The Importance of the First 6 Weeks On Campus

The evidence is mounting, and the information is impressive. What happens during the first six weeks of college may be important in determining a student’s ability to persist and graduate. Many students’ college success can be solidified or thwarted during the first six weeks of freshman year. Several sources suggest that nearly 40% of students who begin college will not complete their education, and according to some college experts, more than half of college students who leave college do so in the first six weeks. “A freshman’s most critical transition period occurs during the first two to six weeks.” (Levitz & Noel, 1989)

Why are these first weeks so important?

The first six weeks of college are a crucial time for your student to get acclimated to college and to get into a groove and feel comfortable in their new environment. Your student will need to navigate the transition from high school to college and find ways to get organized, to meet new people, to get involved on campus, to find the support that they need, to cope with the inevitable stresses of college life, possibly to deal with homesickness, and to form new habits and find a new routine for their life. Many colleges recognize these important transitions and institute programs for the first few weeks that address these concerns.

As students attempt to make these necessary transitions, they are faced with some potentially significant challenges that accompany college life. Students must form new social networks and often feel pressure to “fit in.” They must learn to function with more autonomy and independence as they attempt new and often more difficult schoolwork. Students are often faced with new, or at least a greater level of, temptations such as alcohol, drugs, and sex. Time management and self-responsibility are new skills to learn.

What should I do?

Students who anticipate the challenges of the first few weeks of college will be better prepared to face them. Students who are prepared to take their frustrations and turn them into actions will be armed to make the most of their experiences. Students might consider several, or all, of the following suggestions:

- **Pay attention to ALL of the communication coming from your school.** Colleges will reach out to students, but students must read e-mails, attend orientation and/or welcome meetings, and act on information that they are given.
- **Work at establishing a good relationship with your roommate.** A good working/living relationship will not necessarily happen automatically. Communicate, share expectations, and show respect. Think about how to be a good roommate yourself.
- **Find a niche in which you feel comfortable.** This may be a group of students from class, a club, religious or social group, an athletic team or department. Find your “corner of the campus” in which you feel most comfortable and cultivate it.
- **Learn as much as you can about your surroundings – your new home.** Spend time wandering campus, exploring a campus center or the library, checking out the local shops or restaurants. Get to know what is around you.
- **Investigate all of the support available on campus.** Check out tutoring, your residence assistant, your advisor, the counseling center. Know that you are not in this alone.
- **Avoid going home.** This may be difficult for some students, but you will not connect to campus and to other students if you leave at the first chance that you have. There will be time for visits home and with your high school friends later, but spend the first few weeks getting to know your school and making new friends.
- **Take a piece of advice from Eleanor Roosevelt and “do one thing each day that scares you.”** Of course, evaluate the risk and make wise choices, but move out of your comfort zone and stretch.

Excerpts Taken From “The Importance of the First Six Weeks of College,” written by Vicki Nelson.

Go to the next page for a step by step plan to be successful during your first six weeks at CSUEB!
The First 6 Weeks—A Success Plan

Doing college the right way for the first six weeks will set you up for future success. Following these week-by-week steps you’ll be well on your way to a great first year.

Week 1—Planning & Getting Acclimated

- **Get A Planner (Electronic or Paper):**
  - Enter in all your class times and extracurricular activities as you learn of them.
  - If you are working, put that schedule in as well.
  - Enter the due dates for all assignments, papers, projects, and tests/quizzes from your course syllabi.
  - Keep your planner handy so that you can enter events on campus or in the community that you would like to attend or even hang out times with your friends.

- **Get Organized:**
  - Unpack everything! If you have moved into a new apartment or are living on campus, make sure that you have taken the time to unpack and put everything where you need them to be as this will help you start the year off feeling more organized and less stressed.
  - Create a Task List. Use Google, Toodledo, Alexa or another option to help you organize everything you have to do! List things to do. Cross them off when completed. Getting organized will help you save time, keep every thing in your life efficient and cause less stress in knowing when/what is due. Studies have shown that crossing something off your To Do List creates instances of happiness and positivity in your brain.
  - Organize your study area/desk. Figure out what you need to help you study in the area that is designated. Examples: Pens, pencils, laptop, notepad, etc.
  - Organize the contents of your book bag—what items do you need to take to class, which days. Examples: text books, note pad, laptop, pen, pencil, hand sanitizer, etc.

- **Develop Goals:**
  - Figure out what your goals are for your first year.
  - Write them down!
  - Revisit them throughout the year.
  - Common Examples:
    - Get a job
    - Get at least a 3.0 GPA
    - Join 3 organizations

- **Feel Like You Belong:**
  - Figure Out How You Will Become A Member Of The CSU East Bay Community. Are you going to get a job? Are you going to join organizations? What are you going to do?
  - Find ways to explore your interests and try new things.
  - Some examples:
    - Attend a floor or building program.
    - Attend an athletic event or activity at the University Unions.
    - Go to a meeting for an organization that you are interested in.
    - Meet at least five (5) new people each week.

- **Get Academically Prepared:**
  - Learn to study! College is very different from High School, it may be helpful to go AACE (Academic Advising and Career Education) to get various resources about how to be successful academically. Learn all of the tools and services the office offers.
  - Learn what resources your college offers to help you be successful academically.
  - Figure out if you need a tutor, for which class. Work with available campus offices to get one as needed.
The First 6 Weeks—A Success Plan

Week 2—Get Connected

Now that you are settled in, one of the best things about college is meeting people who are different from you and making lifelong friends! We hope that you continue to build friendships and form relationships across campus throughout the year!

Here are some other important interactions and conversations you should have:

- Introduce yourself to your professors. The best times to do this are after class and during their posted office hours.
- Meet someone on a different floor in your residence hall, or even in a different building!
- Sit with someone different in the Pioneer Kitchen or at the University Unions.
- Meet at least five (5) new people each week until you feel like you have developed a good support network of friends on campus.
- Connect with other people in your major. This is often one of the most helpful groups you will come across as many of them will have the same classes as you and you can create study groups from your connections.
- Explore BaySync—see what’s available. See what organizations you want to be apart of. Look at upcoming events for the semester/year.
- Attend events. There will be numerous events during Weeks of Welcome. Attend some, introduce yourself to people you see at the event.
- Look for a job. If you need extra cash, several offices on campus might be hiring! There is a misconception that you have to have work study to work on campus. NOT TRUE!
- Remember, now that you are away from home and meeting new people, don't forget where you came from. Make sure that you are keeping connected with friends and family from home. Call, write, email, Facebook, just make sure you stay in touch! They will really appreciate it!

Week 3—Making The Grade

You are probably realizing the differences between High School and college in all areas of your life. Some of your classes are likely becoming more intense as the coursework increases. In other cases, you may not feel like you have as much work because you don't have weekly assignments.

But, BE CAREFUL - you are accountable for ALL assignments as well as readings. Make sure you are attending all classes and know how to take good notes. Tips on being successful academically:

- Check out the library to see what resources they have available.
- Check out the resources available from your college/major.
- While in class, sit in the front so that you can pay closer attention and so that the professor can see you.
- Make sure you attend all classes! It may be factored into your grade!
- Use tutors if you need them.
- Talk with others in your classes and form study groups where you can prepare for quizzes and tests together.
- Don't forget to also stop by the offices on campus that you previously identified. Remember, they have lots of resources available to assist you!
- Re-assess your study habits. Do you have a schedule, is it working? Do you need to get better organized?
- Visit your professor during Office Hours. Are you confused about a topic covered? Do you need follow up? Go visit your professor(s) during their Office Hours.
- Start planning for your mid-terms—how are you going to study and be prepared for having multiple assignments/exams in one or two weeks?
- Start planning for your finals—it’s not too early! Figure out how are you going to study and be prepared for having multiple assignments/exams in one week?
**Week 4—Get Involved**

You are an important part of our community! If you are not already involved in a club or organization, join one so you can reap all the benefits that come along with it!

Getting involved helps connect you and will help make you an even more valued member of our community. It's a great way to gain skills that may help you in your future career. Best of all, it's a great way to meet new friends and find your "niche" here at CSU East Bay!

Did you know that studies have proven that students who are involved in extra-curricular activities in college do better academically?

- Check out [BaySync](https://mybaysync.csueastbay.edu/) it has EVERYTHING you need to know about getting involved, attending events, getting connected. The exact address: [https://mybaysync.csueastbay.edu/](https://mybaysync.csueastbay.edu/)
- Check out the Weeks Of Welcome Website for a detailed listing of events and opportunities for you to participate in during the first six weeks of the semester.
- Attend al Fresco where you will be able to learn about most clubs/organizations and meet new people! Check out the Website for updates.
- Visit Associated Students, Inc’s (ASI) [BaySync Page](https://mybaysync.csueastbay.edu/) and their Website to learn about all of the resources, events and services they have to offer all students.
- If you live on campus—visit the Residence Hall Association’s (RHA) [BaySync Page](https://mybaysync.csueastbay.edu/) and their Website to learn about all of the resources, events and services they have to offer students in the residence halls.
- Visit the Student Life and Leadership Programs (SLLP) [BaySync Page](https://mybaysync.csueastbay.edu/) and their Website to learn about all of the resources, events and services they have to offer all students and student organizations.
- Visit the main [Events Calendar](https://mybaysync.csueastbay.edu/) on BaySync to peruse and RSVP to upcoming events.
- Explore the Rush process for fraternities and sororities. Figure out which one is best suitable for you.
- Choose at least one (1) organization/club/fraternity/sorority to get involved in.

**Week 5—Take Care Of Yourself**

By now you have faced, and possibly experienced, many of the challenges and pressures associated with college. Always know that you have the support of many staff, faculty and offices on campus.

Keep in mind that if you are feeling overwhelmed; you should set up a meeting with your Advisor, your RA or another professional in Student Affairs. Remember it is very important to take care of yourself and don't be afraid to ask for help if you are going through a tough time. Here are some ideas on taking care of yourself:

- Eat healthy by balancing your diet with fruits and vegetables...“An apple a day will get you an ‘A’.”
- Do an activity outdoors or take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Try to get 7-8 hours of sleep a night.
- Use the Recreation And Wellness (RAW) center. Check out their Website for their hours and services.
- Check out Student Health and Counseling Services. They have A LOT of services, events and resources to help you stay healthy! Visit their Website for more information.
- If you live on campus, talk to your Resident Assistant (RA) about other resources that may exist.
- Get to know the Bay Area. Especially if you are new to northern California, check out the local cities if you can. Check public transportation to see if you can get there if you don’t have a car. Explore!
- If you have gained the “Freshman Fifteen,” you may want to create a new dietary plan for your visits to the PK.
- Ask family members to send you a care package of things from home that you love.
You have accomplished so much during your first five weeks! Just think of all of the changes you have adjusted to. Some were easily navigated while others were much more challenging. The important thing is that YOU MADE IT THIS FAR!!!

Now that you have successfully completed your first 5 weeks, it would be a good time to think about the following:

- Evaluate the goals that you set for yourself at the beginning of the year.
- Check out your grades for each class.
- Now is the time to begin your relationship with AACE, specifically Career Education if you want to start planning for a job after you graduate or for the summer.
- Set goals for the remainder of the semester.
- Meet with your Major Advisor.
- Start planning out your classes for Spring Semester.
- Think about your plans for Thanksgiving and/or Winter Break. How do you plan to interact with your family, with your High School friends, or friends from home? Most college students report that they have changed dramatically during the first semester of college. This often affects how they interact with family and friends when they return home for the holidays.
- Reflect on the year thus far.
- Think of changes you will make for the remainder of the semester to meet your new goals.
- Think of changes you will make for the next semester to meet your goals.