

So Now What?

By: Misty Herzog, Senior Higher Education Advisor

Hello Everyone! My name is Misty Herzog and I am the Senior Higher Education Advisor for the Higher Education Department. I have been with the Department for about twelve years now. I have my Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Human Development from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay and my Master's Degree in Training and Development from the University of Wisconsin-Stout. I am also certified as a Global Career Development Facilitator and as a Distance Credentialed Facilitator. Though it may sound confusing, it just means that I have training in career advising and also career advising via distance modes such as email, phone contact, etc. I truly enjoy working with clients and helping them to identify and then accomplish their educational goals. Through my educational background, training, and many years of service, I have learned many helpful things along the way. I look forward to sharing some of those tips with you in this article. Previously, my co-workers had shared information about choosing a career and then choosing a school. I would like to share with you some tips for the next step.....you're in college so now what?

PART I: COMBAT HOMESICKNESS WHEN AWAY AT COLLEGE

According to a web article entitled, "Tips for College Success" by Columbia Gorge Community College:

"There are five steps to culture shock. As a freshman, you may experience some Or all of the following phases. You may experience these phases in order, and some phases may repeat or overlap.

- 1 Phase one: Fascination with the new environment
- 2 Phase two: Severe homesickness
- 3 Phase three: Find fault with new surroundings; build stereotypes
- 4 Phase four: Find humor in your adjustment
- 5 Phase five: Embrace the new culture; you will miss it when you go (<http://www.cgcc.cc.or.us/StudentServices/TipsCollegeSuccess.cfm>)

I know both professionally and personally how rough homesickness can be. In fact, I moved back home after my first semester of college because of it. However, I now know that homesickness is actually a part of the college experience and that most new students go through it to one degree or another. It's just important to know that you are not alone. Kaleigh, a University of Western Ontario student wrote about three steps that helped her to deal with homesickness in her blog:

"1. Acknowledge It.

Know that what you are feeling is normal and that many others are feeling the same way. Give yourself time. 'Allowing yourself to feel sad and get it all out might just be all you need to get out of the slump.'

2. Stay In Touch.

Checking in with missed family and friends can be fine. If your family lives far away, it may help to go with your college friend to visit his/her family.

3. Get Going.

“Schoolwork is a great way to keep busy, but don’t limit yourself to just that. Find things that are fun to make sure you’re enjoying your time away, not just suffering through it. Going to lunch with classmates, or renting a movie with your girls are acceptable and encouraged ways to get over your homesickness slump”.

(<http://www.collegefashion.net/college-life/3-tips-for-dealing-with-homesickness-in-college>)

PART II: MEET NEW PEOPLE

An anonymous author once wrote, “It’s not what you know but who you know that makes the difference.” This is such a true statement. Throughout your college years you will have the opportunity to meet many people. Take advantage of this opportunity. Use the positive encounters as the basis of friendships and future networking possibilities and the negative ones as a learning experience and a test of your patience and humility.

One of my recommendations is always attend your college’s orientation. This is a requirement for a lot of colleges anyway. This not only gives you the opportunity to learn what’s what but also who’s who. Everyone at orientation is new and nervous just like you. This is a great way to meet a new friend or two before classes even start. Knowing someone in advance also helps to address the homesickness issues, if you are experiencing this.

In a lot of cases freshmen are required to live in a dorm setting and you will probably have a roommate or two. Once classes start, you will be taking courses with many different types of people. It’s a perfect time to introduce yourself to others sitting next to you or even ask them a question or two.

Peer connections are very important, but don’t forget the professionals that surround you every day. You never know when you will need assistance or even a letter of recommendation someday. Get to know your professors. As Lynn F. Jacobs and Jeremy S. Hyman stated in the August 10, 2010 Professor’s Guide column on www.usnews.com, “The single most underutilized resource at college is the office hour, now available in person, by e-mail, or by Skype. You might not have realized it, but professors are required to be in their office two to four hours a week to meet with students and help them with the course. Your tests and papers will go better if you’ve had a chance to ask about things you’re confused about, and, with any luck, received some guidance from the professor about what your thesis sentence should be or what’s going to be on the test.” (<http://www.usnews.com/educations/blogs/professors-guide/2010/08/17/top-10-secrets-of-college-success>)

Those professionals behind the scenes are very important, too. Make it a point to meet and have readily available contact information for what I call “your college life support

team.” This may include your academic advisor, school health center staff, tutoring staff, registrar, bursar, and financial aid advisor. If you are receiving the Oneida Higher Education Grant, you should also be familiar with the Higher Education staff and have our contact information, too. You should call us anytime you make any changes or if you’re struggling so that we can advise you of your options. Building positive relationships with your college and Higher Education staff can be of great benefit to you. Just a little tip.....it’s nice just to say thank you to all these folks once in a while. All of our jobs can be quite hectic and just a simple smile and “thank you” can make our day!

PART III: GET INVOLVED AND DO NEW THINGS

One of the great things about going to college is that you have the opportunity to learn as much out of the classroom as you do in it. In his article, “The Significance of Getting Involved in College Activities,” Jason Stollham states: “Getting involved at the various college activities will enable you to meet and interact with several fellow students as well as students from other colleges. This helps you to get rid of the isolated feelings you had in the beginning of your college term. Moreover, this will allow you to get exposed to diverse culture and opportunities which may prove beneficial in your future.”

(<http://collegematchingservice.com/education/the-significance-of-getting-involved-at-college-activites.html>) So find out what your school and new community have to offer. This may include student clubs and organizations, fraternities or sororities, sports, or even the school newspaper. You may find some of this information in your college’s student handbook, in the student service area at your college, and even on your college’s web site. You may even want to consider a job or even a volunteer opportunity in your community.

You may have the opportunity to study abroad. This usually means that you go to another country to study and learn for a couple of weeks, a semester or even a year. This is a great opportunity to learn about other people, cultures, new places and even the differences in education around the world. You can work with your school financial aid office for options to help you afford it. For many, this is a chance of a lifetime!

As a higher education advisor, I have a lot of returning adult clients that come to visit me, and through conversation I have learned that many have been at their jobs for a long time. They are very skilled and are fantastic at what they do, yet they cannot get a raise or advance positions because they do not have a college degree. I have other clients that have the opposite problem. They have the college degree but they cannot get hired because they do not have any work experience. For the first group, the remedy is easy. We do some career exploration and then come up with an educational plan to help them reach their educational goals. It’s a little tougher for the second group. This is where internships can be important. According to an article written by Jeff Mcquire, “The importance of internships to college students in terms of networking and gaining new resources cannot be understated. Building a network of ‘who you know’ through college student internships can pay great dividends upon graduation. By remembering the social aspects of making contacts with people as people while working at college internships, you can help to ensure that, if good contacts are with other organizations by the time you graduate, you will then have an “in” at those other organizations in additions to the

organizations where you performed actual college internships.”
(<http://www.collegeview.com/articles/article/college-internships>) If you are interested in internships you may want to contact your college student services or career planning offices for more information. If you are receiving the Oneida Higher Education Grant, you may also be interested in our Higher Education summer internship program. Information on this usually comes out in spring and will be posted on our website when available.

Just remember that balance is key. It is important to be involved and make the best of your college years. However, make sure you don't sacrifice your academic success along the way. Use lists and a calendar to organize your activities and academic responsibilities such as exams and due dates for papers and projects. With a little planning and organization, you can be successful academically and still have a great social life.

PART IV: NON –TRADITIONAL STUDENTS, A DEFINITION AND TIPS

According to the UW-Madison Adult Career & Special Student Services Department, “At UW-Madison, nontraditional/adult student may not have attended college directly out of high school, may have taken some time away from formal education, may have dependents, and/or may have a full-time job”

(<http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/info/definitions.htm>)

A large number of our clients in the Higher Education Department fall in this category. Many are finding that they need to go back to school for employment reasons. Some have lost their jobs due to the economy and need to refocus their career. Some need a degree for job advancement. Others have finally come to the point in their life where education is a personal goal. No matter what the reason, these students usually have a lot of other responsibilities on their plate and “balance” seems to be the key to success. If you fall in this category, you really need to sit down and examine your situation. Will childcare be an issue? If so, this may not be the right time for you to go back to school. Otherwise make sure you have a couple of back up childcare plans or even consider being a part-time student for a while. If you are a full-time employee, you may need to consider attending classes part-time or finding a school that offers delivery systems that meet your needs such as accelerated or evening classes, etc.

The University of Kansas Academic Achievement and Access Center lists twelve tips for non-traditional students. They are:

1. “ Keep your eyes on the prize.
2. Be realistic in your goals.
3. Enlist support from your family and friends.
4. Get to know other students.
5. Get to know your professors.
6. Make the most of every class.
7. Become an informed student.
8. Learn how to use your school Library
9. Visit your school's career center.

10. Brush up on your writing and study skills.
11. Ask for help when you need it.
12. Embrace technology.”

([http:// www.achievement.ku.edu/guides/non_traditional.shtml](http://www.achievement.ku.edu/guides/non_traditional.shtml))

Though the above tips were addressed to non-traditional students, I think they are also great advice for all students.

PART V: CONCLUSION

In conclusion, getting into college is a great accomplishment. However, what you put into it and what you get out of it is what really matters in the end. It's up to you to make the most of your time there. If you are going away from home, know that homesickness is normal. Expect it and come up with ideas to work through it. Take advantage of opportunities that expose you to new people. Get to know your classmates, residence hall mates, professors, and your “college life support team.” Contact a Higher Education Advisor if you are getting the Oneida Higher Education Grant any time you make changes or are struggling so we can advise you. Don't forget to say thank-you to those that help you along the way. Get involved. Seek out student and group organizations that are of interest to you. It's a great way to meet new people and to feel more at home at your school. Take advantage of study abroad opportunities if you can. This could be a chance of a lifetime. No matter what, try to intern. This can provide you with important networks when you are ready to seek employment. If you are a non-traditional student, it is very important to examine your life and determine how much time you can realistically devote to school and then create a plan. Do your best to balance your academics, social life and responsibilities. If you are struggling get help! Address issues early so that you don't do poorly, lose your financial aid, or worse- get dismissed from school. Just remember, no matter if you are eighteen or eighty, the staff at Oneida Higher Education is here to help you reach your educational goals!

