** for learning by:

- Reviewing notes and handouts from the previous class

- Checking your syllabus for the topic that will be discussed in class, then reading and highlighting appropriate sections of textbook and/or making notes made on the topic before class
- Arriving before class begins with all materials needed (notebook, pens, highlighter, textbook, previous handouts, etc.)
- Connecting with professor and other students *before* class begins
 - o Discussing lectures and assignments
 - o Sharing resources or challenges
- Selecting a seat in class that is close to the front with a clear view of the instructor and away from potential distractions
- Adopting a positive attitude and displaying positive body language
 - o Making eye contact with instructor with an “open” expression
 - o Sitting up attentively, nodding understanding when appropriate
- Getting enough sleep and food so there won’t be physical distractions

During class, **absorb** information by:

- Engaging in active listening
 - o Paying attention to the way instructor has structured material
 - o Tying new information to what you have already been taught or know from prior experience
 - o Self-questioning what is being heard and making connections
 - o Asking questions out loud to clarify statements or for explanation
 - Never sit in ignorance
 - Asking questions helps the instructor expand on ideas and make material more relevant to all students
 - Helps the questioner take ownership of the material
 - o Listening for what is *not* being said
 - If the instructor doesn’t say much about a topic and discusses it less than others, it is likely not as important
 - o Noticing the instructor’s posture, movements, and changes in his/her tone, volume, or inflection; you may notice movements that accompany important points
 - o Engaging fully in classroom discussions as it will help you better understand the material and points of view
 - o Listening for key information likely to appear on a test
 - Definitions
 - Comparisons
 - Themes
 - Significant dates and events

- Superlatives
- Questions the instructor asks during class
- Information that is repeated
- Information the instructor tells the class to pay particular attention to

During the class, **capture** information by:

- Taking notes about what was heard, discussed, and understood during class
- Determining the most effective means of notetaking
 - Notes must include all important information
 - Notes must eventually be coherent, legible, and well-structured to be a strong resource for studying later on

For many students, capturing information is the most challenging part of the process. Students must be engaged in extensive lessons on notetaking using the Got Notes handout included in the Appendix. See further details below.

After the class, **review** notes in order to fully comprehend and retain what is taught.

- Initial review should happen within a few hours of each class while you can still remember key elements of the lecture
 - Write a summary of the notes you've taken in class
 - Write notes on your notes to clarify, question, or to do further inquiry

Process:

Information Gathering and The Learning Cycle

(Time as needed, multiple sessions. Opportunities for practice and demonstration of skill is strongly recommended.)

Prior to classroom discussion on the learning cycle, instructor may choose to make observations of students in earlier College Success or academic classes in order to provide feedback about students' level of engagement. In addition, instructor may facilitate discussion among students about how they perceive their own level of engagement, attitudes towards class lectures, and challenges in the classroom environment. Please also see further suggestions for information gathering section below.

Consider sharing pictures of students in classroom settings demonstrating varying levels of engagement. Solicit feedback about the pictured students' level of engagement, interest, chances of success in the classroom, etc. Push the class to consider what perceptions teachers and classmates of the pictured students might have about them.

Explain the concept of active versus passive listening, asking students to identify which of the pictured students are active listeners and which demonstrate signs of being passive listeners. Explain to students that in order to be successful in the classroom they must become *active listeners*. Define *passive listening* as simply hearing information, which is mechanical and effortless. When listening passively, students make no attempt to think critically about what is being heard. *Active listening* on the other hand involves thinking critically about what is being heard, therefore engaging in *the learning cycle*.

Prepare or draw chart of The Learning Cycle (below) on white board or screen. Using the information provided in the Key Points, facilitate a discussion about each component of the learning cycle, encouraging students to share what they already do to prepare, absorb, capture, and review information.

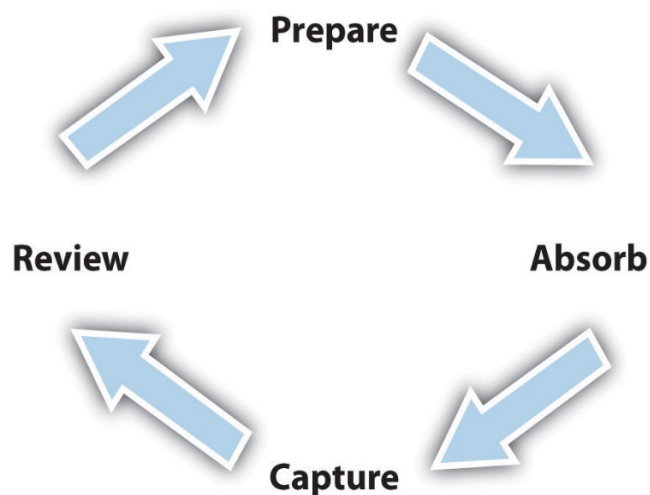


Figure: The Learning Cycle

Further suggestions for the information gathering section:

Based on feedback from students and observations from the pilot College Success Program, there needs to be intensive instruction, review, and multiple opportunities for practice of notetaking skills and strategies. Students should be required to employ notetaking skills in the College Success Class *and* to demonstrate attempts to use and practice the strategies discussed in their academic coursework. Instructors may want to consider doing periodic checks to ensure that students are using the techniques and/or assist those who are struggling with literacy skills such as identifying main ideas, making inferences, and summarizing which details are critical to the process.

One very successful strategy employed in the pilot program was to work with a college instructor to deliver a series of lectures on a relatable, easily accessible topic/subject with the

goal of providing students with opportunities to demonstrate each part of the learning cycle – preparation, absorption, capture, and review. The steps were as follows:

Prior to beginning discussions on information gathering:

- Engage the help of a professor committed to delivering a minimum of five 45-50 minute class lectures that are typical for a college classroom.
- Distribute material related to the first lecture a few days before the first class, informing students that its contents will be the topic of the lecture. Do not give specific instructions about what to do with the material.

Lecture Day 1

- College instructor lectures on relatable topic (social sciences probably most accessible for students).
- Observe and make note of student behavior during first lecture.
 - o Make note of which students took notes during the lecture.
 - o Which students seemed familiar with the material? (Is there evidence that any students read the lecture material provided?)
 - o How was the students' level of engagement during the class? Did they demonstrate the traits of active listeners?
 - o Did students ask questions during the lecture and/or engage fully in discussion?
- College instructor is to assign written homework related to the lecture or reading material that will be due on lecture day 2.
- Share your observations with students after the lecture, making sure to point out *both* positive behaviors and those behaviors that need improvement. This is an excellent time to discuss active vs. passive listening and the preparation and absorption pieces of the learning cycle.

Lecture Day 2

- College professor discusses his/her expectations with students.
 - o What preparatory work is generally expected before a lecture?
 - o What behaviors does the instructor expect to see from students, and what behaviors make an engaging class?
 - o What were the instructor's observations during the previous day's lecture?
- Professor delivers 2nd lecture in the series.
- College Success instructor should again observe student behavior, checking for active listening and students' integration of strategies discussed.

We recommend that students be given an assessment within three days to evaluate their understanding and retention of the material taught over the two days. College professor will grade the tests, and they should be returned to students for review.

These two days of lectures are students' starting points. The focus for the next few weeks of the College Success course will focus on all the components of the learning process – proper preparation for class, active listening, notetaking skills, questioning, review, etc. During this period, students will work actively to improve their skills. After 3-4 weeks, the college professor returns to deliver remaining lectures.

Lectures 3-5 should be considered assessment activities designed to demonstrate understanding of the Process of Learning including information gathering, critical thinking, reading to learn, memorization and recall, and test preparation.

Lecture Days 3 & 4

- Distribute material related to lectures 3 and 4, again with no instructions to students other than to inform them that the upcoming lecture will be based on the handout.
- Reiterate to students that these lectures, as well as all of their college coursework, are opportunities to practice and master the strategies they are learning in the College Success course.
 - o Explain that their skills will improve with practice and time.
 - o Each class is an opportunity to improve.
- College professor delivers follow-up lecture based, at least in part, on distributed material and building on previous lectures.
- Again, College Success instructor should make same observations and evaluations of students' engagement, notetaking, etc. as they did on lecture days 1 and 2.
 - o Share observations with students after the lecture.
 - o Discuss students' perceptions of their own levels of engagement.
 - o Did they approach this class differently than on days 1 and 2?
 - o What were the challenges they faced (if any)? Are there areas in which they felt more successful/confident?
- College instructor assigns homework assignment that will provide opportunities for students to review and evaluate grasp of material.
- Instructor will announce 2nd assessment to be given on lecture day 5.
 - o Observe whether students take the opportunity to ask about test format, length, content, etc.
 - If students do not take the initiative to ask questions, remind them that understanding format and content is crucial in order to doing well on assessments.
 - Provide information about test format, content, etc.

Lecture Day 5

- Assessment day. Once test is completed, college instructor should take the opportunity to discuss it with the class.
- The second test results should count towards students' grades in the College Success course.

Unit 2 – Study Skills & Academic Skills

Section 6: The Process of Learning – Thinking Critically and Creatively

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Define critical thinking
- Describe the six (6) thinking skills that are critical for academic success
- Review Bloom’s Taxonomy and link “thinking verbs” to specific thinking skills
- Identify how the six (6) thinking skills contribute to learning
- Understand why critical thinking skills are important to academic and life success
- Identify biases, assumptions, fallacies/logical pitfalls that hinder understanding
- Practice problem-solving, decision making, and questioning
- Critique arguments, evaluate ideas, justify and criticize positions in reading materials
- Engage in problem solving exercises that require collaboration and application of decision making skills

Materials:

[*The Importance of Thinking Critically and Creatively*](#) (Appendix)

Teacher supplied readings (newspapers, magazines, short stories)

Suggested Videos:

5 Steps to Improving Critical Thinking – Samantha Agoos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dItUGF8GdTw>

Critical Thinking by Qualiasoup

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OLPL5p0fMg>

Explain:

Reiterate to students that passively listening to what instructors say and scanning textbooks and handouts is not sufficient if they intend to be good college students and more successful learners. Listening and reading must be accompanied by critical thinking in order for individuals to fully understand problems and issues; sensibly evaluate beliefs, ideas, and arguments; and problem solve (make smart decisions and draw reasonable conclusions when presented with evidence and information). These skills are necessary for life, not just the classroom.

Key Points:

- There are six defined thinking skills

- Lower level skills are those most used in elementary through high school
 - Remembering and Recalling
 - Understanding
- Middle level skills are what college students will get most practice with and must master
 - Applying
 - Analyzing
- Higher level skills are the most demanding and require effort to develop. These skills are key to success in the college years and in the work world, but they are also the skills that many students have the least experience with.
 - Creating
 - Helps students come up with new ideas and methods for problem solving
 - Evaluating
 - Helps students make sound decisions about the plausibility and merit of those ideas
- When students receive assignments, knowing which of the “thinking skills” aligns with the “thinking verb” provided in the instructions will help them better understand what sort of thinking or response the instructor expects.
- Students should be able to define critical thinking, e.g., “the ability to objectively analyze and assess the validity of an idea, set of beliefs, claim, or argument in order to form a judgment or draw conclusions.”
 - Logic and reasoning are needed to evaluate evidence, to make an informed decision, or to draw a reasonable conclusion.
- Close reading in a variety of genres and exposure to many new ideas on a consistent basis are essential to developing stronger critical and creative thinking skills.
- Fully understanding the problem or question at hand is essential to good decision making.
- Evaluating all of the available options requires the ability to recognize any underlying biases and fallacies that can skew or predetermine thinking.
- The ability to think creatively will be critical for success in the 21st century since technology and systems are changing more rapidly than at any other time in human history. Creativity is instrumental when problem solving and collaborating with others to produce new products, ideas or services. Thinking creatively requires us to:
 - Be curious about the world around us
 - Flexible in our thinking
 - Have the willingness to ask why things are the way they are
 - Have the creative skill to reimagine old ideas in new ways

Process:

What It Means to Think Critically

(Time as needed; multiple sessions. Opportunities for practice and demonstration of skill are strongly recommended.)

Building critical thinking skills is an incremental process, and course instructors will need to help students by demonstrating how these skills can and should be applied in both the academic and personal arenas. Students should be provided multiple opportunities for both guided and independent practice in critical thinking through examination of selected news articles, academic excerpts, and fictional work over several weeks course.

Students may be introduced to the topic through videos and/or classroom discussion about the term “critical thinking” and its meaning. Guide students through the handout [The Importance of Thinking Critically and Creatively](#) with detailed class discussions on the material, particularly the concepts outlined in the “Key Points.”

Ensure that students complete Important Takeaways exercises in the [Importance of Thinking Critically and Creatively](#) handout (pages 19-22).

Unit 2 – Study Skills & Academic Skills

Section 7: The Process of Learning – Reading to Learn

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Assess their current knowledge of and attitudes toward reading to learn
- Recognize why reading is so important to college success
- Model taking personal responsibility for understanding what they read
- Understand and practice the four steps of active reading
- Develop strategies for reading quickly and more effectively
- Distinguish the difference between active and passive reading
- Employ active reading strategies to learn from an assigned textbook
- Compare information that can be learned from different parts of textbooks
- Recognize strategies for reading special types of materials
- Recognize the importance of developing a strong vocabulary
- Apply strategies for expanding their vocabulary knowledge

Materials:

SSNH Reference Book, Chapter 10

[Reading to Learn](#) (Appendix)

Suggested Videos:

College Info Geek – 5 Active Reading Strategies for Textbook Assignments

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLOpqJeE4_w

Tom Caswell’s Listening, Notetaking, Reading, & Studying

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuCAb8b6g34>

Explain:

Help students understand that reading for college is much different than it might have been in middle and high school. In general, they will be required to do far more reading in college and to employ different skills. They must keep in mind that the goal of reading is not to complete it as quickly as possible, but to read efficiently while *comprehending and retaining the information*. The purpose of this section is to help them better understand how to learn more from their reading sessions, in less time.

Process:

SSNH Chapter 10, “Information Source 1: Study Reading,” provides a general overview of how students should approach reading as a source of learning new material. Instructors may find it helpful to assign students the task of pre-reading the chapter prior to beginning classroom instruction on the topic.

The [Reading to Learn](#) handout in the Appendix provides a comprehensive, step-by-step explanation as to how students should approach reading different types of material for the purpose of understanding and learning. Instructors are encouraged to break the unit into segments that best fit the specific needs of the students and the available time.

Students should be guided through the reading, engage in discussion, practice applying the strategies, and complete the activity pages to ensure their ability to implement the strategies and suggestions independently.

Ideally, work on [Reading to Learn](#) will be done in conjunction with ongoing work on notetaking, and of course, critical thinking. This kind of work should be ongoing throughout the duration of the College Success course in order to provide opportunities for practice and self-evaluation of skills, and to monitor improvement. For the purposes of accountability, students should be asked to provide evidence of active reading and notetaking for their current academic classes. Students could greatly benefit from feedback from the instructor and classmates and should be encouraged to routinely demonstrate their engagement in close reading by producing evidence of understanding using the Cornell Method to create study notes.

Unit 2 – Study Skills & Academic Skills

Section 8: The Process of Learning – Memorization & Recall

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Identify the three stages of memory – registration, retention, and recall
- Understand the difference between short-term and long-term memory
- Experiment with various memory techniques and strategies
- Understand the primary and regency effects and how those concepts can help students optimize their study times
- Develop and utilize a toolbox of memory aids to improve recall and study success

Materials:

SSNH Reference Book, Chapter 5

Explain:

Ensure that students understand that although memorization is not the primary key to success (as it may have been in early grades), developing a good memory is important for helping them capture ideas. A good memory is particularly helpful when studying sciences and foreign languages. It is important that students explore a variety of memorization strategies in order to determine the ways their minds are best able to retain information.

Key Points:

- There are three stages of memory each representing differing levels of intensity
 - o Registration – the stage at which information comes to your attention and has meaning for the individual
 - o Retention – the stage at which a conscious decision is made to remember something
 - In order to retain new information after registering it, another step is necessary. A *decision* has to be made that it is *important* enough to commit the information to memory.
 - A decision has to be made about *how* to remember that information
 - o Recall – the stage where an individual is able to access the information they chose to retain
 - The technique used must be one that enhances the likelihood that it will be recalled when needed (e.g., an exam, a formula, or a speech)
- There are two types of memory - short-term memory and long-term memory

- Short-term memory is where information is stored at the registration stage of memory. We begin to forget information within 30 seconds of hearing it.
 - Something active must be done with the information in order for it to become a part of long-term memory.
- Long-term memory takes place through effort. After acquiring new information, review it as soon as possible to build retention. Deliberate actions must be taken to avoid memory “decay” and to be able to recall information when needed:
 - Write it down
 - Make a drawing or other visual imagery
 - Say it out loud
 - Link the new information to other information that is already stored in your mind (association effect)
 - Make sensory associations – visual, sound, smell
 - Link information to a positive emotional experience
 - Create or utilize a known mnemonic
 - Actively break information into chunks
 - Repeat the information numerous times ensuring that as many senses as possible are engaged
 - Write the information (notebook, index cards, mind maps, etc.)
 - Review and say information out loud (make songs, raps, etc.)
- The concept of primacy and regency effects states that we tend to remember things that occurred at the beginning of events (primacy) and at the end (regency). Given the proven existence of this phenomenon, it is advisable to have many beginnings and endings in a study schedule.
 - Rather than one long two-hour session, it is better to have 3-4 shorter sessions during the same period
- Building your memory skills is a tremendous asset
 - Skills can be actively built by using online tools or by creating games
 - Using mnemonics, flash cards, rhymes, songs can be very helpful in recalling factual information

Process:

Engage students in a game where they are asked to memorize a list (below) for just **20 seconds**. This list consists of 20 items in the following order, as written. List should be prepared on chart paper or slide prior to lesson.

Arch, Chowder, Airplane, Kirk, Paper Clip, Column, Oak, Subway, Leia, Fries, Pen, Maple, Window, Scotty, Thumb Drive, Brownies, Door, Skateboard, Cedar, Luke

After 20 seconds, remove the list from student view and ask 2-3 individual students to say how many they were able to recall. Then present the list of items below. This time, the same words/items from the first list are grouped in similar categories.

Fries, Chowder, Brownies, Paper Clip, Pen, Thumb Drive, Oak, Cedar, Maple, Airplane, Skateboard, Subway, Luke, Leia, Kirk, Scotty, Column, Window, Door, Arch

Again challenge 2-3 students to see how many of the items they remember. In general, students are able to remember more of the items when they are arranged in discernable categories. This exercise serves as an introduction to the concept of remembering items by *thematic association* – one of the tools students can use as a study aid for their own work.

Engage students in a discussion about other memorization techniques such as using mnemonics. As an example, students often use the following mnemonic for listing the order of the planets in our solar system (before Pluto was demoted to “dwarf planet” status):

My Very Excellent Mother Just Served Us Nine Pizzas
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
Mercury Venus Earth Mars Jupiter Saturn Uranus Neptune Pluto

Discuss why it is easier to remember this information with the mnemonic. Reinforce the idea that there are numerous other techniques for memorizing key facts needed to master new information they learn in their current classes. Encourage students to research mnemonics frequently used in their area of study.

Introduce students to the concepts of the **3R’s of memory: registration, retention, and recall**, emphasizing the importance of being purposeful in their desire to retain information as discussed in the “Key Points.” Reiterate that new material is best retained with rehearsal/repetition and taking active steps toward memorization. Refer to Figure 1 on page 59 (SSNH) showing the transfer of information from short to long-term memory, and Figure 3 on page 61 showing the increase in long-term memory achieved when more intelligences are engaged, providing students with specific examples of how this can be done.

Discussing the concepts of the **primary and regency effects** will help students understand the value of chunking smaller amounts of time to study tasks in order to capitalize on the idea that

we tend to remember the first and most recent events during a particular time frame. Additionally, there is a degradation in our ability to retain information the longer we study. It is therefore recommended that students work in blocks of 30-45 minutes at a time in order to study something significantly but in a timeframe short enough to prevent “forgetting” the material. So, studying for 45 minutes at a time, taking a 15-minute break, then resuming for another 45 minutes, will likely be more effective than working for straight two hours. Employing these time blocks, along with *regular* review, will greatly increase student retention of the information.

Challenge students to adjust their current study habits to incorporate the time blocking strategies and memory aids discussed to improve their outcomes. Encourage students to build these shorter study blocks into their schedules using calendars, etc. Again, implementing methods to foster student accountability can support and encourage adoption of new strategies and attitudes towards study.

Unit 2 – Study Skills & Academic Skills

Section 9: The Process of Learning – Preparing for Tests

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Assess their current use of good test taking strategies and their attitudes towards testing
- Discover how studying for tests fits into the learning cycle
- Understand why test anxiety occurs and how to mitigate and avoid its symptoms
- Differentiate between summative and cumulative tests
- Recognize types of tests and test questions
- Identify strategies for preparing for various types of tests
- Apply strategies to prepare for and take tests and exams in their current coursework
- Comprehend what constitutes academic dishonesty and its consequences

Materials:

[*Preparing For and Taking Tests*](#) (Appendix)

SSNH Reference Book, Chapters 12 & 13

Explain:

Explain to students that rather than being seen as a horrible, unnecessary burdens, tests can be viewed as opportunities to measure progress, learn from our performance, and consider ways to improve upon that performance in the future. Tests are *not* measures of our intelligence, nor are they the only ways to demonstrate knowledge. Reinforce the idea that college professors generally expect students to show their own thinking and interpretation of the material. Therefore, it is imperative that students demonstrate the ability to *apply* what they've learned, as opposed to simply regurgitating information.

Key Points:

- The test anxiety many students experience is very often due to a lack of preparedness.
- College students must not only remember facts and figures, they are also expected to demonstrate the ability to interpret, apply, and make judgments about the information presented. These abilities must be reflected in their responses to exam questions.
- Reiterate that studying daily is imperative for academic success. Daily studying should include:
 - o Gathering information - This includes merging class notes and notes taken from the text, clarifying lingering questions or misconceptions by doing additional

- research, asking the professor questions during office hours, and/or by discussing with study group members.
 - Applying/Visualizing – Determine how information can be applied in real situations, or visualize yourself using the information to problem solve. Doing this will help students derive some meaning from new ideas.
 - Cementing knowledge – Creating Cornell notes for new material and self-testing.
- Students must create a plan to prepare for tests both independently and in study groups well in advance of the actual exam.
 - Study groups should be organized and have regular meetings for maximum effectiveness.
- There are two types of tests:
 - Formative tests* are designed to make sure you know fundamental material *before* moving on to more difficult work. These include short quizzes, unit tests, pop quizzes, and review tests in textbooks.
 - Students should make sure to use the results of those tests to help them assess what information they need to understand better and devote more time and attention to. This process ultimately helps students improve their final grade.
 - Summative tests* include midterms and finals where the goal is to assess how well students have mastered the entirety of the course material.
 - These tests typically carry the majority of points towards the final grade
- In order to properly prepare for a test, it is important to understand the format in which it will be given.
 - What *types* of questions will be included (short-answer, essay, multiple choice)?
 - Are there parts that will carry more points than others?
 - What material will the test cover? Is it cumulative or based solely on recent work?
- Students must fully synthesize the general rules of test taking such as scanning, time management, following directions, etc.
 - There are specific strategies for handling math and science tests that will help students maximize accuracy.
 - Students should follow specific strategies for handling each type of question.
- The action verbs used in essay questions provide important clues about what the professor is looking for. It is important that students understand the intention and expectation when those words are used.
- Successful students evaluate their test results to check for patterns, strengths, and areas of weakness. They also evaluate how well they used their time; did they complete the test or come up short on time for a certain part? They should always incorporate and consider the instructor's comments when tests/papers are returned.

- Academic integrity is a serious issue. Violating the rules of academic honesty can have damaging effects, even if not caught.

Process:

Engage students in discussion about testing and the anxieties and struggles they may have had with tests. Foster an open dialogue among students about how they currently prepare for tests and what sort of grades they consider to be okay.

- What are your expectations for tests and overall course grades?
- What are your aspirations?
- How are those aspirations and expectations colored by past experiences?

Go back to the GPA chart discussed at the beginning of the course. If students are currently enrolled in college coursework, are they on track to achieve the grades projected at the beginning of the course?

Reinforce that consistently achieving strong grades on tests does not happen without practice and effort. It might be helpful to compare studying and the learning process to an athlete training for an important playoff game or big race. Without consistent practice, including building skills by competing in smaller, less important races and games, athletes will have difficulty performing well in “big games or matches” (which for students would be exams).

The chapter on “Examinations” in the student reference book provides a general overview of testing and is a good supplemental resource that can be assigned for independent reading at the beginning or end of this section of the program. However, it is suggested that instructors use the material included in the [Preparing for and Taking Tests](#) handout for instruction. It provides excellent, detailed steps students should use to approach test taking and to develop stronger test taking skills. It would be very helpful for students if instructors used actual examinations to demonstrate *how* those strategies could be employed. The test preparation review may be given as a homework assignment or as an end of unit/in class assessment.