



Suggestions for Success

The Patricia & Christopher Weil Family Foundation has been awarding scholarships to college students from underserved communities for 12 years. In that time, we've had an opportunity to see what kinds of choices lend themselves to a more successful college experience. Here are a few suggestions:

- Reach out to your college or university and ask them if they have any support services for students from underserved community backgrounds. Some colleges have whole departments dedicated to this support and some even have summer programs to ease students into college life. Still others have official mentor programs.
- Get a mentor as soon as you get to college. This could be an upperclassman, a professor or someone assigned by the school. Your mentor should be familiar with your college and familiar with your background. Students who come from the same background, one of whom has already navigated the ins and outs of your college, make an excellent support structure for each other. Meet with your mentor *at least* once a month.
- If you're in need of a laptop, check out this website: <http://www.c2sdk.org>. These guys provide refurbished computers to kids in San Diego along with tons of software, technical support, and even a replacement warranty, all for greatly reduced prices.
- Learn more about the study abroad programs offered through your college or university. Most colleges have excellent exchange programs where students can either trade their spot with a foreign student for the semester or the year, or a professor from the college will take a group of students to travel and study together. Often the cost is the same or only slightly higher than staying on campus. Don't be afraid to reach out to your financial aid office or college advisor to explore how your grants and scholarship can be used towards studying abroad. Some programs have a minimum GPA requirement, so be sure to keep your grades up.
- Do not be afraid to get to know your professors and go in during office hours. Doing so can lead to research opportunities with them, insightful letters of recommendations, and can open up the possibility of gaining another mentor. You can never have too many people in your corner.
- Remember you are not alone. One of the beautiful things about freshman year is everyone is trying to figure out what they are doing. There will be times when you will feel out-of-your-element and somewhat overwhelmed. Take pride in the fact that everyone, whether they show it or not, will be feeling those emotions at one point. Stand firm in the knowledge that the work you've done up to now has earned you your spot and has prepared you for what will be required of you.
- Make it a point to introduce yourself to and check in with your financial aid advisor. Don't know who that is? Call your financial aid office or look online. Financial aid advisors are often assigned by last name. No matter how frustrated or confused you get, never lose your cool. The

financial aid office is already a stressful place. Remember that people go above and beyond for people who come prepared and who treat them well. Be the student they love to work with and keep copies of everything you get from the office. Doing so can not only save you time. It can also save you money.

- Start looking into summer opportunities in late October. Most summer internships and summer research programs release their applications in late December/ early January. Researching early allows you to decide what programs you would like to apply to, gives you time to gather your letters of recommendations at a respectful time, and gives you the opportunity do work on your applications during your break (away from the stress of classes and homework).

Fun Fact: Professors and mentors are more likely to write a thoughtful letter of recommendation during break because they have more time to dedicate to it. Your thank you letter/gift can double as a christmas gift.

- Note in your planner or organizational system important dates like FAFSA deadlines and registration deadlines. Your yea end schedule will become hectic. Save yourself the trouble of getting stuck in horrible classes or waking up in the middle of the night worried that you will lose financial aid assistance. Plan ahead!

- Reach out for help. Don't be embarrassed to ask for help if you're struggling. Talk to your college advisor, or your mentor. If you're an MKC Scholar, email any one of the board members. College (particularly freshman year) can be difficult for everyone, especially kids coming from underserved communities who sometimes have had less exposure to the world outside theirs.

- Explore, Absorb, Relax and Enjoy!