

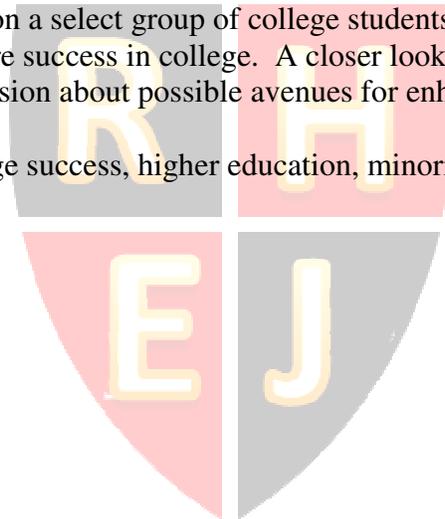
## **Making college a success by assessing and navigating candidates' study habits**

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### **ABSTRACT**

In an ideal world colleges would recruit and admit the “right” students and there would be no doubt about their success. But even in a less than ideal world, it is incumbent upon professors to ensure that students who do come to them experience success to the greatest extent possible. This capstone educational adventure offers immeasurable benefits to the individual student and to society. The individual is prepared for a chosen career that leads to a quality and productive life. Society is enhanced by any worthwhile contributions of the individual. However, college is expensive and requires untold demands of students. To be a success in college, students must make necessary financial arrangements and establish good study habits as they pursue a degree. This manuscript provides a snapshot of the crucial elements for college success. It also provides data on a select group of college students' study habits and how they may be navigated to help ensure success in college. A closer look at the candidates and their study habits informs the profession about possible avenues for enhanced success.

Key words: college cost, college success, higher education, minorities, study habits



## **INTRODUCTION**

College is more than simply a step beyond high school. It is the “higher level” of preparation that a country affords its citizenry for a professional career and a better way of life. It is expensive and demands tremendous effort on the part of students to be a success and should therefore be taken seriously by all stakeholders.

There are gloomy predictions that half of the students who enter college in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will fail to earn a degree (Owen, 2010). To lose such a large number of students to withdrawal or dropout is a travesty for individual students, their families and society. In essence, when a large portion of the student body fails, it casts a negative reflection on the overall effectiveness of the educational system.

What makes a college successful? It is successful when there is quality teaching and learning and a high proportion of students are gaining the qualifications for which they enrolled (Successful further education, 2005). To ensure quality teaching and learning it should be understood that there are different and multiple pathways to learning. For example, students will find that the most effective way for them to learn may be visual-spatial, musical, Intrapersonal, and/or kinesthetic. It is likely that students’ learning style will coincide with their personality type (College success skills, n.d.). Professors should take into consideration students’ learning styles and personality types as they prepare for and conduct instruction.

There are also important external factors related to degree completion. They include the quality of high school preparation, parental income and wealth, and the amount of schooling of the parent(s). Research reports that early intervention programs offer the best opportunity to increase the number of degree holders from lower income families (Beaver, 2010).

It requires comprehensive effort for colleges to recruit the “right” students and ensure their success. This manuscript examines some crucial elements to get about the business. Attention is focused on the decision to attend college and the expected benefits, problems that students face in seeking a college education, particular skills to aid success, a report on selected students’ study habits, and how colleges may navigate students’ study habits to help ensure their success in college.

## **DECISION TO ATTEND COLLEGE AND THE EXPECTED BENEFITS**

Most present-day high school graduates realize that choosing college is an excellent decision because it increases their opportunities for success. Earlier in the century, as many as 1.6 million new high school graduates attended college each year (Rauf, 2004). In recent years, about 70 percent of the nation's 3.3 million high school graduates have gone directly to two- or four-year colleges, and still more enrolled by their mid-twenties (Carey, 2011). But students find that the college learning environment is different from that of high school. College is less structured and requires more self-monitoring skills than is needed in high school because teachers and parents do not make decisions for the students. In the meantime, college students must be prepared to face an increased level of academic competition with less contact with professors. They will be responsible for their actions, learning, successes and failures (College survival skills, n.d.).

Most parents, including those of low socioeconomic status, want their children to attend college. But unfortunately, society does not afford equal opportunities for college. Middle and upper classes have far more access to the right information and to college than others. If parents

and children are not made aware of opportunities early, they may see college as something that is not a reality for them (Dolan, 2008).

About 70 percent of college bound students are white and 55 percent enrolled are female (Rauf, 2004). Beaver (2010) pointed out that for middle-class Americans college attendance is expected and viewed as necessary because of the various advantages degree holders share. To be successful in college students will need a lot of knowledge and certain thinking capabilities. They need self-knowledge, such as a realistic appraisal of their strengths and weaknesses, and know how to study and manage their time as well as make the right decisions. They must also know how to interact with students and professors from different backgrounds and how to navigate the bureaucratic process, especially in terms of financial aid (Dolan, 2008).

Being in a good position to raise a family is at the top of freshmen's values list (Rauf, 2004). In addition to increasing opportunities for general success in society, a bottom-line benefit of a college degree is greater income. Degree recipients will have acquired skills that make them more employable and allow them to command higher incomes, especially those with majors like accounting, computers, and nursing. It was reported that on average, a high school graduate brings home \$630 a week while a person with a bachelor's degree earns \$1140 a week (Beaver, 2010). Another study reported that in the mid-1970s college graduates earned about 40 percent more than people with high school diplomas and today it stands near 100 percent. College graduates were the only category of workers whose real pay increased since 1979 (Carey, 2011). It was stated that college graduates earn more because they are smarter and societies reward smart people (Beaver, 2010). However, the ultimate benefit of a college education is for the nation. That's because the economy continues to reorganize itself in ways that favor people with the knowledge and skills that college degrees represent. The nation that invests the most in education is generally the nation with the highest level of per capita income (Carey, 2011).

As the benefits of a college degree are highlighted, it is important to underscore that proportionality among various ethnic and socioeconomic groups is an issue. One study reported that the number of college graduates is increasing but the distribution is unequal. Students from lower income families attend and complete four-year degrees at far lower rates than those from middle and higher income groups. As many as 90% of students from the highest income quartile enroll in college after high school, while only 40% from the lowest income quartile do so. It gets even worse for the latter group in terms of college success as only 11% of low-income first generation college students graduate after 6 years (Beaver, 2010).

## **PROBLEMS THAT STUDENTS OFTEN ENCOUNTER**

To succeed in college students must first get to college. While there are opportunities to improve college preparation at all levels, high school is where college aspirations come to an end for far too many students. Too many students drop out of high school and relinquish the opportunity to enroll in college (Carey, 2011). Dropout rates in urban high schools are daunting, with matters being particularly serious for certain groups and certain areas of the country. For example, it was reported that 50% of the high school dropouts come from just 12% of the high schools in the nation and that more than three-fourths of dropouts come from the bottom half of the socioeconomic ladder (Beaver, 2010). Another factor that hinders students from entering college is that less than half of all students are exposed to a legitimate college preparatory curriculum in high school (Carey, 2011).

Also, to succeed in college students must stay in college. Students drop out of college by the hundreds of thousands every year (Carey, 2011). Predictions are that half of the students who enter college in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will fail to earn a degree (Owen, 2010). A contributing factor to this high dropout rate is students' inability to find and use information. Librarians and professors frequently complained that freshmen were unable to use university resources well. It was reported that 59% of college instructors were dissatisfied with the ability of high school graduates to do research. The skill weaknesses of entering college students were categorized into groups which included: lack of general knowledge, difficulty defining research questions and following the research process, problems searching for information, and trouble evaluating and using information (Owen, 2010).

Reasons associated with minority students being successful or staying in college include economic factors, institutional type, campus environment, institutional agents, and psychological factors. As an economic factor, the ability to pay is essential in attending college; institutions classified as minority-serving tend to have a positive effect on success, whereas chilly and hostile campus climates may be discouraging; the environment created by faculty and peers shapes students' perceptions of and experiences in college; and psychological factors such as self-concept, commitment, and expectations are associated with college success (Factors that influence, 2011). Students who struggle to pay for college tend to anticipate more academic and social difficulty. First-year students who find it hard to pay for college also tend to anticipate other challenges such as learning course material, interacting with faculty members, managing time, and making friends (Lipka & Berrett, 2011).

Additional problems exist for those college students who try to fight to the finish. Students are expected to do more demanding and sophisticated work than they were a decade ago (Glenn, 2011). Research shows that most students have not developed a systematic approach to study skills. In college instructors take for granted that students can read, write, listen, take notes and work on exams and assignments effectively. Unsuccessful students bumble through such activities whereas successful students employ a systematic approach (College survival skills, n.d.).

Another basic skill that today's college undergraduates seem to lack is critical thinking. They do not seem to think for themselves and to take college seriously enough. Some think that if most students would simply apply themselves seriously to their studies, many of their deficiencies would quickly disappear (Prepping kids for college, 1996). Adams (2011) reported that forty-five percent of students had no significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and written communication during the first two years of college and that 36 percent demonstrated no significant gains in those areas over four years of college.

Commitment to college work is another issue. Findlay (2010) reported that the amount of time an average undergraduate student spends studying has declined by 42 percent, from 24 hours to 14 hours a week. The drop is at every type college in the United States. Interestingly, study time has gone down and grades have gone up. Women were found to study on average more than men and students in areas like engineering clocked more hours studying than others.

Problems for college students go beyond study skills and time on task. One problem common to both sexes of college students is stress. They face more competition, worry about having to work during college, frequently or occasionally do volunteer work, and are increasingly interested in politics. While drinking is still a problem, it is now done less frequently, as is cigarette smoking (Rauf, 2004). However, there remain a host of physical, educational, social, disciplinary, psychological, and legal problems associated with college

student alcohol consumption (dePyssler & et al., 2005). African American students' alcohol consumption rates are significantly lower than rates for white students, one-third the rate, because they do not endorse alcohol use as positively as white students (dePyssler & et al., 2005). In reality, college students lead busy and variant lives and therefore, spend too little time studying. They devote less time for studies and more time for other activities. While studying may not simply be a quantity issue, adding qualitative techniques such as good study habits can make study time effective for students (Nonis & Hudson, 2010). Looking at quality time and effort, Lipka & Berrett (2011) reported that nearly a quarter of engineering majors often show up for class without assignments completed. Also, lack of sleep could underlie some of the problems that students encounter. Buboltz and et al. (2009) stated that poor sleep quality was reported by 22.6% of participants in their study and 65.9% indicated that they experienced occasional sleep problems. More than half of the respondents noted feeling tired in the morning, a prime time for academic performance.

The general population faces major challenges in earning a degree but it can be even more challenging for persons with disabilities. For example, students with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are at high-risk of academic achievement problems and school failure and are less likely to complete a postsecondary education. Things that hinder them include problems in self-regulation, task persistence, and attention. Students with ADHD do not necessarily lack the intellectual ability to learn. Their hyperactivity, impulsivity, and/or inattention make concentration difficult and negatively affect their performance. It was posited that school curricula necessitate linguistic and logical-mathematical types of intelligence whereas students with ADHD possess more natural and spatial types of intelligence (Reaser & et al., 2007). Students with learning disabilities often have difficulties in remembering and following directions, completing tasks, asking for help when needed, and persevering with difficult tasks (Al-Hilawani & Sartawi, 1997).

## **SKILLS FOR SUCCESS IN COLLEGE**

Along the way in this manuscript, attention has been called to some things that play a role in college success. In this section more explicit focus is given to specific skills that are identified for success in the academic domain. It is important to realize that no one skill leads to academic excellence. Success in college requires a number of skills that when properly used become productive habits in all areas of life (Cusimano, 1998).

According to dePyssler and et al. (2005), the best predictors of grade-point average (GPA) are student study habits and practices. Positive study practices were associated with academic success. African American students seemed particularly prone to drop out because of poor study habits. Good study skills and habits are essential for students' successful academic performance (Al-Hilawani & Sartawi, 1997). High achieving college students have better study skills than low achieving students in areas of time management, study techniques, and attitudes toward learning. Training in study skills significantly influence retention of at risk college students. Students with high GPA practice self-awareness, purposeful planning, and self-adjustment activities more than students with low GPA (Al-Hilawani & Sartawi, 1997).

Anderson and Anderson (1992) reported that two skills (study skills and communication skills) learned in high school contribute most to college success. The authors offered the following guidelines for developing good study habits and skills:

- Have a special time for study each day;

- Learn to use the library (and modern technology);
- Decide which subjects require the most time;
- Study to learn (make information meaningful; and
- Never pretend to understand, always ask for an explanation.

In the meantime, students are encouraged to continue to search for the most effective ways to achieve academic success (Anderson & Anderson, 1992).

Cusimano (1998) made the case that the first step to developing better study skills lies in organization, both physical and mental. Students are encouraged to keep their study center equipped with extra supplies such as pens, pencils, calculator, folders, paper and any other items (including technological ones) they anticipate needing. Another “must” was good time management; without which a student can easily fall behind in course requirements. The author advised that students should at the beginning of the semester set up a daily, weekly and monthly schedule for study and other activities.

Other essentials for success in college include (1) Note-taking skills – professors often teach by lecture and class notes are the record of what was said in class; (2) Good listening skills – which help in assimilating important information from lectures. This can be facilitated by making eye contact with the professor and rephrasing in mind what is being said; (3) Effective reading strategies – which empower ones academic abilities. Application of such may include reading a chapter by looking over the title, headings, illustrations, charts, and diagrams and then reading the chapter; (4) Putting information into long-term memory – this may involve storing information through daily review and understanding of the material; and (5) Test-taking strategies – this includes being prepared and getting proper rest and nutrition for the brain to work at an optimum level during the test (College success skills, n.d.; Cusimano, 1998).

Lipka and Berret (2011) reported interesting observations on study habits. They found that more than 85 percent of students take careful notes during class, but only half discuss effective studying habits with faculty members or classmates. Also, two-thirds of students stay focused while reading course materials but only half frequently write summaries of their readings.

Several sources (College survival skills, n.d.; Mayer, 2006) offered practical tips and activities to aid students in college. Suggested ones that may be helpful in making the transition from high school to college are:

- Adjust your attitude toward studying. Embrace college as an opportunity to learn about things you are passionate about;
- Select an appropriate set of classes. Inquire about class format, class requirements such as amount of reading, papers assigned, type of tests given and instructor’s teaching style;
- Take a less demanding class along with more demanding classes each semester. This will help balance the workload;
- Complete classes required for graduation early in the program. This reduces scheduling conflicts;
- Develop organizational strategies, study skills, and a network of support;
- Attend class. Arrive on time, pay attention and participate in class discussions and activities;
- Talk to the instructor, ask questions;
- Complete and check all work. Turn in neat and clear assignments;
- Monitor your progress. If you begin to fall behind, ask for help; and
- If with a disability, stay in contact with the office of disability support services and your professors.

In summary, to maximize success in college, it takes a high level of academic aptitude, efficient study skills, and positive attitudes for both students with disabilities and those without. Specific aspects important to learning are motivation, time management, information processing, self-regulated strategy use and general study skills (College survival skills, n.d.; Reaser & et al., 2007). Of course, a sufficient amount of time at studying is needed to go along with these skills. Glenn (2011) and Rauf (2004) reported that students were studying less than they should and less than their counterparts did a decade ago. Adams (2011) reported that on average students spent 12 hours per week studying.

## **STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR STUDY HABITS**

No two people learn in exactly the same manner; each has unique ways of processing information. It is vital that students understand their own learning style and find their keys to success. A set of tools is needed that can be utilized to learn, adapt and create strategies tailored to one's personal strengths and unique information processing skills. Students must understand their own style and accommodate it to be an effective learner and to compete at the postsecondary level (College survival skills, n.d.). As noted earlier, low GPA has been associated with low levels of perceived competence, security, and self-esteem (dePyssler & et al., 2005).

In large measure it appears that professionals do the talking about study habits for students. To take a different approach, after challenging students to attend class regularly and to do all assignments on time, Deen (2005) gathered their suggestion as to what is needed for them to be successful. The suggestions were:

- Use good time management. Start with highest priorities, e.g., education, family, then swimming;
- Avoid procrastination. It can be the worst enemy;
- Take work seriously. Just do the work and do it right; and
- Have a good attitude. Go into class expecting to learn something new and get a better understanding.

The students went on to make suggestions about the kind of teachers they need in order to become successful. They fell into two general classifications: (1) teachers who know and care about their students, and (2) teachers who provide a learning situation in the classroom. Teachers who know and care: Give encouragement to students (compliment good work, encourage one to try hard and help with problems); Love their job (walk through question until student understands); Know their students (gauge what students can really handle); Care about all students (make all students feel special); and Give detailed explanations of assignments (have patience). Teachers who provide a learning situation in the classroom: Give lot of writing practice (it is necessary); Insist on good behavior (be flexible but not to a point students walk over them); Allow students to express their views (accept different views); and Give feedback (tell what one needs to work on) (Deen, 2005). The author advised that teachers can heed students' suggestions by getting to know them individually, caring about them, and encouraging them to succeed. Besides getting to know them through their writing, teachers can have student conferences, use quick e-mails, do writing in the computer lab to see what causes difficulty, and have students critique each other's writing in peer groups and small support groups to encourage one another (Deen, 2005).

On a positive note, students reported being very engaged in the classroom. They indicated that they analyze ideas to a substantial degree, apply concepts and theories to new situations, receive diverse perspectives in classroom discussions and prompt feedback from the faculty, and ask questions in class (Rauf, 2004). Lipka and Berrett (2011) reported that three-quarters of the students in their survey perceived substantial gains in job-related knowledge and skills and half had had internships.

The current study went beyond gathering suggestions from students about making college a success; it actually ascertained students' perceptions of their study habits. The population consisted of 32 students enrolled in a teacher education program at an urban university in southern USA. They were administered a twenty-item likert-scale instrument which included study habits in the categories of in-class behaviors, study habits, completion of assignments, test-taking strategies and personal disposition. Construction of the scale was based on a number of resources cited in the reference list, especially Southern Kings Consolidated School (n.d.). The drafted instrument was submitted to a class of graduate students to complete and make comments on the structure and content of the scale. Their comments were taken into consideration in forming the final version of the instrument. With the instrument, the junior and senior teacher education majors were instructed to indicate on the scale always, often, sometimes, rarely or never, how often they do the listed behaviors. The responses were tallied according to the areas on the scales and percents were calculated. A further calculation was made to determine the number and percent for the combination always and often for each item to indicate how many satisfactorily applied the study habits or behaviors. Table 1 illustrates the findings.

In terms of categories, the students' self-report in personal disposition was highest. All of the students (100%) indicated that they believed in themselves and 97% think positively, are confident and say "I can do it." The category with some of the lowest ratings was test-taking strategies. Things that they did least were "Read whole test first and plan their time" (31%) and "Outline an essay answer then begin to write" (41%). Frequencies for other items in this category were marginal – "Answer questions you know first" (84%), "Prepare/study well for quizzes/exams" (78%), and "Go over returned tests, study mistakes" (78%). The category in-class behavior had high frequencies for three items ("Take notes in class" – 97%, "Prepare for class, bring materials" – 97%, and "Pay attention in class, concentrate" – 94%).

The Study habits category did not reflect excellent behavior on the students' part. They reported weak performance on "Stick to schedule, homework/review notes" (44%) and "Have space to study, few distractions" (69%). Reports on the other items ("Manage study time and set goals" and "Do difficult homework when at best") were only marginal, 75% each.

For the category completion of assignments, all of the students (100%) reported that they "Submit assignments on time" and 94% "Complete assignments to best of their ability." However, they were slow to "Ask instructor for outside help" (44%). The students were marginal when it came to "Use of library, computer for information" (78%) and "Read material assigned by instructor" (75%).

In summation, the candidates reported extremely high personal disposition, belief and confidence in themselves. They professed very good in-class behaviors when it came to "Take notes in class," "Prepare for class, bring materials," and "Pay attention in class, concentrate." Reports about their performance on Completion of assignments varied tremendously among the items (from 100% for "Submit assignments on time" to 44% on "Ask instructor for outside help." Shortcomings were reflected when it came to test-taking strategies and study habits.

Table 1: Candidates' Report on Study Habits (N = 32)

Study habit	Report (No/%)						
In-class behaviors: (No/%)	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	AO	
-Take notes in class	24/75%	7/22	1/ 3	0/ 0	0/ 0	31/ 97%	
-Ask questions when unsure	17/53	8/25	6/19	1/ 3	0/ 0	25/ 78	
-Pay attention in class, concentrate	20/63	10/31	2/ 6	0/ 0	0/ 0	30/ 94	
-Prepare for class, bring materials	26/81	5/16	1/ 3	0/ 0	0/ 0	31/ 97	
Study habits: (No/%)	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	AO	
-Manage study time and set goals	13/41%	11/34	7/22	1/ 3	0/ 0	24/ 75%	
-Have space to study, few distractions	13/41	9/28	9/28	1/ 3	0/ 0	22/ 69	
-Do difficult homework when at best	14/43	10/31	6/19	2/ 6	0/ 0	24/ 75	
-Stick to schedule, homework/rev notes	4/13	10/31	13/41	3/ 9	2/ 6	14/ 44	
Completion of assignments: (No/%)	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	AO	
-Read material assigned by instructor	15/47%	9/28	8/25	0/ 0	0/ 0	24/ 75	
-Ask instructor for outside help	7/22	7/22	15/47	3/ 9	0/ 0	14/ 44	
-Use library, computer for information	15/47	10/31	7/22	0/ 0	0/ 0	25/ 78	
-Complete assignments to best of ability	23/72	7/22	2/ 6	0/ 0	0/ 0	30/ 94	
-Submit assignments on time	24/75	8/25	0/ 0	0/ 0	0/ 0	32/100	
Test-taking strategies: (No/%)	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	AO	
-Prepare/study well for quizzes/exams	14/44%	11/34	7/22	0/ 0	0/ 0	25/ 78	
-Read whole test first, plan your time	7/22	3/ 9	8/25	9/28	5/16	10/ 31	
-Outline essay answer, begin to write	9/28	4/13	7/22	8/25	4/13	13/ 41	
-Answer questions you know first		16/50	11/34	5/16	0/ 0	0/ 0	27/ 84
-Go over returned tests, study mistakes	18/56	7/22	5/16	2/ 6	0/ 0	25/ 78	
Personal disposition: (No/%)	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	AO	
-Believe in yourself and your abilities	29/91%	3/ 9	0/ 0	0/ 0	0/ 0	32/100	
-Think positively, be confident, say "I can do it"	28/88	3/ 9	1/ 3	0/ 0	0/ 0	31/ 97	

It was very interesting to discover that the students always believed in themselves and their abilities and always submitted assignments on time. The literature reported that low levels of perceived competence, security, and self-esteem are associated with low GPA (dePyssler & et al., 2005). It also reported that procrastination can be college students' worst enemy, whereas having a good attitude was a great asset (Deen, 2005). The students further reported that they almost always take notes in class, prepare for class and complete assignments to the best of their ability. The literature (College success skills, n.d.; Cusimano, 1998) rated note-taking as a very essential skill for college success. The students reported a number of weaknesses in test-taking strategies as well as in asking instructors for help and sticking to a schedule. However, these study habits were viewed in the literature as important for success in college (College success skills, n.d.; Cusimano, 1998). Thus, it may be inferred that in the current study the students' excellent personal disposition, which is associated with obtaining good GPAs, and habits such as preparing for class, taking notes in class, and completing assignments as best they can are assets for completing their college studies. However, behaviors such as not sticking to a study schedule, not having distraction-free space to study, and deficiencies in fundamental test-taking strategies serve as potential problems for them as they matriculate through college.

### **HOW COLLEGES MAY HELP ENSURE SUCCESS (NAVIGATING STUDENTS' STUDY HABITS)**

There was evidence in the literature to suggest how colleges may help ensure college success. Dolan (2008) asserted that colleges would do well to make their admissions standards clearer about the knowledge and skills students should master; understand that entering students often don't know what courses to take, don't have the correct study habits, and don't know how to negotiate the system; and provide mentors as necessary. Colleges should also realize that meeting students' need for support may increase their persistence and success, especially in these difficult economic times (Lipka & Berrett, 2011).

While students should define their own success, colleges must help them along the way. Colleges should compile resources to help students become well-rounded by providing them with information and assistance with time management, study techniques, stress relief and health awareness. A lot of this material can be made available in a college handbook which can be used as a reference tool throughout the college experience (College success skills, n.d.). Librarians can also help students successfully transition from high school to college (Owen, 2010), especially in fostering good study habits. Also, colleges and policymakers can design effective programs to address student alcohol abuse and familiarize faculty and academic departments with alcohol abuse prevention concepts and approaches (dePyssler & et al., 2005). Concurrently, instructors can empower college students by providing them with a realistic evaluation of their work and by reinforcing high performance (Al-Hilawani & Sartawi, 1997).

To help students succeed in college over 70 percent of institutions offer first-year seminars. The seminars serve to assist students in making the transition from high school to college and to motivate them to take advantage of everything the university has to offer. Some positive outcomes associated with first-year seminars have included improvement in retention from the first year to the second year and subsequent graduation rates. Other benefits of the seminar have included enhanced opportunities for interacting with faculty, participating in class discussions, collaborating academically with other students, and forming a network of friends on campus (Jessup-Anger, 2011).

Colleges can get students excited by sharing with them the benefits of a good college education. They should inform students up front exactly what is expected of them, find out what worries they may have about college and ease their minds on those issues and then get down to the business of teaching (Prepping kids for college, 1996). Teaching should be of the highest quality, accommodating the particular needs of all students. Quality teaching helps to ensure better retention and pass rates (Successful further education, 2005). Even students with ADHD showed improved behavior or performance when tasks were made salient, novel, or interesting (Reaser & et al., 2007). In essence, colleges need to foster a very positive environment for learning. One good strategy offered in teaching is to make examples of good students' work rather than singling out the underachievers for criticism (Prepping kids for college, 1996). Adams (2011) suggested that colleges should foster an institution-wide culture of learning and change incentives to make learning a priority.

In higher education the expectation for students is to enroll in college, perform in classes and to graduate (Braley & Ogden, 1997). In view of overwhelming evidence that students are devoting less time to their studies, it is critical for educators to understand the true nature of this situation (Nonis & Hudson, 2010). Teachers must see students through the students' eyes in order to understand and help them. After all, it's the students who are getting an education and they should be included in the thinking and planning process (Deen, 2005).

In general, colleges seem to be making a favorable difference. Students mostly rate their institutions as supportive and responsive and they are earning record high grades. As many as 87 percent of students responding to a survey indicated that they are satisfied with their college experience (Rauf, 2004).

To assess and navigate students' study habits, which was the concern in the current study, universities need to understand their students' strengths and areas of need to make the ultimate difference. It was discovered that the sample population of teacher education majors on the one hand frequently engaged in some essential study habits and on the other hand infrequently engaged in some essential study habits. However, without concerted effort, it is possible for a professor to teach to retirement and not fully know and understand students' study habits. Faculty need extensive data on and understanding of students' in-class behaviors, study habits, effort at completion and submission of assignments, their test-taking strategies, and their personal disposition for learning and earning a college degree.

There are different avenues for navigating students' study habits. The professor could (1) attempt to accommodate or instruct the students as they are and basically accept what results, (2) facilitate development in the areas of infrequent engagement, or (3) do both numbers 1 and 2, accommodate in areas of strength and facilitate in areas of weakness, as deemed necessary. The author's experience and the literature tend to support a combination of accommodation and facilitation (Deen, 2005; Lipka & Berrett, 2011; Rauf, 2004). Along these lines, some suggested means to navigate students' study habits are:

- Make learning an experience that is of, by, and for the students. One where students feel free to participate and ask questions in class, where they are expected to prepare for class, pay attention and take notes
- Make instruction an authentic process. One that demonstrates effective goal setting, time management, and scheduling of activities; that emphasizes best practices of studying and doing homework
- Make assignments reasonable and purposeful. Relay the importance for doing assignments, make known the resources for completing assignments, emphasize

submitting material on time; encourage students to ask for assistance if needed to complete assignments

- Make test-taking an opportunity for success instead of one of failure. Teach well and prepare students to effectively demonstrate their learning when called for; make them well aware of sound test-taking strategies, give immediate and helpful feedback that can lead to improvement, and reinforce students when they do well
- Make believers out of students. Always keep goals, activities, and assessment within students' grasp, where with hard work and dedication, they can succeed.

When such suggestions are implemented, based upon findings and inferences in the current study, there is reason to believe that more and more students will be a success in college.

## SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

College success is most assured when a student has had a quality high-school preparation program and is dedicated to his or her work in an institution of higher learning. Such students also tend to employ good study habits. The literature has gone to great length to enumerate these study habits and expound on how essential they are to college success (Al-Hilawani & Sartawi, 1997; College success skills, n.d.; Cusimano, 1998; dePyssler & et al., 2005). A major problem is with students from diverse circumstances for whom a quality high school curriculum is a rarity and they often lack good study habits. Yet, they should not be denied the opportunity to earn a college education.

Students who are academically successful tend to use study skills spontaneously and more efficiently than low achieving students (Al-Hilawani & Sartawi, 1997). Therefore, a learning center, introductory course, or seminar on good study skills and habits should be available to help university students who have academic problems (Al-Hilawani & Sartawi, 1997).

The current study found that teacher education majors make frequent use of some essential study habits but infrequently make use of other essential study habits. Professors must work with what students currently do well as they develop them into what they should be. After all, as Deen (2005) stated, educators should strive to be the kind of teachers that students need and always remember to see the students through the students' eyes; for they are the product we are working to perfect.

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