

GBC College Knowledge



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How to Study and the Difference Between High School and College

Articles written by:
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This document describes how high school differs from college and the importance of studying. This is the seventh in a series of eight that will provide readers information about many important aspects of college.

Community Colleges a Brief History

The public junior college movement was born in the Chicago area due to the leadership of William Rainey Harper and J. Stanley Brown. Harper, the first president of the University of Chicago, distinguished between the general education of the first two years of college life and the specialized focus of the last two years. This distinction generated the term "junior college."

Harper believed that junior college-level work could also be done at "cooperating" high schools in a fifth and sixth year. By 1899, Brown, superintendent of the Joliet Schools, had developed a six-year school at Joliet Township High School. Thus evolved Joliet Junior College in 1901, the nation's oldest continuous public community college. With Harper's successors at Chicago uninterested in the junior colleges, their guidance passed to the University of Illinois (excerpts from an article by Dave Bartlett, Encyclopedia of Chicago, 2005 Chicago Historical Society).

The State of Nevada administers its own system of higher education through the Nevada System of Higher Education, NSHE. Within this system there are three types of institutions. One being a series of four colleges referred to as community colleges. The name, "community college" derives from the fact that "two-year" colleges primarily accept, and attract, students from their respective local community. Because of their rural service area some colleges, such as Great Basin College, have been authorized to offer selected four year degrees. The "two-year" community educational institutions also provide a variety of post-secondary educational opportunities including non-credit courses and credit bearing programs leading to certificates and associate's degrees. In Nevada, a second type of institution is that of the University (i.e., the University of Nevada Las Vegas and the University of Nevada, Reno) which award bachelor's, master's, doctoral and professional degrees, as well as having intercollegiate athletics and a research component. The third institutional type of institution in Nevada is the Desert Research Institute which is wholly devoted to research and intellectual discovery.

Nevada is a state with a relatively short history of two-year public institutions. Elko Community College was organized in 1967 and began a movement that has grown today to 4 public community colleges with over 30 locations statewide. Later, Elko Community College became Northeast Nevada Community college and today is known as Great Basin College.

Comparing Community Colleges and Four-Year institutions

The hallmark of the community college movement was and remains access to higher education. Community colleges were originally an extension of public K-12 districts and to this day accept all students with the ability to benefit from higher education. Because of these two facts, some underestimate the level of academic rigor found in the community college and the demands that will be placed on its students. Additionally, because community colleges are open

access and focused on student success, a series of non-college credit bearing transitional courses (sometimes call developmental or remedial) are offered to fully prepare students for college level work. Finally, the selective admissions criteria of many four year colleges and universities leads some to believe that coursework at these institutions will be more difficult than those found at the community college. When taken as a whole, the points referenced above create an unfortunate and erroneous perception about the ease of community college coursework. In short, college coursework at the community college is equal in learning outcomes and academic difficulty to that offered by four year colleges.

Community college courses must be equal to that offered by various four year institutions so as to allow for the acceptance of course equivalencies between two and four year colleges. This fact is borne out by the acceptance of community college coursework by the four-year schools and the high level of success community college transfer students enjoy when they attend the university.

High School Versus College

1. College is much faster-paced than high school. What was typically covered in a 5 days/week, 36 week high school year will be covered in a 3 or 4 days/week in a 16 week semester. College coursework is delivered approximately three times faster than high school coursework.
2. The faster pace of college coursework means:
 - a. More independent work and outside reading (see section on Studying, It's a Matter of Time below)
 - b. Fewer graded assignments, making each assignment more important
 - c. Less monitoring of student progress by instructors
 - d. No time for busy work: all work assigned must be completed and turned in on time
3. Attendance is strongly encouraged but often not required. If you do not show up to class, no one will look for you. However, if you miss too many classes you will fail.
4. Classes will be populated on average with more knowledgeable and motivated people than found in the typical high school class and as time goes on, the competition will stiffen. In classes there will often be non-traditional students with 5-30 years of post high school life experience; much can be learned from these older students.

Transitional Courses

As mentioned previously, community colleges are open access and focused on student success. This means that a series of non-college credit bearing transitional courses (sometimes call developmental or remedial courses) are offered to students who come to college underprepared for college level work. These courses are of great benefit to those lacking the necessary skills to be immediately successful in college level English, reading and mathematics. However, this benefit is not without cost. Coming to college underprepared will necessitate the taking of non-college-credit bearing transitional courses. These



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courses will cost time and money and will typically delay time to graduation by at least one full semester.

How to Study and Succeed In College

Learning, doing well and getting good grades always involves the development of a system or process of study that works for you. In such a system you must find a way of applying your mind so as to acquire knowledge and understanding. When asked about studying, students often say things like "I need complete quiet to study" or "I like music or the television on when I study," others speak to the time of day they study best or the fact they need the caffeine in coffee or soda pop to stay alert when studying. Yet, these preferences often miss the essence of what it means to study. In short, you need a comprehensive system of studying that works, regardless of the subject, its level of difficulty, or the style of the instructor.

Speaking of instructors, faculty members at Great Basin College have devoted much of their lives to the particular discipline or subject they are teaching. Collectively, they want little more than to communicate important subject matter knowledge and information to their students. They love their subject and they want you to love it too. But if you do not or cannot love the subject, they want you to at least learn enough to pass the course and successfully integrate the knowledge and information received into your life and chosen field.

Having been a student or educator for the past 57 years (44 at the College level) I have given the whole process of teaching and learning a great deal of thought. At the very intersection of teaching and learning we find the student studying. To that end, you have heard many people advise you to study, to study hard, but never explain how it is really done. Because of my interest in student success and therefore the process of studying, over the years I have asked teachers, professors, tutors and very good students alike to explain how they study. Remarkably, there has been a very high degree of consistency among all respondents; it involves four basic elements and here they are:

Element 1: This is the most basic of elements and involves attendance, paying attention, and most importantly, actively taking good notes. Attendance is vitally important; in a three credit lecture course, you receive 45 hours of direct instruction from an expert who cares about the subject and you. Very few people are smart enough to miss class and do well. As you attend each class, take careful notes, especially noting things that are written on the board, displayed in a power point slide, or verbally emphasized by your instructor. Now set those notes aside. One additional point relative to note taking in class: your class might be entertaining, but it is not entertainment, meaning observing a lecture like you might a television show or movie will not work. Again, active note-taking is of critical importance.

Element 2: Read the book and any supplemental materials carefully, outlining (i.e., taking hand written notes) as you go. Do not expect to read 20 pages and remember anything. Read and outline as you go.

Element 3: Complete all assigned work (e.g., readings, doing problems, writing papers and reports) to the best of your ability and turn in this work on time.

Element 4: Take your class notes and your outlined notes from the readings and rewrite them into a single consolidated set of notes. At this point, you have a streamlined set of materials in your own handwriting that will form the basis for your studying and learning.

The system described above involves many of the senses, hearing and seeing in class, the physical act of taking notes, reading, doing problems, and writing involves repetition, time on task and various ways in which the brain receives and integrates information. By now, some of you may be saying, "of course anybody who goes to class every day, pays attention, takes good notes, completes the readings and other assignments on time, and then studies a comprehensive set of notes will do well and learn a great deal." That's right, and that is what be required of you for academic success at the college level.

Studying, It's a Matter of Time

Periodically Great Basin College asks its students to complete a student satisfaction survey. In the most recent survey a significant sampling of students completed the survey college and answered a series of questions about their behavior and college experience. Nearly 80% of the GBC students report they working for wages in addition to going to school, with 26% of the students working full time and 53% part time. Given that students are taking different courses and have different study habits it is difficult to come up with a hard and fast rule about needed study time. However, it is generally accepted that students must study 2-3 hours outside of class for every hour in. Using this rule of thumb the typical full time student would need to study and work on assignments in excess of 30 hours per week, a difficult proposition while working full time. Many students need to work in order to afford the expense of going to college. However, when there is not an appropriate balance between working and studying, failure and/or dropping out is often the end result. In keeping with this theme, GBC has an admirable graduation rate of 26%, the very highest among the 4 community colleges in Nevada. However, when 26% graduate on time, what happened to the other 74%? Studying, it's a matter of time.

For more information or assistance call Great Basin College's Admission, Advising and Career Center at 775.753.2168