

## Week One

# Mapping Out the Semester and Setting Goals



Each successful semester in college begins in the same way that any successful adventure or journey begins—with a plan and goals. As you begin the first week of your semester, your professors will give you a syllabus for the course. The syllabus is your map to your class. It is one of the (if not THE) most important documents of the semester. It is a contract between you and the professor and contains all of the rules, guidelines, assignments, and important dates for your course. Successful students immediately three-hole punch the syllabus and put it in the front of their course binder. Successful students also read the syllabus meticulously, mark, and underline important statements, rules, and dates that the professor emphasizes in class. The syllabus is NOT a document to bury in a folder or to lose. It should be looked at before each class period.

### Activity One

Read through each syllabus you received this week. Underline and highlight important points in the syllabus. The following questions might help you to look for important information. Note anything in the syllabus that is unclear and clarify it with the professor in class or through email.

#### Contacting the Professor

Where is the professor's office? How and when can you contact the professor with questions?

#### Course Content

What is the purpose of the class?

What types of assignments will you have? When are they due?

## Class Policies

What is the attendance policy?

How many classes can you miss? What is the consequence?

What should you do if you need to miss class or have a family or health emergency?

How will you be graded in the class?

What should you do if you need accommodations?

What is the policy for late work?

Are electronic devices allowed in the classroom?

## Resources

What resources are available to support you with the course?

## Activity Two

Use the syllabus to create a learning plan for each course. See Figure 1.1 for a student sample. You could use the blank templates included to write in your course information for each course—or you could use Smart Art in Word to create your own electronic template similar to Figure 1.1 and print it out and place it in your course binder. If you choose to write in the blank templates in this book, you could photocopy the template and place it in your course binder. Either option would work; the key to success this week is to create a learning plan that contains all the key elements of the course in one place so that you can refer back to it and stay on track throughout the semester.

## Figure 1.1: Student Learning Plan

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### Course: Biology

#### Goals:

1. Receive an A
2. Become an effective note-taker
3. Be aware of all biological processes

#### Test:

1. 1 test every two weeks
2. 1 final exam before break

#### Reading Plan:

1. Reread notes
2. Reread power points
3. Read the chapters in the book before class using THIEVES

#### Daily Assignments:

1. Read text before class
2. Study notes every night
3. Worksheets on Moodle

#### Projects/Papers:

1. Research paper for biology lab
2. 1 page papers for lecture

#### Study:

1. Use quiz notes to reorganize and restructure power points every night
2. Look over homework assignments on Moodle
3. Create concept cards for vocabulary
4. Create Bloom's Taxonomy Cards and study with a group

#### Note-Taking:

1. Print off power points and create a note-taking template for lecture before class
2. Mark notes in my textbook using THIEVES while I read
3. Use Quiz notes and note reduction for studying

**Resources:** MARC (Academic Learning Center), SWAG sessions, Biology Coaching/tutoring

## Figure 1.1: Student Learning Plan

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**Course:**

**Goals:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Test:**

- 1.
- 2.

**Reading Plan:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Daily Assignments:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Projects/Papers:**

- 1.
- 2.

**Study:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Note-Taking:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Resources:**

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- 2.

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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Note-Taking:**

- 1.
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- 2.
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- 4.

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**Projects/Papers:**

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- 3.
- 4.

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**Projects/Papers:**

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- 1.
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- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Resources:**

### **Activity Three: Self-Assessment**

For any plan to be successful, one needs to begin by assessing how and what has worked in the past, what hasn't worked very well, and then form goals based on the valuable information that comes out of that assessment. We assess many things and form many goals—but sadly we seldom take the time to assess ourselves and form our own goals. Successful people realize the importance of self-assessment and goal setting. They take that time to reflect, assess, and set their own goals. Invest in yourself this week. Use the following, self-assessment (Figure 1.2. Self-Assessment) to take the time to reflect on how you have performed in past semesters in the areas that are key to your academic success.

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## Figure 1.2: Self-Assessment

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**Date:**

(5 is highest)

1. How have you performed in the following academic skill areas in previous semesters:

Reading	1	2	3	4	5
Time Management	1	2	3	4	5
Organization	1	2	3	4	5
Test-Taking	1	2	3	4	5
Studying	1	2	3	4	5

For those that are not “5,” what do you feel would help you get to a “5”?

2. How do you feel about your performance in past courses?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

3. How do you feel about yourself as a student?

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

4. What do you feel you need the most Academic support with?

5. What new goals do you wish to make for the semester? What support do you need to achieve these goals?

## Activity Four: Goal Setting

Now that you have assessed yourself, it is time to dig a little deeper into the skill areas of academic success and identify your strengths and weaknesses and set specific goals for improving in each skill area. This book also offers specific strategies for improving in each skill area throughout the semester. *(While the book is planned to cover the skills in a logical fashion to help students when they generally need help with the academic skills during the 16-week-semester—students are able to skip ahead and target the specific skill area at any point in the semester as needed. For example, if the self-assessment and goal setting activity revealed that you really need to work on your reading strategies immediately, and this book doesn't cover those until weeks 5 and 6, you may want to look ahead to weeks 5 and 6 and begin working on the reading strategies now.)*

Complete the goal setting questions and chart in Figure 1.3 to identify strengths and weakness in each skill area. As you reflect on each, it is important to begin with your strengths. You may be tempted to skip your strengths and only write down weaknesses. **AVOID this temptation.** It reduces confidence and self-efficacy and sabotages goal setting. In setting goals, you need to **build on your strengths.** To do this, you must first identify them. Everyone has strengths in every area—most of us just don't focus on them. We only focus on our problems and weaknesses. This creates anxiety, fear, and ultimately leads to failure! You want to **SUCCEED.** So begin with your strengths.

As you set goals, be very specific and concrete. Good goals can be measured and assessed. Consider the following example:

Reading: Strength—comprehension    Weakness—takes too long to read; don't read before class

**General Goal: Become a better reader.** *How do you know you are a better reader? How do you measure and verify this goal? How do you demonstrate it and measure it. It is much more difficult to verify. When progress isn't easy to see and measure, goals tend to not be met.*

**More Specific and Measurable Goal: Develop effective and efficient reading strategies that help me to read my textbooks before class.** *This goal could easily be demonstrated. You could show someone at the end of the semester the reading strategies that you were using to efficiently and effectively read your textbook before class. You could also verify whether or not you were doing this.*

### Figure 1.3: Goal Setting

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**Date:**

Most Students find success when they make adjustments in the following skill areas. Use the chart to evaluate yourself in these areas and set some goals.

<b>Reading</b>	<b>Strengths:</b>  <b>Weaknesses:</b>	<b>Goals</b>
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Strengths:</b>  <b>Weaknesses:</b>	<b>Goals</b>
<b>Studying</b>	<b>Strengths:</b>  <b>Weaknesses:</b>	<b>Goals</b>
<b>Test-Taking</b>	<b>Strengths:</b>  <b>Weaknesses:</b>	<b>Goals</b>
<b>Time Management</b>	<b>Strengths:</b>  <b>Weaknesses:</b>	<b>Goals</b>

## Activity Five: Campus Connections

Your campus has invested in valuable resources to help you find success with many of these goals that you have just set for yourself. These resources are gold mines. Unfortunately, many students don't find them until it is too late. They have either already met failure, resulting in a Grade Point Average (GPA) that needs to be rebuilt. Or, they are nearing the end of the academic career and wish they would have found the resources sooner. Students who connect with these resource people and support services early in their college careers report high levels of academic success. Successful students seek out support and use it! They realize that the resources are for everyone and for all levels of learning. They are not shy about seeking support. You shouldn't be either! Use the following Campus Resource Sheet (See Figure 1.4 Campus Connections) to seek out the support that is available to you on your campus and connect with the key people who can help you succeed. Make a plan to connect with them this week or next week and use their services frequently! Who knows—you might even end up becoming one of their employees. As a director and supervisor of a learning center who hires and trains academic coaches, I can tell you that I often hire the students who utilize the learning center because the students who use the services at the learning center are often the best and most successful students!

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## Figure 1.4: Campus Connections

Most campuses invest in these resources to help students succeed. Search your college website to find these campus resources. Use the chart to write down the contact information, hours, services provided, and appointment time that you set up, and notes from your meetings and visits. Also, be sure to write the appointments you make in your planner.

Campus Resources	Typical Services Provided	Visit
<p><b>Career Center</b> Contact person/director:</p> <p><b>Services Students might be interested in:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Guidance in choosing a major</li> <li>◆ Information about internships</li> <li>◆ Personality tests</li> <li>◆ Help with resumes and cover letters</li> <li>◆ Mock Interviews</li> <li>◆ Career Fairs</li> </ul> <p><b>Location:</b></p> <p><b>Hours:</b></p> <p><b>How to make an appointment:</b></p> <p><b>Phone Number:</b></p> <p><b>Email:</b></p>	<p>Career centers typically guide you in finding a major. They might offer a test such as the FOCUS that identifies potential careers that fit with your personality type. They also offer help with finding internships, writing resumes and cover letters, and searching for jobs.</p> <p>While some students wait until their senior year to visit the career center, this is a <b>BIG MISTAKE!</b> Students need to start creating a resume right away and begin figuring out what should be on the resume, so they can begin getting those experiences during their first year. Otherwise—they will find they have a lot of empty spaces on their resume when they begin writing it their senior year.</p>	<p>Appointment date(s):</p> <p>Notes from visit:</p>

(Continued)

**Figure 1.4: Campus Connections (Continued)**

<p><b>Counseling Center</b> Contact person/director:</p> <p><b>Services Students might be interested in:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Guidance in choosing a major</li> <li>◆ Personality tests</li> <li>◆ Help with roommate issues</li> <li>◆ Sorting out relationship issues</li> <li>◆ Dealing with anxiety</li> <li>◆ Coping with stress</li> <li>◆ Making big life decisions</li> <li>◆ Resolving conflicts</li> <li>◆ Just someone who will listen objectively</li> <li>◆ Dealing with and identifying depression</li> </ul> <p><b>Location:</b></p> <p><b>Hours:</b></p> <p><b>How to make an appointment:</b></p> <p><b>Phone Number:</b></p> <p><b>Email:</b></p>	<p>Students often make the mistake of thinking that the counseling center is only a place to go if you have mental illness. This is not true at all. In fact, the counseling center is not equipped to deal with mental illness. Rather, the counseling center is a resource for all students. It offers them caring and educated resource people who are available to listen to their needs and help them make sound decisions. It is a place to go when you need an objective listener—someone who can help you resolve conflicts, find coping strategies for stress and anxiety, mild bouts of depression, and making sound decisions. The counseling center is a place to go to get a better understanding of yourself! Successful students do not hesitate to use it when they need someone to offer them sound advice and coping strategies. They realize it is a resource for everyone.</p>	<p>Appointment date(s):</p> <p>Notes from visit:</p>
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**Figure 1.4: Campus Connections (Continued)**

<p><b>Campus Ministry</b> Contact person/director:</p> <p><b>Services Students might be interested in:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Spiritual direction and guidance</li> <li>◆ Worship and prayer services</li> <li>◆ Scripture sharing and book groups</li> <li>◆ Retreats</li> <li>◆ Community outreach and service projects</li> <li>◆ Social Justice groups</li> </ul> <p><b>Location:</b></p> <p><b>Hours:</b></p> <p><b>How to make and appointment:</b></p> <p><b>Phone Number:</b></p> <p><b>Email:</b></p>	<p>Students sometimes forget that academic success depends on more than just studying. It requires that you tend to all of your needs. As a person, you also have spiritual needs. This is true regardless of your religious affiliation. Even people who do not believe in an afterlife have spiritual needs. Spirituality in its simplest forms means tending to your personal wellbeing. A director of a campus ministry center can help you identify and meet your spiritual needs while you are on campus.</p>	<p>Appointment date(s):</p> <p>Notes from visit or meetings:</p>
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**Figure 1.4: Campus Connections (Continued)**

<p><b>Writing Center</b> Contact person/director:</p> <p><b>Services Students might be interested in:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Help in finding a topic</li> <li>◆ Feedback on writing</li> <li>◆ Tips for editing and proofreading</li> <li>◆ Help with documentation</li> </ul> <p><b>Location:</b></p> <p><b>Hours:</b></p> <p><b>How to make an appointment:</b></p> <p><b>Phone Number:</b></p> <p><b>Email:</b></p>	<p>One visit to the Writing Center, and you will be convinced it is essential for all of your papers. A Writing Center can help you with all stages of your papers and will make you a stronger writer. All writers seek feedback from others. Many writers pay for feedback. While you are in college, you get this feedback and guidance for free from your Writing Center! Use it—successful students do!</p>	<p>Appointment date(s):</p> <p>Notes from visit or meetings:</p>
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**Figure 1.4: Campus Connections (Continued)**

<p><b>Academic Learning Center</b> Contact person/director:</p> <p><b>Services Students might be interested in:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Study strategies</li> <li>◆ College reading strategies</li> <li>◆ Test-taking strategies</li> <li>◆ Note-Taking Strategies</li> <li>◆ Time Management Strategies</li> <li>◆ Tutoring</li> <li>◆ Study Groups and Supplemental Instruction</li> </ul> <p><b>Location:</b></p> <p><b>Hours:</b></p> <p><b>How to make an appointment:</b></p> <p><b>Phone Number:</b></p> <p><b>Email:</b></p>	<p>The Learning Center might be one of THE most important places on campus. It offers resources that could help you improve with all of the skill areas that are key to you achieving the goals you set for the semester. Successful students do not wait until they are struggling to go to the learning center. They go there at the beginning of the semester and continue throughout. They attend all study sessions attached to classes regularly. They utilize every support service available to them—that is why they succeed!</p>	<p>Appointment date(s):</p> <p>Notes from visit or meetings:</p>
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(Continued)

**Figure 1.4: Campus Connections (Continued)**

<p><b>Library</b> Contact person/director:</p> <p><b>Services Students might be interested in:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Help in narrowing a topic</li> <li>◆ Help in researching a topic</li> <li>◆ Guidance in citing sources</li> <li>◆ Support in finding relevant sources for a paper</li> <li>◆ Quiet places for studying and working on course work</li> </ul> <p><b>Location:</b></p> <p><b>Hours:</b></p> <p><b>How to make an appointment:</b></p> <p><b>Phone Number:</b></p> <p><b>Email:</b></p>	<p>The library is the Academic Hub of your campus. There, you can find trained research consultants who can save you a lot of time in your research. The library staff is also often trained in source citations. Additionally, it has great hidden corners for studying and getting a lot of work finished. Visit it often and use it well. It is a valuable resource.</p>	<p>Appointment date(s):</p> <p>Notes from visit or meetings:</p>
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