

## Preparing Students for Life Success and Life Value Beyond School

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### Abstract

Success is defined differently through every stage of life. The definition of success in college includes understanding course material, achieving a high GPA, attaining honors, and progressing towards graduation. However, the definition of success after college includes but is not limited to accomplishing one's goals, attaining financial security/job satisfaction, and being content with one's best attempt. This chapter focuses on exemplary habits that you can model and instill in your students that will carry them to graduation and beyond.

## **Introduction**

The word “success” means different things to different people and in different stages of life. The definition of success in college includes understanding course material, achieving a high GPA, attaining honors, and progressing towards graduation. However, the definition of success after college can include accomplishing personal and career goals, attaining financial security and job satisfaction, and finding pride in the work you produce. This chapter focuses on exemplary habits that you can model and instill in your students that will carry them to graduation and beyond.

### **Definition for Success**

Merriam-Webster defines success as “the fact of getting or achieving wealth, respect, or fame” (n.d.). From the student’s perspective, success most likely translates to achieving one’s goals both during the academic career and post-graduation. Goals during the academic career are quite varied among students, but the most common is graduating. Other goals may be matriculating through an honors program or getting involved in extracurricular activities such as student government or student organizations. Post-graduation goals may include enrolling in a graduate or professional program, acquiring a good job, or obtaining a stable financial status. It is important that students have these types of goals as they progress through their academic career. Having a clear career objective and a set plan of study motivates students towards success. However, for some students, these goals can weigh heavily on them and impede their ability to be successful. Your role as their teacher can be looked at as two-fold:

- help students develop obtainable, clearly defined goals
- communicate the attributes/habits needed to accomplish set goals

**Help Students Develop Obtainable Goals**

The first goal of all students entering college is to graduate. Faculty can make students aware of services available on campus that can aid them in creating an academic plan of study and deciding a career path (see list of resources at the end of this chapter). For assistance on a plan of study, faculty can point students to undergraduate coordinators, department advisors, program directors, and the campus Career Center. Students can be made aware of the different services the Career Center can offer to help develop a career path; aptitude testing, resume critiques, interview tips, and career-fair dates are some of the services that the Career Center can provide. Faculty can also encourage students to develop smaller goals within a classroom setting that will help them be successful throughout the course.

**Communicate Necessary Habits to Accomplish Goals**

The best way faculty can communicate the attributes and habits necessary for achieving success in and out of the classroom is to model the attributes that are proven to lead to success. Faculty can purposefully incorporate specific attributes into their pedagogy and in their everyday interactions with students. Students can learn which habits lead to success by watching the actions of the instructor. As the old adage says, “Actions speak louder than words”.

**Habits for Success**

For many students to attain success during and after college, they need to develop and apply effective habits. Steven Covey, author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, introduces habits that help people develop and become more effective (1999). The first four habits can be directly applied to students in their endeavor to succeed:

- Be proactive...Take responsibility for your actions.
- Begin with the end in mind... Set goals and plan ahead.
- Put first things first... Don't procrastinate. Start with the most important task.
- Think "win-win"... Base every interaction on mutual respect.

Students need to learn how to incorporate these four habits into their everyday lives, as students and as members of society (Covey, 1999).

### **Be Proactive**

Students who are proactive don't make excuses. They accept the consequences of their actions. Penalties for late work or class tardiness are expected. They know where to go for help when it is needed. They go to office hours, talk to professors before or after class, and send emails with a short question.

### **Begin with the End in Mind**

Students should have well-defined goals during college as well as after college. They should set semester goals as well as daily goals that lead to the accomplishment of their overall goal.

### **Put First Things First**

Students should prioritize obligations. They should do the most important things first. Putting off tasks because they are difficult is never a good idea. Successful students should realize that college is their job and doing their best in classes should be of highest importance.

### **Think "Win-Win"**

Students who think "win-win" know how to work with others to benefit everybody. They know that actively participating in a study group helps with learning difficult subject

matter and internalizing the content by helping others learn. They know to be respectful when dealing with professors and classmates.

### **Instilling Successful Habits in Students**

Instructors are frequently among the most influential people in their students' lives. As their teacher, you can begin modeling and presenting the habits that will be necessary for your student's success in college and in their career. We have gathered the following suggestions for your consideration: be a role model for the students, clearly communicate the qualities necessary to succeed, provide opportunities for help and networking, and hold regular office hours.

#### **Be their Role Model**

Instructors should be good role models because students are learning through their lesson plans as well as their speech and actions. Students learn through their teachers' commitment to excellence. In addition to what is written in the syllabus, students learn habits that lead to success as they see these habits modeled by their instructor. It should be clear to students that instructors take pride in the work they do and they do their best. As a good role model, teachers should always:

- Arrive early to class. Teachers should plan to be 5-10 minutes early, so that in case of a delay or a mishap they will still be on time. This is a good habit for students to adapt. By arriving early, they won't miss any class announcements or disrupt class by coming late.
- Come prepared. Class time is too short for a teacher to show up without a plan or prepared lesson/assignment. The same goes with students: there is no time to finish assignments during class time. Before class, teachers and students should look at the

previous class's notes, finish grading or assignments, and read over the new lesson to be taught/learned.

- Exude joy and excitement. Enthusiasm increases the students' motivation to learn and succeed in the course. The joy and enthusiasm shown by a teacher can ease the pain of learning for the students and instantly add interest and passion to the subject.
- Don't make excuses for mistakes. The habit of making excuses has several negative effects for students, including failing a course. There is always room for improvement and having excuses will not further a student's path to success. A teacher can set a good example for his or her students by admitting to mistakes, taking responsibility, correcting it, learning from it, and moving forward.

### **Clearly Communicate Qualities for Success**

Teachers should pass along the lessons they have learned throughout their life experience. As mentioned before, teachers are among the most influential people in a student's life and they have the unique opportunity of encouraging excellent habits in a daily setting. To communicate these qualities for success, teachers should always:

- Use the Syllabus and Classroom Policies to establish successful traits. The syllabus is a great place to motivate and encourage students to practice good habits for success. In-class policies can be used to merge good habits into the classroom structure and encourage students towards excellence in everything they do.
- Dispel pre-conceived fear of content. Any subject can be challenging when you first approach it and don't make an effort to learn. Teachers should encourage their students to tackle hard subjects with an open mind and excitement to make it easier to learn and

absorb the material. Help students take small steps to learn hard topics; this will keep them from getting discouraged and giving up.

- Provide constructive criticism. Constructive criticism combined with positive feedback encourages and motivates students to continue on with the assignment, improve their previous attempt, and succeed.

### **Provide Opportunities for Networking and Help**

There is no escaping teamwork in the working world. Networking and peer feedback are crucial skills your students will need to survive in the workplace. Likewise, it is necessary for a successful student to know where to look when they need help. Teachers should make their students aware of the campus Career Center and networking opportunities the university offers throughout the year. As a teacher, you can introduce healthy team-work attitudes and helpful tools:

- Create small group activities and projects. Divide a task between several students who will help each other learn, motivate each other to keep on working as a team, and realize success together.
- Assemble or encourage study groups. Explaining what they have learned and working through material out loud will help students understand and remember the material better.
- Encourage discussions through the forum in Moodle 2. Students learn a lot from their peers' discussions and peer review will motivate better performance.
- Provide students with helpful tools and services. Teachers share the responsibility of providing information for students to find tutoring and any other kind of educational

resources. They should be prepared to provide studying suggestions on how to organize agendas, prioritize tasks or even creating study groups.

### **Hold Regular Office Hours and Encourage Students to Attend**

Holding consistent office hours as a teacher will build a relationship of trust with the student. They will know when they can expect to communicate with you and it shows them that their grades and success in the classroom are important to you.

- Incentivize office hours. Rewarding students that visit during office hours is a great way to encourage students to make time to discuss test or project performance.
- Host small study sessions during office hours. If students shy away from creating their own study groups, encourage group sessions during office hours. Provide snacks and creative ways of learning material that wouldn't usually work in larger classroom settings.

### **Conclusion**

As students move from college into the job market and their career, the habits for success learned during college continue and help them to be successful. Thinking “win-win” will build relationships that will carry on after college giving graduates contacts inside the company to which they wish to apply. Being proactive teaches them not to fear failure or make excuses for it but to learn from the experience. Putting first things first prevents procrastination, helping to meet deadlines. Beginning with the end in mind helps graduates to set and achieve goals, planning for the future; teaching them to become a person of action.

Successful students develop and apply effective habits. These same habits carry over after graduation helping them to become successful in life. Vince Lombardi once stated, “The



price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand” (n.d.). The ideas and techniques presented in this chapter are designed to lead students to appreciate and implement this insight.

### **Useful Tools**

Below is a list of useful resources assembled by teachers, for teachers. We recommend passing on these links and resources to your students as they continue their academic paths career.

### **UNCC Career Center for Work, Service, and Internships**

The Career Center is dedicated to providing resources for students as they decide career and begin their job searches.

<http://career.uncc.edu/>

### **UNCC Advising Center**

The Advising Center is specifically for undeclared students and students in the process of switching majors.

<http://advisingcenter.uncc.edu/>

### **UNCC Counseling Center**

The Counseling Center’s primary goal is our student’s mental health. Emergency hotlines and personal counseling information are just two of the resources they provide students.

<http://counselingcenter.uncc.edu/>

**UNCC Center for Academic Excellence**

The Center for Academic Excellence provides tools for students to assist students in their studies with resources like tutoring, academic consulting, and educational strength.

<http://ucae.uncc.edu/>

**15 Habits of Top College Students**

This is a great article put together by professors with U.S. News and World Report. It contains great habits for success that will be useful as you direct your students.

<http://www.washcoll.edu/live/files/3704-the-15-habits-of-top-college-studentspdf>

### References

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