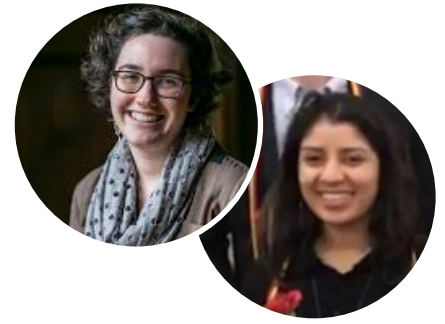


Tips for Students on MAKING COLLEGE "WORTH IT"

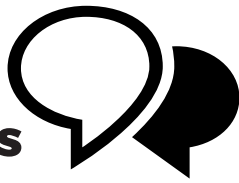


by Sophia Abbot and Lucia-Maribel Craige

Educational scholars George Kuh, Ken O'Donnell, and Carol Geary Schneider suggest one key way to make the most of college and to gain a sense of direction is to participate in high-impact educational practices (HIPs). HIPs are experiences that prompt significant student engagement in meaningful tasks, resulting in deep learning. HIPs include undergraduate research, internships, residential learning communities, service-learning, e-portfolios, and capstone experiences (AAC&U 2008).

HIPs also enhance students' overall college experience. A survey of recent college graduates, conducted by the Elon Poll and the Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University, found a high correlation between participating in high impact experiences and feeling that attending college was "worth it" considering both the costs and benefits (Center for Engaged Learning 2019).

Talk to Professors



Do this about nearly every topic! Share what you're interested in, tell them about what you're reading, and ask them about their work. Don't think of conversations with professors as strictly relegated to grades or struggles with course content (though that's always relevant!).

For example, Lucia talked to a Spanish professor about her interest in the class and says,

"He told me about a winter-term study abroad experience in Spain and Morocco he was coordinating and that if I was able to, I should come. While on this trip, I talked with him extensively about Spanish, wanting to learn Spanish and how I was going to declare Spanish as a minor and I would like him to be my advisor. He asked me why I chose a minor and not a major in Spanish since he knew I would be able to do it. I was not expecting his response or expecting him to be serious since I did not think much of my Spanish at the time. However, after our conversation, I decided to declare another major in Spanish. The experience ... gave me a newfound sense of confidence, curiosity, and understanding for myself and the places we had visited."



In conversations with other professors, similar opportunities opened up for Lucia. She reflects, "by simply talking with my professors and developing a close relationship to them, I was introduced to new experiences that ended up all connecting." **Professors can be your greatest mentors and advocates on campus, so seek out and foster those connections.**

Say yes to new opportunities



Time is tight, and there are countless new experiences vying for your attention once you get to college, but if you can, **embrace something a little outside your comfort zone**. Lucia and Sophia both reflected on their feeling unsure about their ability to contribute to projects. As Lucia shares, “I remember feeling surprised that she asked me [to help design a class] and a little intimidated by whether or not I would actually be able to contribute something. The class we designed ended up being a success at Elon.” Lucia’s experience with this professor led to an opportunity to study abroad in Argentina, and her work on this poll design and writing project. Think seriously about saying yes especially if a mentor suggests you’d be a good fit for a project! Often others can see things in us that open new doors we haven’t even considered in ourselves.

Seek out High Impact Practices



High Impact Practices (**study abroad, undergraduate research, internships, service-learning, and more!**) can be especially transformative and meaningful for students, and our own experiences echo the research data. We’ll note that participation in these practices is time consuming. Lucia and Sophia both worked and are still working in college. For each of them, part of access was that these were funded experiences in some

way so they didn’t need to choose between work and learning. Many institutions have summer paid undergraduate research options, some institutions will extend financial aid to study abroad, and some internships are paid, so research your options. Other opportunities might emerge as part of coursework, so you don’t have to make participation an either-or choice.

Remember, you have something worth sharing!



Finally, both Lucia and Sophia had mentors who reached out and said, “Hey! You can contribute something!” Sophia reflects that this trust can feel scary, but is worth accepting. She shares thinking at the time,

“How could I—a twenty-year-old college sophomore—make a contribution to a field that people with PhDs spend whole lifetimes studying? Could I even write at the levels academic journals expect? Nonetheless, with scaffolding, reading, free writing, editing, more writing, reflecting, and revising again, I finished a summer of independent research with my supervisor and realized that in fact I’d been preparing for this all along. I also realized my voice matters. I do have something to say, and I can make changes in the world by sharing.”

We’re passing that note along. You can too! **You got into college for a reason, and you can effect change around you.**



Read more at www.CenterForEngagedLearning.org/making-college-worth-it



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