



SPENCER A. RATHUS
LOIS FICHNER-RATHUS

MAKING THE MOST OF COLLEGE

Making the Most of College

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Preface

College for many is the opportunity of a lifetime. This book is intended to help students make the most of that opportunity.

The central purpose of college is to foster the intellectual development of students. Our years of teaching experience, however, have given us to believe that the central purpose of the college student—whether residential, commuting, or returning—often becomes coping with the myriad academic, personal, and social challenges posed by college life. The concerns of students range from the sublime to the mundane—although not usually the ridiculous. On a theoretical level, students may be concerned with questions such as “What is the mind?”, “What is knowledge?”, and “What is the true nature of the universe?” On a practical level, they may be equally concerned with questions such as “Where will I find a parking space?”, “How can I fit in a part-time job?”, and “What do I do for a date?”

As a primary, research-based textbook for the college-orientation or college-success course, *Making the Most of College* is intended to help students cope with all of these challenges. In doing so, the book addresses five broad areas:

1. Orientation to the college and local community,
2. Management of time and money,
3. The academic side of college life,
4. The personal and social sides of college life, and
5. Making the transition to the career world.

Orientation to the College and Local Community

Chapters 1 and 2 help orient students to college and the community. Chapter 1 assists students to form accurate expectations about college; to recognize, for example, that college professors are not carbon copies of high school teachers. It discusses some of

the equipment that facilitates performance in college, from dictionaries to computers. All students, moreover, need to identify and learn how to use the resources on their campuses, and residential students need to locate the services that are available in their communities. So Chapter 2 tours facilities ranging from the campus library to health-care services, day-care centers, and environmental groups.

Management of Time and Money Chapters 3 and 4 help students learn how to manage their time and money. Some college students are just beginning to learn how to manage money, and some literally do not know where next year's tuition will come from. Residential students may be faced with changes in eating and sleeping habits, and with new responsibilities, such as underwear that must be washed and toothpaste that must be replenished. Some new residential students find that they miss classes because no one gets them out of bed in the morning. Most students complain that there are not enough hours in the day for them to meet all their obligations and still find the time to breathe. Commuting students may face special problems in buying and maintaining cars and finding strategic times of day when the freeways are not extended parking lots. Returning students must often juggle the demands of family and college life—a difficult balancing act, indeed. Returning students often miss classes or are late in completing assignments because the children are ill or the babysitter had to study for a test. Chapter 3 will help students fit classes, studying, meals, family life, a social life, work, extracurricular activities, recreational activities, and sleep into their schedules. Chapter 4 will help them find and manage money.

The Academic Side of College Life Chapters 5, 6, and 7 will help students manage the academic

side of college life—attending classes, taking notes, studying, writing papers, and taking tests. Academically, many students find college far tougher than high school. In some colleges, the scramble for grades can be crushing; students may feel that their admission to graduate school or success in finding a lucrative job hinges on their performance on every quiz, test, and term paper. Poor grades may not only signify a waste of time and hard-earned money; they may also contribute to a collapsing self-identity and feelings of guilt and shame. So a major part of this text is devoted to imparting skills that will help students learn the subject matter in their courses and perform well on tests.

The Personal and Social Sides of College Life

Chapters 8 through 13 offer advice on ways of meeting the personal and social challenges of college life. College life can be stressful, and Chapter 8 enumerates many strategies for managing stress. Social relationships are also an integral feature of college life. Residential students may have to adjust to living with a roommate from across the country—or the world. For single students who have not developed social skills, a swarming campus of 20,000 students may only render feelings of loneliness more poignant. So Chapters 9 and 10 are devoted to helping students form and maintain sustaining relationships. Chapter 11 advises students on many health matters, including how to initiate and maintain healthful lifelong dietary habits and exercise programs. College life brings many students new freedom, but freedom is a double-edged sword that carries the burden of personal responsibility. Chapter 12 provides students with the information they need about sexual behavior to make mature sexual decisions and to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Whether we like it or not, drugs ranging from the old campus standby—alcohol—to cigarettes, marijuana, cocaine, and steroids are readily available on most of our campuses. Chapter 13 therefore contains information about the uses and hazards of a variety of substances, information that students can use to make mature decisions.

Making the Transition to the Career World

Whereas Chapter 1 helps students make the transition to college life, Chapter 14—the final chapter—is designed to help students make the transition from college to the career world. Many students begin to make this transition early through their selection of a major field. Chapter 14 is replete with practical information on choosing a field that is compatible with one's interests and abilities, finding a job, writing a résumé, even handling a job interview.

All in all, we confess that this book will not provide answers to the questions "What is the mind?", "What is knowledge?", and "What is the true nature of the universe?" However, this book will help students manage the academic, personal, and social aspects of college life so that they have the time and energy to muse upon these questions for themselves.

FEATURES OF THE TEXT

Several features throughout the text stimulate student interest and promote learning. These include:

"Truth or Fiction?" Items Each chapter begins with "Truth or Fiction?" items. The items stimulate reader interest, sometimes by challenging common sense or folklore. A "Truth or Fiction Revisited" insert is placed at the point in the text where each "Truth or Fiction?" item is discussed. These inserts afford readers the opportunity to check their presumptions against the facts.

Questionnaires Numerous questionnaires are found throughout the text. These questionnaires afford students insight into their personalities, behavior patterns, and attitudes as they bear on their adjustment to college life.

"What Do You Do Now?" Sections "What Do You Do Now?" sections place students in demanding and sometimes perplexing situations, and challenge them to indicate how they would handle them. Then we suggest possibilities with which readers can compare their own solutions. These interactive features afford students the opportunity to test their own coping skills. Then they receive feedback that helps them assess the appropriateness of their ideas.

"In Your Own Write" Features The "In Your Own Write" features are journal entries that give students an opportunity to organize and express their thoughts and experiences on issues raised in the chapters. During a time in which "Writing Across the Curriculum" is being emphasized in American colleges and universities, these features give students practice in expressing ideas through the written word. They also serve as a springboard for class discussion and involve students personally in the subject matter of the chapters.

"Summing Up" Features Each chapter ends with a list of ten questions that summarize the material. This feature encourages students to reflect on what they have read and discussed in a nonacademic, personalized way. The feature will promote retention by rendering the material more relevant to students' lives.

Lists of Detailed Instructions Lists of instructions offer detailed advice for handling various matters. Chapter 7, for example, includes lists of things to bring to a test and of hints for taking multiple-choice tests. Chapter 12, similarly, offers a detailed list of strategies for averting sexually transmitted diseases.

Extracts from Literature and the Popular Culture Numerous excerpts from sources as wide ranging as Plato, Samuel Johnson, Shakespeare, Mark Twain, Michael Jackson, and Mae West demonstrate the enduring intellectual and entertainment value of

adages and aphorisms and offer wisdom in their own right.

Writing Style The writing style of the textbook is “user-friendly” in tone, personalized. It speaks directly to the student, using the first person, contractions, and humor, where appropriate. As a result, we hope that students will find the book useful and engaging. We want them to perceive the book as part of the solution to the challenges they are facing, not as part of the problem.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Making the Most of College is accompanied by an extensive array of supplementary items designed to facilitate learning, teaching, and assessment of student progress.

Student Journal One contemporary trend in education is the encouragement of students to maintain journals. Journals allow students to record their experiences, organize their intellectual and emotional responses to their experiences, and express their views through writing.

Foremost among the supplementary materials, then, is the *Student Journal*, which was written by the authors of the textbook itself. The journal accompanies the textbook at no extra charge and provides students with an opportunity to respond to the concepts and strategies that are advanced in the textbook. It is not just a series of blank pages. It contains exercises that encourage students to reflect upon the issues raised in the textbook and to “make them their own.” Exercises in the journal are numbered according to the chapters to which they refer. Pages are perforated and there are places for students to write in their names and the date, so that students can hand in journal pages as written assignments.

Annotated Instructor's Edition This informative Annotated Instructor's Edition is designed specifically for the first-time instructor of the college orientation course, although experienced instructors will find it a useful reference as well. It consists of the entire student text with marginal annotations providing a wealth of ideas for classroom preparation. There are five types of annotations printed in red ink in the margins: Learning Objectives at the beginning of each chapter; Background Information, which includes references to suggested readings; Discussion Suggestions; Class Activities; and cross-references to topics contained in the *Student Journal*.

Test Item File This booklet contains 500 questions comprised of multiple choice, fill-in-the blank, true/false, short answer, and essay questions which can be used as a basis for examinations and quizzes. This test bank is also available in a computerized format for the IBM. This program, the *Prentice Hall Testmanager*, allows you to add, delete, and edit ques-

tions within the file in order to create customized tests.

Prentice Hall Critical Thinking Audio Study Cassette This 60-minute cassette helps students develop their critical thinking skills. The first part, which runs approximately 50 minutes, demonstrates how asking the right questions leads to better critical reading and thinking skills. The second section consists of helpful tips on how to study, how to take effective notes, and how to become a more active learner. These tapes are available free in quantities of up to 10 upon adoption.

In addition to these supplements, videotapes are available free to qualified adopters of *Making the Most of College*. These videos deal with such topics as substance abuse, stress, fitness and exercise, and study skills. Please ask your Prentice Hall Sales Representative for details.

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Spencer A. Rathus
Lois Fichner-Rathus


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Making the Most of College



Making the Transition to College Life



TRUTH OR FICTION?

- Many straight-A high school students become “C” college students, even though they continue to work as hard and perform as well.
- In college, resident and academic advisors make certain that you adhere to curfews and get your work done.
- Most beginning college students believe that they can get by academically in college without missing out on interesting social activities.
- College teaching is superior to high school teaching.
- College professors try to motivate their students.
- The primary purpose of college is to help you get a good job.
- Some colleges require students to purchase personal computers.

Beginning is what this book is about. Beginning college, beginning adulthood, beginning again. Beginnings are exhilarating. They offer the opportunity for boundless success. And for failure.

We wrote this book to help you take full advantage of the promise of college. This book can help you whether you're the first one in your family to go to college or the well-to-do offspring of a family in which six generations have trodden the ivy halls ahead of you. It can help you whether you're fresh out of high school or returning to college after rearing a family. This book can help you whether you're a conscientious student or your report card has seen better days.

This book can help you

Fit classes, studying, meals, family life, a social life, work, extracurricular activities, recreational activities, and sleep into your schedule.

Find and manage money.

Get the most out of your classes.

Study and remember what you've heard and read.

Improve your grades on tests and papers.

Make and keep friends.

Handle the conflicting needs of family and college life.

Initiate and maintain healthful lifelong exercise programs and dietary habits.

Cope with the pressures of sex.

Handle the issue of drugs.

This book can also help you if you're not sure about where you're headed after you graduate—or how to get there.

Although college promises to enhance your skills and sophistication, doing well in college requires some skills and sophistication at the outset. Study skills and sophistication in the form of "test-wiseness" are basic to success. Knowledge of ways of handling stress, getting along with instructors and peers, and coping with distractions also has its place.

In this chapter we'll discuss what lies ahead in college and some of the basic equipment you'll need. First, however, your first author shares some of his early college experiences with you.

A PERSONAL CONFESSION

My own experience highlights some of the things that can happen when a naive teenager goes off to college. Whether you are at a 2-year school, a 4-year school, or a university, knowledge of my experiences may be of use to you.

When I went off to college some years ago—how many is my business—my classmates and I attended an orientation session in a grand auditorium. We were heartily welcomed by a progression of campus dignitaries. Then the dean of students made an ominous speech, which, I suppose, was intended to arouse us to do our best. He told us that we "A students" had better get used to C's because we were no longer at the top of the class, as we had been in high school. A grade of C defined "average" work at college. The average first-year student at this college had gotten an A- to B+ average in high school, so that student was probably now headed for a C average.





It is true that “straight-A” high schoolers sometimes become “C” college students, even though they continue to perform as well. One reason is that college competition is tougher.

The dean noted that our health, like our grades, might also decline over the next four years. Studying through the night; loading up on fast foods, candy bars, and Cokes; and the stress of striving for A’s weren’t likely to make us models for workout tapes.

Then he said, “Look at the person to your left. Now your right. Now look at yourself—yes, at yourself. One of the three of you will not make it through.” I had no idea it would be me.

I had breezed through high school. I had assumed that I would breeze through college. Not so. I had little idea of what I was doing. My official major was “Undesignated,” and it is hard to stay motivated when you’re heading for an “undesignated” career. I was in an alien town. I was also a bit shy, so friends didn’t come easily. The competition for grades was cut-throat. Although I continued to suppose that somewhere in my head there dwelled a brain, I didn’t apply it very well.

Completing assignments and studying were hit-or-miss for me. Papers abruptly came due and I had little time to compose them. Sometimes I hadn’t even selected a topic by the due date. Tests, too, were suddenly upon me. With the distractions of dating, bridge (the card game), science-fiction novels, TV, writing letters, and calling home (collect, of course)—somehow I wasn’t prepared.

When it finally dawned on me that there might be a problem, I didn’t know whom to talk to about it. I didn’t even know that people *spoke* to other people about problems. I wasn’t being tough or blindly self-assured. I was just plain ignorant.

I didn’t flunk out. I edged out, slipped out, drifted out. It was a piecemeal and painful process. It took me six years to receive my bachelor’s degree—from another college. (Your second author wants it understood that she received her B.A. in three years and doesn’t understand the first author at all.)

The school referred to in the personal confession is a residential 4-year college. Some of you are commuting. If so, you may be able to rely on the emotional support you receive from family ties when you experience

Chiefly the mould of a man’s fortune is in his own hands.

FRANCIS BACON



IN YOUR OWN WRITE

Now that you’ve read the confession, write in your own words some of the concerns you have about the college years that lie ahead.

I am worried about finding a career that I will enjoy for the rest of my life and also making the grades to fulfill my career obligations.

They always say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself.

ANDY WARHOL

stress and personal doubts. On the other hand, consider the experiences of Roberto, who commuted to North Lake College, a community college in Irving, Texas.

I was one of the stars in high school and the first one [in the family] who went to college. My family looked at the textbooks I brought home and shook their heads in wonder. My mother hugged me all the time, but my father sort of looked at me—not knowing what to make of it all. I didn't know what I wanted to do [that first year], and I started getting some bad grades. But I had to hide it at home. I was the savior, you see, and [my younger brothers and sisters] were going to follow me. I had to keep my happy face even though I was struggling. I found myself spending more time away from home, and I felt [alienated] from school and my family. Fortunately I could talk to my psychology professor and he was a big help to me.

Returning to school while raising a family—or after raising a family—can be yet more difficult. And today about 6 million college students are age 23 or above.¹ Parents who attend college are likely to be pulled in many directions at once. The need to prepare dinner for a family may conflict with the need to spend time in the library or to write a paper. (The “Just-Say-No” motto applies to parents attending college as well as to substance-abuse campaigns.)

People who return to college after raising a family are likely to fear that their academic skills have gotten rusty. Fortunately, you don't forget how to write, even if you do not recall the names of all the parts of speech. And if some skills in, say, math have gotten rusty, the high levels of motivation mature students bring to their work usually more than compensate. Older students who attend college usually know exactly why they're there, which gives them an advantage over many younger students.

There's no doubt about it. College makes major demands on students and differs from high school in important ways. The chief message of this book is that it is up to you to take charge of your own college experience, even if you do not feel perfectly prepared for what lies ahead. It is up to you to find out what lies ahead. It is up to you to make decisions and not just fall into things. The nearby questionnaire will afford you some insight as to whether or not you are a take-charge type of person. Don't take the results of this questionnaire, or any other questionnaire in this book, as carved in stone. If you are not now a take-charge kind of person, why not resolve to become one? You'll also fare better in college if you adjust your expectations to mesh with the realities that lie ahead. Some of those are discussed in the next section.

WHAT LIES AHEAD

Perhaps the greatest difference between high school and college life is the freedom. Many of the requirements and constraints of the high school years draw to an end. Freedom is a heady elixir. In college you have the freedom to make something wonderful of your life, and the freedom to make a mess of it.

Freedom

Consider one of the ways in which Lisa, a first-year student at the University of Michigan, reacted to her new-found freedom:

I'd gone to church every Sunday as long as I could remember, unless I was sick or there was an emergency. When I got to school and the

Men at some time are masters of their fates:
The fault, dear Brutus, is not
in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are
underlings.

SHAKESPEARE,
Julius Caesar



QUESTIONNAIRE

Who's in Charge Here?

One of the reasons that one of us had so much trouble as an undergraduate was failure to take charge of his college career. He let life take charge of him. Rather than establishing clear goals and making a plan as to what he had to do to meet those goals, he drifted along from day to day—cutting classes, getting poor grades, trying not to think about the future.

What about you? Do you believe that you are in charge of your own life—that you are the master of your fate? Or do you believe that most of what happens to you is a matter of chance or luck—that your fate lies in your “stars”?

To learn more about whether you see yourself as in charge, take the following questionnaire. For each item, place a checkmark in the Yes or the No column. When you have finished, turn to the answer key at the end of the chapter.

	Yes	No
1. Do you believe that most problems will solve themselves if you just don't fool with them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Do you believe that you can stop yourself from catching a cold?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Are some people just born lucky?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Most of the time do you feel that getting good grades means a great deal to you?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Are you often blamed for things that just aren't your fault?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6. Do you believe that if somebody studies hard enough he or she can pass any subject?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you feel that most of the time it doesn't pay to try hard because things never turn out right anyway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8. Do you feel that if things start out well in the morning, it's going to be a good day no matter what you do?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9. Do you feel that most of the time parents listen to what their children have to say?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10. Do you believe that wishing can make good things happen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11. When you get punished, does it usually seem it's for no good reason at all?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12. Most of the time, do you find it hard to change a friend's opinion?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Do you think cheering more than luck helps a team win?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Did you feel that it was nearly impossible for you to change your parents' minds about anything?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15. Do you believe that parents should allow children to make most of their own decisions?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Do you feel that when you do something wrong, there's very little you can do to make it right?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
17. Do you believe that most people are just born good at sports?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Are most other people your age stronger than you are?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
19. Do you feel that one of the best ways to handle most problems is just not to think about them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
20. Do you feel that you have a lot of choice in deciding who your friends are?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. If you find a four-leaf clover, do you believe that it might bring you good luck?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Did you often feel that whether or not you did your homework had much to do with what kind of grades you got?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

