



BASE CAMP

The Official Newsletter of College Bound Advantage

(614) 352-8413 693½ High Street, Suite C, Worthington, Ohio 43085
DrJay@collegeboundadvantage.com

Around the Fire with Dr. Jay

As we move into September, we congratulate our client families whose student begins their college journey. YAY! “Back to school” and “Off-to-college” time has finally arrived.

In this issue, we will take a break from our traditional format and focus instead of some things that might prove helpful to students who are beginning their college career and their families.

Words to the Wise from a College Professor



While I may not remember how many times I had to replace the elbow patches on my tweed jacket, I do recall some timeless tips that can help students manage college coursework. Some of my favorites follow. If you would like a more extensive discussion, including specific strategies for a number of course types (e.g. lecture course, writing course, math course, etc.) e-mail me at DrJay@Collegeboundadvantage.com and I will forward you a copy.

1. Identify a place or two on campus to study and go there every day. Build study into your calendar.
2. Read the syllabus for each class when received and place all due dates of assignments/exams into your calendar so you will always have a central reference.
3. Work on each class a short time each day. This will keep everything fresh, allow for pacing of work, and prevent the loss of details and content.
4. The No-Brainers: Attend class and complete and turn-in homework assignments (including reading) on time. Homework is designed to help you learn, so make sure you understand it. If you read or skim chapters in advance, faculty lectures will make better sense and will be retained much more easily.
5. If you are struggling with a class, get help early. Talk to your faculty, attend Math or Writing Lab sessions, ask the Academic Services office for Peer Tutoring, or enlist the help of a friend who was successful in the class.
6. If you are cratering in a class and don't believe you can course correct, drop the class with a “W” before the final drop date (usually about 6-7 weeks into the semester). A “W” will appear on your transcript, but will not impact your GPA and you can re-take the course later. Even if you earn an “F” in a class, the course can be retaken at the same college and the new grade will replace the prior “F” for GPA calculation purposes, although the “F” will remain on your transcript. One caveat – dropping classes may impact financial aid, so check in with your financial aid representative

as you consider a drop. Also some policies may differ between colleges.

7. Develop a strategy for each type of class. A successful strategy for a Math class is different from a strategy for a content (memory) class or a writing class. Team Projects also require that you develop a strategy. E-mail me for my entire document that offers ideas for these strategies.

Immersive, Cohesion Building Experiences Improve Student Retention, so why not join one?



Many colleges offer experiences that help build strong interpersonal relationships between students while also helping the students connect to their college. The students who engage experiences such as this enjoy a substantial bump in first to second year retention, greater satisfaction with their college experience, and are more likely to graduate.

These immersive experiences all share a few characteristics: (1) an intentional and ongoing engagement with a small group of peer students, student leaders, and at least one member of the faculty or staff; (2) a set of designed, shared experiences that foster the development of authentic relationships and group cohesion; and (3) an experience that will help students identify with the college through its history, activities, and traditions. The result is that each student will have a strong, diverse, and capable support group and a deep identification with the college.

So, what are the options? Here are some ideas of the types of experiences I am talking about:

1. Residential Learning Communities – Place students in shared living arrangements based on a theme (such as outdoor adventure) or academic interest (such as Art or Engineering) and then provide ongoing programming around the topic.
2. Residential Advisors (RAs) – these residence hall advisors are well trained, enjoy strong peer relationships, and have an opportunity to help other student residents.
3. Orientation Student Advisors – These students help deliver summer Orientation programs. They are well trained, develop a set of strong peer relationships, and help incoming first years students.
4. Social Fraternities and Sororities – As a group, students in these organizations enjoy the highest retention and graduation rates as a result of the strong peer, organization, and college connections they develop.
5. Immersive leadership development programs that meet the criteria.
6. Optional college trips, excursions, service projects, etc. that satisfy the criteria. Some colleges offer backpacking trips or assign groups to Habitat for Humanity Homes, or offer other travels together.
7. Immersive Study Abroad trips that are designed in such a way as to meet the criteria
8. Athletic teams (varsity or club sport) that meet the criteria. Some coaches who intentionally tend to culture can make these exceptional experiences...others...not so much. Intramural sports do not, in and of themselves, satisfy the criteria.
9. Any student organization in which the student takes on a significant leadership role. Membership and involvement helps, but doesn't necessarily meet the criteria.

Coach your student to identify and engage activities such as these and they will thank you as they, along with their close friends, walk across the stage to accept their diploma from the college they love.

Picking a Major – “Pure Major” or “Applied Major?”



At CBA, one important distinction we make is the difference between a “pure discipline major” and an “applied major.” This distinction helps students begin to consider a broader set of options than they might otherwise.

The best way to make the distinction is with examples. Mechanical Engineering is, fundamentally, applied Physics. So a student interested in majoring in Physics (pure discipline) might also want to explore its practical application in Engineering (applied major). The fields of Journalism, Public Relations, and even Digital Media draw heavily on writing skills. So, students who enjoy English (pure discipline) might also want to consider these majors in other fields that draw heavily on related skills. Students with strengths in Art (pure discipline) may also want to consider Graphic Design, Marketing Communication, Digital Media, Interior Design, or Industrial Design – all applied majors.

A benefit of applied majors is that they offer a clear progression to career opportunities, internship options, and typically lead to larger starting salaries than their pure discipline major counterparts.

There is also the opportunity to partner applied majors and minors with pure discipline majors and minors such that real synergies are realized. For example an Art major may be combined with a Graphic Design minor or vice versa. These types of combinations are powerfully motivating to students, offering both intellectual growth and practical application.

Once a student has identified some majors to explore, they can schedule an appointment with a faculty member in each area to learn more. They can also talk to other students majoring in the area of interest or take an introductory course.

The Anatomy of a College Degree



At most colleges, degree requirements (the course progression leading to a degree) follow a set pattern or design. It can be helpful to understand how college degree requirements are organized in order to best take advantage of the options that are potentially built in. We will provide a simple overview in this issue, but will expand our discussion to each component of college degree requirements over future issues.

With only a few exceptions, Ohio’s colleges and universities have all migrated to a semester system. So, the academic year is broken into a fall semester and a spring semester, each comprising around 16-17 weeks. In a typical semester, students would take 15 credit hours (around 5 classes) with 120 credit hours required for completion of the degree. Thus a degree can be completed in approximately 4 years not including summers. Most individual courses award 3-credit hours, with some lab and other extended courses awarding 4-5 credit hours.

First, let’s look at the **structural components of a college degree**. They are as follows:

1. **Core Curriculum** (AKA “General Education Requirements”) (approximately 1/3 of total credit hours)
2. **Major Courses** (1/3 to 2/3 of total credit hours)
 1. Courses in the major area of study
 2. Courses outside the major area of study, but required by the major

3. **Free Electives** (0 to 1/3 of total credit hours)
 1. Courses that can be taken from any area of the university
 2. Courses that apply to earning a Minor
 3. Courses that apply to earning a Certificate
 4. Courses that apply to a graduate degree

Over the next issues, we will look more closely at each structural component of a college degree and will conclude by exploring how this understanding might be used to a student's advantage.

Happy Trails



Well, it's time to re-pack the backpacks and get on down the trail. Thanks for joinin' us for the fun. See you next time!