

FRESHMAN YEAR EXPERIENCE_{SM} SERIES

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CREATE YOUR COLLEGE SUCCESS

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Activities and Exercises for Students

Robert A. Friday

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Activities and Exercises for Students

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To James C. Friday and Phyllis B. Friday, my parents, for sitting me down and persuading me to become a freshman. To Sharon Friday, my loving wife, who encourages me to remain a freshman in discovery and enthusiasm, and who spent hours proofreading, offering countless valuable insights, suggestions, and above all, inspiration. To these people this volume is dedicated.

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To the thousands of students who have shared their problems, hopes, and dreams with me for teaching me how to help them.

And, of course, a very special thanks to John N. Gardner and A. Jerome Jewler, whose generous and inspired collaboration is changing the way freshmen everywhere approach personal and intellectual growth.

❖ Introduction ❖

At the request of the author, we're pleased to introduce this book with some words of advice for those of you who are about to enter the wonderful, challenging, frustrating, rewarding, unexpected, exciting, and always fascinating world of what we professors call "higher education" and you call "college."

Quite simply, the advice is to get on with the business of being in college by giving college everything you've got. If you don't know quite how to do that (and few people come equipped with this knowledge as freshmen), you're going to appreciate what this book can do to help. Because it isn't merely a book to be read and remembered; it's a book that asks you to give of yourself in return.

For learning "college" isn't exactly like studying history. Experience is the key to learning how to make the most of your college years, and experience is what you'll find within these pages in the form of one activity after another designed to help you realize the breadth and depth of the college experience.

To use an example, take the group activity called "The Social Problem" that appears on page 125. Its purpose is to indicate that each of us has his or her own personal system of values and that each of us therefore has the right to disagree, providing we don't expect everyone else to agree with us. To state this simply seems obvious; but experiencing value decisions in "The Social Problem" and other similar exercises can be both revealing and instructive to those who participate—and teaches each participant to be tolerant of differing attitudes within the group, even if he or she is not in agreement with those attitudes.

So it goes with the other critical areas covered in this extensive collection, areas such as social and intellectual development, physical and spiritual development, and emotional and voca-

tional development. What's even more intriguing about these exercises is that many of them can work whether you undertake them on your own or as part of a group of students in a class, a club, or simply as an extracurricular activity.

If you use this book in conjunction with one of our books (*College Is Only the Beginning* or *Step by Step to College Success*), you will find that, whereas our books provide important information and food for thought on succeeding in college, this book gives you a chance to express those ideas in highly active and interactive ways. You might even say the three of us planned it that way.

We commend Bob for his incredible talent in creating a large group of exercises, gathering others from many different sources, and weaving them into a work that not only provides valuable information but employs creative exercises that allow the reader to absorb and actively use that information in so many unforgettable ways.

Enjoy the book. Work at the exercises. Have fun while you're doing them. We can assure you that we did.

John N. Gardner
A. Jerome Jewler

❖ Preface ❖

The Origin of This Book

When I began to design the New Student Seminar program at Duquesne University in 1985, I had already been following the work of John N. Gardner and A. Jerome Jewler for five years. What they were saying about the freshman year echoed what I had encountered every day during my seven years as an academic adviser at the University of Pittsburgh. The freshman is entering a new world that looks deceptively like the old high school situation with chalkboards, desks, teachers—and yet the pressure of making life-defining decisions affects each and every one.

When our New Student Seminar program was on the drawing board, Gardner and Jewler's *College Is Only the Beginning* was published. I was thrilled and relieved to find that the issues I wanted my staff to negotiate with our freshmen were discussed in one book. I adopted the book at once and for the first time in my life began a major project with half the work completed.

The second half of my task, as a professor of communication and a training consultant, was to develop Individual Exercises and activities to help my staff get away from the standard lecture format and into a process of discovery with the students. The New Student Seminar (or freshman seminar) is not a content course that presents so many facts and theories. The freshman brings his or her own agenda to this class. The faculty are there to help freshmen find answers to their problems; make sense out of confusion and fear; translate their dreams, skills, and values into an academic plan (often with career objectives); and create strategies for success. Above all, this process of discovery must involve the stu-

dent and faculty in the development of meaningful relationships that will last a lifetime.

The instructor's manual and handouts that I produced for our first faculty training were designed as a supplement to *College Is Only the Beginning*. *Create Your College Success* is an expansion of the manual and handouts with the addition of **purpose**, **directions**, and **closure** for each Individual Exercise or Group Activity to help both freshmen and faculty create a learning experience that responds to the needs of the students. Similarly, this book builds on the direction taken by Gardner and Jewler in *Step by Step to College Success*, which is a distillation of their first book with the addition of some Individual Exercises.

Freshmen, This Is Your Discovery Book

The purpose of this book is to give you and your faculty a number of ways to investigate and build on the concepts and information put forth in *College Is Only the Beginning* (1985, 1989) and *Step by Step to College Success* (1987). The **Individual Exercises** and **Group Activities** are organized in chapters that conform to the order of *College Is Only the Beginning* (1989). An **Individual Exercise** is designed to be worked on by you alone, giving you a better understanding of a central aspect of the corresponding chapter in *College Is Only the Beginning*. A **Group Activity** is often designed to build upon the results of the preceding Individual Exercises; activities are creative ways to involve you with your peers in the themes espoused by Gardner and Jewler. Individual Exercises and Group Activities require you to: (1) write, speak, and think critically; (2) interact with and interview many people; (3) develop consensus in small groups; and (4) research problems. Through these various communication experiences, you should gain an understanding of the role that college can play in developing your future success and happiness.

A Personal Note to Freshmen

Use this book. Write in this book. Pull together your insights—combine them with the views of others. As you proceed, you will look back on old chapters and find that you are constructing your own map to college and career success. Keep this book. Follow your map. Years after graduation, you will look back on your moments of self-discovery as focal points for career and life decisions.

At times, your instructor may join the class in an Group Activity and let you direct the class. I encourage you to try directing

an Group Activity and urge that everyone in the classroom offer support and cooperation. Such a task is not always easy, but the experience can be invaluable!

The Journal and You

Every chapter in this book concludes with a journal assignment devised to help you investigate your feelings, practice your writing, and integrate your new discoveries into your life. I urge you to buy or (as some students do) construct a notebook that can serve as your expressive space. Follow the journal assignments and explore your own experiences. The journal will help you clarify your feelings and impose your order on traditional first-year chaos. The journal will help you investigate your reactions to situations, to others, and to your own hopes and fears. I collect my students' journals several times during the term and give them written feedback on their entries. Your instructor may also do this. In the end, your journal will give you what it has given to thousands of freshmen: understanding. Put another way: experience + knowledge + reflection = understanding.

A Personal Note from a Freshman

When I entered college with the class of 1970, the furthest thing from my mind was becoming a college professor in communication—not to mention an international consultant specializing in the transfer of executives between Germany and the United States. And yet those two roles that I play can be traced to the strengths and interests that grew in me with each year of discovery. If I had had a freshman seminar, I feel that my path through painful years of self-examination and confusion in college would have included a more productive learning experience. My hope is that this book will give you the chance to define what you want to know, so that you don't just guide your choices with "shoulds" and "requirements that you take to get them out of the way."

Many freshmen administrators and faculty hold a new idea that we should empower freshmen—which reminds me of the words from the great German author Goethe: "Danger itself fosters the rescuing power." In entering college, you are plunging into a fast-moving stream of decision making and learning. I hope this book will help to empower you to make the decisions that are right for you.

Please note in the first two chapters I have included "Trivia Teasers." I welcome any students or faculty to send their trivia teasers to me so that I can include them in the next edition of this book. Finally, I would be grateful for your suggestions on any improvements for the next edition.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert A. Friday". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Robert" and last name "Friday" clearly legible.

*Robert A. Friday, Ph.D.
Freshman, 1966-*

Freshman September

Where's my room;
Where's my space.
my home, my pet—
mom and dad—some familiar
place?

I miss my friends
and special things
while others carry on
—and sing—and dance
—and drink—and smoke
—and yell out windows:
"Last one to the bar buys
the beer!"

But I'm here.
—a tear
shedding in some other world,
some others' world.
I shed the former me
September shedding autumn tree.
Inward cry and quake—and
lie awake.
I fake—a smile and while
away the day—away the night.
To distant home from present
fright.

I don't want to be here!
I'm going home.
I'm gonna get out that suitcase
and duffel bag
and find some boxes and pack it all in.

My folks were wrong!
They'll just have to admit it.
They're going to see me take
a firm stand on this one.
'Cause the people here aren't friendly.

The teachers don't care.
The food's lousy.
The dorm's noisy
and crowded
and—and—everything!

I've got two hours before my roommate
come back from class.
I'll be gone—
and they'll be glad to see me go!
They'll put their junk in my space
and forget I ever existed—
and that's fine with me.
"Oh, hi guys. What are you doing
back early?"

"We were in orientation class."
"Our instructor said that all
freshmen experience culture shock,
homesickness, confusion, denial,
withdrawal, compensation, loneliness,
frustration, alienation, anomie,
depression, and bizarre behavior
of one form or another."

"You're kidding?!?"
"Do you guys feel all that?"

"Oh no—not us—but most freshmen
do."

"Yeah—I'll bet
—like those guys in the next room."

"Yeah—but our instructor said it
still could happen—you know
a delayed reaction.
So we're supposed to sit down
with our roommate and talk about our favorite things."

"You mean like pizza with
green peppers, mushrooms
and onions?"

"You're on!"

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