Commitment to Success in College
by
Donald Ramirez

How committed are you to being successful?

College, as everything else that’s worthwhile in life, requires commitment if we are to be successful.

• Why are you attending college? Without being able to answer this question, you cannot address the level of commitment you are willing to make to be successful.

• Do you see college as something you fit in around your real interests, as something to do until something better comes along? Or do you see college as a vehicle to more options in life, and potentially to a more successful life?

• Do you get to your homework only after doing “more enjoyable” things, or do you set a high priority to learning the material?

• Are you willing to use the resources (tutors, videos, computer tutorials, etc.) that the college offers to help ensure your success, or are these things just other annoyances that take up your time?

How you honestly answer these questions will greatly affect how well you do in college, in general, and how well you will do in this class, in particular.

It is my opinion that without a high level of commitment, students waste their time by attending college. They will become discouraged because they cannot keep up with class, and will either drop their classes, or fail them.

College is serious stuff, but it can be a wonderful part of your life. It can dramatically change your life in very positive ways. (It did mine.) Developing good study skills, and learning how to learn will be positive assets for the rest of your life. Viewing college as a positive experience instead of drudgery can greatly enhance the quality of your college years.

You have the freedom and the power to think about college (and anything else) in any terms you wish. No one makes you think a certain way. Doesn’t it make sense to make a commitment to learn all you can, and make the entire process a positive one? I believe that unless a student does just that, it greatly reduces the likelihood that they will complete their degrees.

We need more highly educated people in this country. We greatly need you to be one of them!
Common Myths About Success in College

Only “brains” do well in college. The truth is that being successful in college has more to do with determination and commitment than with being brainy. I think a good analogy to being successful in college is a marathon race where everyone who finishes wins, not just the person who comes in first.

“Brains” never have to study. They just know the material. I hear this from some students in every class I teach. My classmates referred to me to as a “brain.” This “brain” had to study 20 hours each week for a single calculus class—while working part-time, and taking a full load.

If I attend class, I can get all I need to pass the class without studying. Unless the class is a complete review for you, or unless you are truly a “brain,” this approach won’t work.

Homework is a burden that we really don’t have to spend that much time on. Successful students spend a lot of time on homework.

I’m a returning student, and I really can’t compete with the new high school graduates. My returning students are almost always my top students. I believe that this is because they are used to working hard, and are used to being disciplined. (I was 25 years old when I started community college, and I competed quite well—because I was committed to success.)

I just graduated from high school, and college shouldn’t be any more difficult. Unless you attended a demanding high school, this is probably false. College is, in general, much more demanding.

Teachers assign a lot of work just to scare us. They don’t really mean it. I assign a lot of homework simply because mathematics is learned not by watching, but by doing.

Teachers just like to make things hard on students. I never like making things hard on anyone, but having eight successful years of full-time college and almost a quarter of a century of successful years in industry as an applied mathematician, I believe I know what is needed in the classroom and on the job. Our country needs people who are educated, reliable, honest, hard working, and creative, not just people who think they deserve a lot of money.

If I had a better teacher, I would have passed the class. Before you blame your teacher, take an honest look at your commitment. While some teachers are better than others, your job as a student is to learn how to learn in spite of the teacher. We need for you to be self-reliant when you leave college.

Make a commitment to be successful. It will change your life!