



***RISING SCHOLARS SEMINAR***

# **A Guide to Success in College**



**Allegheny County  
Department of  
Human Services**

**Independent Living Initiative**

# Dear Rising Scholar,

Congratulations on your college acceptance! The following information will help you make the transition to a successful college experience! A Guide to Success in College contains helpful information on topics such as:

- How to read a syllabus
- Scheduling and dropping classes
- Maintaining a relationship with your advisor and professors
- Study and time management tips
- The importance of extra-curricular and pre-professional activities

Please keep in mind that you need to be in contact with your caseworker (if you're still active with CYF), Independent Living Worker or Educational Liaison every 30 days, Use email, phone calls, texts or face-to-face meetings – just be sure to stay in touch!





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# Contact Information

**KidsVoice:**

(412) 391-3100

**412 Youthzone:**

(412) 902-4068

**Education Liaison:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Youth Coach:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

# Important Things to Know



As soon as you're settled on campus, get a campus map and make sure you are familiar with the locations of the academic buildings, financial aid office, admissions office, health center, library and cafeterias.

Don't stress!  
It's unhealthy! Find a healthy outlet such as an intramural sport, exercise or a campus club!

Don't change who you are unless it's for the better!

If you don't attend class, you are the only one missing out on a great education!

Don't do what everyone else is doing...  
**BE A LEADER**

Keep in touch with adults who support you: your mentor, caseworker, educational liaison, KidsVoice staff, etc. And don't forget your academic advisor! An advisor can be your biggest supporter on campus as well as a great mentor!

**ALWAYS PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD! BE POSITIVE!**



## More Important Things

**20%** of violence occurs off campus – be extra careful!

**60%** of acquaintance rape on campus occurs in a dating or steady relationship – drugs and alcohol can increase the risk. Stay sober. Stay safe.

Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among college students. Don't suffer in silence. Reach out for help. Call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 800-273-8255 (TALK) or dial 9-8-8 to be connected directly.



# The Differences Between High School & College

High School Classes	College Classes
The school year is 36 weeks long. Classes extend over both terms and some are divided between terms or weeks.	The academic year is typically divided into two separate 15-week semesters, plus a week of finals for each (and a summer semester).
Classes generally have no more than 35 students.	Some university classes may number 100 or more. Community college classes are about the same size as high school classes.
Out-of-class study time varies.	You should allow at least 2-3 hours of out-of-class study time for each hour of class. (15-16 hours of class per week = 30-32 hours of study time)
Assignments are typically shorter and reviewed in class.	Students are assigned substantial amounts of reading and writing which may not be directly addressed in class. You are expected to be prepared and have completed the assigned reading, which may total 25-200 pages per week per class, depending on the difficulty of the class.
Learning is a matter of supplying students with information and testing them on the same.	Critical thinking plays a bigger role; you are expected to take responsibility for your learning. Professors will assume you have completed the required assignments.

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<b><i>Special Accomodations: High School</i></b>	<b><i>Special Accomodations: College</i></b>
Shortened assignments if included in plan.	Shortened assignments are not a reasonable accommodation.
Use of notes on exams if included in plan.	Use of notes on exams is not a reasonable accommodation in college.
Explaining questions using different words is often considered.	Explaining questions using different words is not reasonable in college.
Focus on ensuring success	Students must meet the academic standards of a course. Success is not guaranteed.
High school must pass students socially.	It is legal for a student with a disability to be academically dismissed from college.
<b><i>Testing: High School</i></b>	<b><i>Testing: College</i></b>
Testing is frequent and covers small amounts of materials.	Testing may be less frequent and may be cumulative, covering large amounts of material. It is common to only have four exams per course per semester. Comprehensive finals are common.
Teachers may go over what will be on the test.	Test preparation is the students' responsibility. The professor may or may not review for the test.
Make-up tests are often available.	Make-up tests are seldom an option; if they are, it is the student's responsibility to request.
Teachers work around school activities for testing dates.	Professors usually schedule tests without regard to the demands of other courses or outside activities.
Teacher frequently conduct review sessions, pointing out the most important concepts	Professors rarely offer review sessions. When they do, students are expected to be active participants.
Tests are modified and interpreted to help students understand what the teacher is asking.	Tests are verbatim (word-for-word). You are expected to know what the professor is asking- no help is given.

Passing a course is based on your ability to reiterate what you have been taught.

Passing a course is based on application of the principles taught.

### **Grades: High School**

### **Grades: College**

Grades are given for most assigned work.

Grades may not be provided for all assigned work.

Consistently good homework grades may raise your overall grade when test grades are low.

Grades on tests and major papers usually provide most of the course grade.

Extra credit projects are often available to help raise a student's grade.

Extra credit projects may not be an option in college.

Initial test grades, especially when they are low, may not have an adverse effect on your final grade.

Watch out for your first tests. These are usually "wake-up calls" to let students know what is expected. They may count for a large part of the course grade.

Students graduate as long as they have passed all required courses with a grade of D or higher

Students may graduate only if the average classes meet the departmental standard typically a 2.0 or a "C" average.

In high school you must pass.

In college, you can fail.

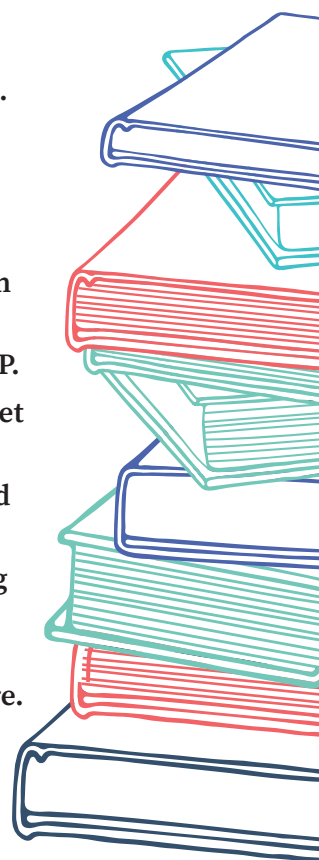


# Academic Course Load

- To be considered a full-time student and receive maximum financial aid, students are required to take a minimum of 12 credits each semester (a typical class is worth 3 credits). In order to finish in four years, most majors require students to take more than 12 but fewer than 19 credits each semester.
- We recommend that you carry only 12 credits your first semester, as you are adjusting to college life.
- Most bachelor's degree programs require students to take a number of credits in the Humanities, Mathematics, Sciences and Social Sciences in addition to your major courses. Your academic advisor or program director should provide you with a graduation requirement checklist. Refer to the checklist when you are scheduling classes each semester.

# Academic Success

- Pay close attention to each course SYLLABUS because it contains important information about the course, including when assignments are due. It is YOUR responsibility to know these deadlines. See Reading a Syllabus on page 8 for more information.
- Pay attention to attendance policies, which can also impact grades.
- Be attentive in class! Participate and ask questions.
- Don't procrastinate when you have an assignment. Study in advance; avoid cramming or waiting to study until the day of the exam. Turn assignments in on time.
- Break large reading assignments into smaller pieces.
- Make use of the Writing Center to assist with writing assignments.
- Take advantage of the library.
- If you're having a hard time in a class, you can set up an appointment to meet with your professor for help/suggestions.
- If you need extra help with your classes, locate the tutoring center and ASK FOR HELP.
- Study buddies/groups can be effective but don't become dependent on others to get work done for you.
- Time Management, organization and planning are essential for both personal and educational success.
- Plagiarism means copying someone else's work word-for-word and or paraphrasing without proper citation. There are SERIOUS consequences for plagiarism! CITE YOUR WORK!
- Used books/rented books can be useful if you can't afford them from the bookstore. (Amazon.com has become a college student's best friend)



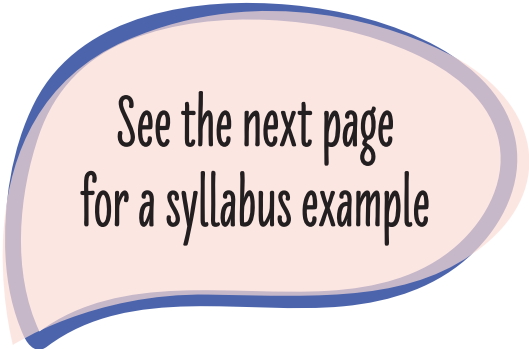
# GPA

## (Grade Point Average)

- In college, you will continue to earn a GPA.
- Most colleges and universities require students to maintain a passing grade (C or better) in each course to earn credit.
- In order to continue receiving financial aid, a 2.0 GPA is necessary. Anything below a 2.0 GPA places a student on academic probation for a semester. The GPA must be improved during the following semester or the student will be asked to leave the college or university.
- Depending on your major, you may be required to maintain a 3.0 GPA or higher. Check with your advisor for your major's GPA requirements.

# Reading a Syllabus

- A syllabus is a document outlining a course description, objectives, specific texts, materials needed and most importantly, assignments and their due dates for the class. Note to self: those who check syllabus regularly have a higher chance of passing the course.
- Some professors rely completely on the syllabus to inform you about assignments and tests. The excuse, “You didn’t say we had a test on this chapter” or “I was absent when you said that” are not going to work in college. If a due date is on the syllabus, the professor will expect the assignment even if he/she did not verbally remind you of it.



See the next page  
for a syllabus example

**Community College**  
**Basic Writing Techniques**  
**ENG 089 3 Credits- 45 clock hours**

Instructor: Dr. George Roberts  
Office Hours: By Appointment  
E-mail: groberts@ccac.edu | Phone: (412) 487-9982  
Prerequisite: Passing Score on English Placement Test  
Spring 2014

**Course Description**

This course is designed for the student who has little writing experience to develop skills and fluency in writing and to detect, diagnose, and correct error patterns in focused writing. This is the first of two courses that prepare the student for college-writing.

**Teaching Methods and Strategies**

- Lectures
- Demonstrations
- Small group work
- Group Discussions
- Individual conferences
- In class assignments
- Homework Assignments- Students will be expected to spend 3 and 6 hours a week on homework which includes but is not limited to reading and writing assignments.

**Learning Outcomes**

Upon the completion of this course the student will be able to:

- Write in response to readings;
- Generate ideas and express them in written forms;
- Edit to eliminate errors in the use of standard written English;
- Construct elementary summaries and paraphrases;
- Use a variety of sentence structures;
- Make a clear point in a topic sentence;
- Develop paragraphs using a variety of organizational patterns;
- Utilize all steps in the writing process;
- Identify and write in the style and structure of multiple genres;
- Choose effective words;
- Effectively use transitions to move from one point to another in writing;

**Methods of Evaluation**

Students will demonstrate comprehension and utilization of the writing process in classrooms and homework assignments, instructor observations, writing portfolio, exams, midterm and final examinations.

In-class assignments and class participation – 15 points per class= 250 total

Homework Assignments - 25 points per assignment= 375 total

Writing Portfolio - 100 points

Test - 40 points per test= 120 points

Midterm exam - 55 points

Final Exam - 100 points

Students in 089 must earn at least a C or better to be promoted to ENG 100.

Those students who earn Ds or Fs will have to repeat the class.

### **Attendance and Class Policies**

1. Students are expected to come to every class on time and prepared with the homework assignment completed. Missing class, coming late, or leaving early will directly affect the student's class participation grade. It is important for the student's overall success that he or she attends and participates in every class.
2. If a student finds it necessary to miss a class or part of one, it is his/her responsibility to contact the instructor before class as well as complete any missed assignments. Any quiz or test will be made up on the day the student returns to class.
3. Cell Phones must be turned off completely at the start of class or put on silent to avoid distracting others' learning
4. There will be a "Zero Tolerance" for any plagiarized assignments. Plagiarism includes copying word for word from a book, magazine, internet, or any other printed material. Paraphrasing information is also included in this definition. Plagiarism results in an automatic zero on the assignment.

# Example Course Schedule

Session	Topics to be Covered	Weekly Assignments & Reading
1-31	Syllabus Overview Questionnaire Learning style survey In-class reading and responses (conferences)	
2-7	Read and Respond- editorial Group Interview Capitalization	
2-14	Free Write Chapters 1&2: Reading and Writing Eight Parts of Speech Paper 1 Pre-Write	
2-21	Free Write Chapters 3-5: The Writing Proces Identifying subjects and predicates Effective word choice in writing	Read chapters 3-5
2-28	Free Write Unit 5 Chapter 22: Subjects and Verbs Peer review for Midterm	Read chapter 22-24
3-6	Midterm Chapter 6: Describing Chapter 23: Fragments Writing workshop	
3-13	Free Write Chapter 7 Narrating Chapter 24: Fused Sentences & Comma Splices Paper 2- Pre-write	Read handouts that will be given in class.
3-20	Spring Break- No Class	

3-27	Free Write: Chapter 8 Chapter 26: Verb Tense Punctuation	Read chapters 26-27
4-3	Free Write Chapter 9: Analyzing a Process Chapter 27: Subject Verb Agreement Begin Reading:	
4-10	Free Write Chapter 10: Comparing and Contrasting Chapter 31: Pronoun Agreement Revise writing checking grammar	Read chapters 34-37
4-17	Free Write Chapter 11: Dividing and Classifying Chapter 34: Modifier Errors Revise assignments checking grammar	
4-24	Free Write Chapter 12: Defining Chapter 36: Commas Grammar Overheads	
5-1	Free Write Chapter 13: Analyzing Cause and Effect Chapter 40: Capitalization Revise sentence in own writing	Read handouts that will be given in class. Final Exam- TBA



# Develop a relationship with your Academic Advisor

- Every college freshman is assigned an academic advisor.
- Make a note of who your advisor is, along with their contact information, and keep it handy.
- Meet with your advisor at least twice a semester.
- Your advisor can help you:
  - Select a major
  - Select courses
  - Schedule classes
  - Find a tutor
  - Find an internship
  - And land an internship or job by providing a recommendation





# Study Tips



- In college, YOU have sole responsibility for your success. Your parents and teachers won't be prodding you to go to class or reminding you to do your homework. Success in college requires initiative on your part.
- You should plan to set aside time to study every day. You'll be expected to spend 2-3 hours of studying, reading and doing homework OUTSIDE of class for every hour that you spend IN class!
- Avoid distractions as much as possible when studying. You will notice there will be a million other things to do besides studying! Keep your priorities in order! Go to the library or a quiet area where you can concentrate.
- Don't let disorganization be your downfall! Notebooks and planners can be your best friend. If you need help organizing your workload, visit the tutoring center or talk with the disabilities services office or your academic advisor.
- Make use of highlighters and sticky notes to indicate important points or questions in your textbooks. Write notes in your books to help you remember and understand what you are reading. These books are yours – take advantage of them!
- Write down important information on notecards. You can use them later as a study guide.
- Try to spend extra time on difficult subjects that you are not familiar with and less time on the material you may already know.

## Dorm Life

- Contact your roommate before moving in to decide who will be providing shared items – this will help to avoid over-packing or crowding limited space.
- It is very important to effectively communicate with your roommate to discuss your expectations about time for studying, visiting with friends and sleeping. Having these conversations in advance can prevent many problems down the road.
- Be respectful of your roommate's personal space and belongings.
- Lock personal items away.
- Try not to lose your school ID (replacement cost: \$10 - \$20) or dorm key (replacement cost: \$30 - \$60).
- Most dorms have quiet hours after a certain time, but try not to be loud and disruptive anytime, as other students might be trying to study or catch up on sleep.
- Invest in headphones to limit distractions.
- Communal bathrooms make shower shoes and a shower caddy essential.
- Resident Assistants (RA) are students who help maintain safety and order in the residence halls. Develop a good relationship with your RA; you might consider applying to be one yourself.



# Campus Life / Culture

- Yes, academics are your first priority, but it's also important to **BE ACTIVE ON CAMPUS!** The full college experience includes meeting new people, gaining social and leadership skills, and developing networks and social groups that may last a lifetime.
- Try to get involved in various clubs and organizations.
- If you are interested in a fraternity or sorority, pay attention to signs around campus and to the particular organization itself.
- Remember that you are judged by the company you keep. Don't do anything with your friends that might hurt you personally, academically or – in the future - professionally.
- Be mindful of (underage) drinking & drug use and their consequences.
- Be cautious of what you post on social media. **DO NOT** post inappropriate comments and pictures, including those of yourself violating rules! Future employers **WILL** find those posts and judge you accordingly.
- Be sure to set up a professional voicemail in case of important phone calls from potential employers or internship sites.
- Take care of yourself physically. Use the Health Center when needed!
- Be aware of public safety on your campus. Never walk the campus alone at night, especially if you are a female. Many campuses provide escorts to help you get back to your dorm safely – use them!



# Off-Campus Life

- Be aware of your surroundings at ALL TIMES!
- Partying can be fun but be mindful of your age, your limits and the potential consequences of your behavior.
- Make it your business to know your school's policy regarding the use of drugs and alcohol. You will find that colleges are serious about enforcing these rules.
- Surround yourself with responsible peers when going out to prevent getting lost or in trouble.
- Come together, leave together, stick together (establish rules with your friends, including safety words and signals).
- NEVER set any drink down or tell a "FRIEND" to watch it for you while you step away. Just get a new drink when you return. And don't accept a drink from someone you don't know.
- Take advantage of university transportation, most notably the bus and or taxi.
- If you are lucky enough to have a friend with a car who is willing to assist you (e.g., grocery store and laundromat trips, when you miss the bus, weekend adventures) be respectful of their time and their car and always offer to chip in for gas!



# Financial Aid 101

- The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) needs to be completed each year that you are attending college.
- Make sure you know when your school's deadline date is for you to submit your FAFSA (typically needs to be submitted between January and April each year).
- You can always access your FAFSA at [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov)
- Please make note of your pin and password and keep them in a safe spot. You will need them to log in to your FAFSA account.
- Always stop in your school's financial aid office to obtain scholarship applications that you may be eligible for.
- If you need to take out student loans, there will be additional documents you will need to submit. Your school will send you the information/directions you need to make sure your tuition is covered with your student loans.
- Don't let mail or emails sit unattended, these could be important requests that must be answered in order for you to keep your financial aid!

# Managing your Money

- You should have both a checking and a savings account.
- Budgeting is so important. Know the difference between “wants” and “needs.”
- Stay informed and in charge of your financial aid. Stop by your school's financial aid office at any time!
- **Do not purchase/or apply for credit cards without carefully assessing and understanding of them!** It's too easy to accumulate debt at high interest rates. If you can't afford it, don't buy it!
- Beginning in August, Allegheny County will pay stipends via EBT cards. These cards have some restrictions, so be sure to read the “Frequently Asked Questions” handout and if you are not sure about something, ASK!
- If at all possible, save money from your stipends. Remember, they stop when you turn 21.
- If you receive an IRS refund, save it for future expenses.
- Used books/rented books are available if you can't afford them new from the bookstore. [Amazon.com](https://amazon.com) has become the college student's best friend!
  - If you're eligible for reimbursement, send your book receipts, along with a copy of your schedule, to your caseworker or EL.
  - Community College students are not eligible for reimbursement.
- Don't forget laundry expenditures and printing fees at computer labs on campus.



Remember:

**Send your grades to  
your Education  
Liaison at the end of  
each semester.**

**If you receive a stipend,  
your stipend may  
end until we receive  
your grades!**

**College is a time to step out of your comfort zone, try new activities, figure out your likes and dislikes, obtain a great education, and meet new people. College is a time to live responsibly, optimistically and graciously because not everyone has the opportunity to receive a college education.**



We're wishing you the best of luck!

# Financial Aid 101

C F F G A R N P E L L G R A N T K W J Z G E K L  
 V H W V U E R N P X G E B J V Z D D P O W K W V  
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 P C T P U O N E N S X E H Z M X L M R X W V M N  
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Cost of Attendance  
 Subsidized Loans  
 Need Based  
 MHEC  
 Work Study

Scholarship  
 Eligibility  
 Deadlines  
 FAFSA  
 EFC

October  
 Unsubsidized Loans  
 Merit Based  
 Gift Aid  
 Federal Loans

MDCAPS  
 Pell Grant









**Allegheny County**  
**Department of**  
**Human Services**

## **Independent Living Initiative**