



Attending University is an exciting time full of new possibilities. Coming to campus means a new community, new experiences and new academic responsibilities. All of this can be a bit overwhelming, though. You're not alone if you feel stressed.

# Succeeding at University

Here are some ideas to help you make the most of your potential.

- Choose your courses carefully. An academic advisor can help you determine what courses you require for your degree and the prerequisites for your classes. Consider your situation (e.g., whether you have a learning disability, plan to work while attending classes, have experienced academic difficulties in the past) as you choose the number of courses in which you will enroll. Many students, for a variety of reasons, opt for less than a full load.
- Get connected. Becoming involved in campus activities (e.g., sports, clubs, volunteer activities) is a great way to form new friendships.
- Have fun, but stay safe. If you go to the bar, designate a driver. Stay with people you really know and trust. And keep an eye on your drink. And you don't have to drink because your friends are. A 2003 survey of almost 300 U of S students showed that they preferred to hang out with people who weren't drunk.
- Have your own kind of fun. Leisure time is an important part of succeeding at university. Find some things you like to do and see them as a legitimate part of your schedule.
- Go to class. The University expects that, although you may have more flexibility than you did in high school, you will act independently and take the initiative to attend your classes. Skipping classes means lost marks. It's often easier to learn from the professor than from the text or someone else's notes. And remember, your university grades will likely be lower than your high school marks—this is normal. Showing up for your lectures will increase the probability that you can perform to your potential.
- Get to know your professors. If you have questions, ASK! If you aren't comfortable asking your questions in class, talk to the professor privately. Also, it is your responsibility to let your professor know if you are having difficulties or require extra help in certain areas.
- Plan your time. Use a calendar to keep track of due dates and upcoming exams. Prioritize your work and adjust your schedule as necessary. Staying organized will help you meet your deadlines.

## **KNOW THE SIGNS OF TROUBLE**

Pay attention to how you are doing at university and watch out for potential signs of trouble, including the following:

- Poor or dropping grades; missed assignments and exams; performing below potential
- Skipping many classes
- Excessive use of drugs or alcohol; problem gambling
- Persistently low mood; poor motivation
- Difficulty relaxing; continually feeling overwhelmed, worried or anxious
- Relationship difficulties
- Difficulties with sleep or appetite

- Study well. Study your most difficult subject first - you'll be more productive if you study when you feel awake and have the most energy. Avoid cramming by studying every day instead. Plan on two or three hours of study time for every hour you spend in class. Also, find a good place to study (good lighting, a comfortable chair and a quiet atmosphere make a difference).
- Take breaks. A ten-minute study break every hour will keep your attention sharp.
- Improve your study skills. Form a study group with students who are doing well, find a tutor or read about ways to improve your study skills.
- Know where you are going. If you have questions about your career choice, book an appointment with a career counsellor at the Student Employment and Career Centre. You're more likely to succeed if you have a goal for graduation.
- Take care of your physical health. Take time to rest, eat well and exercise. Taking care of your physical health will give you the energy you need to perform at school.
- Seek support. Stay connected with people who support your efforts at university. Confide in people you trust and work to choose and maintain healthy relationships.
- Be a problem-solver. When things get tough, remember that venting isn't enough. While it's important to talk with family and friends, make sure that you also develop a plan of action. Decide what's not working, look for alternatives, try on some different solutions and evaluate how things go. Keep trying if your first attempt to solve things doesn't work.
- Get help quickly. The University considers you an adult who is responsible for your own behavior and academic performance. If you are experiencing difficulties, don't wait for things to get worse. Seek help. Talk to your professors. Contact Student Central (966-1212) or the University's website for information about campus resources.
- Maintain your perspective. University is an important part of life, but it isn't your whole life. Maintain your sense of humor, stay balanced and enjoy!

If you are experiencing personal difficulties that are interfering with university, contact Student Counselling Services (966-4920) or Student Health Services (966-5768).