Greetings, Class of 2016,

Orange County United Way is pleased to collaborate with the University of California, Irvine to bring you this year’s edition of The Edge, a fantastic guide to enhance your understanding of the UC system and many other aspects of the college preparatory process.

The journey on which you are embarking is filled with excitement and self-discovery. After writing essays, touring campuses, applying for college admission, and earning your high school diploma, you are now in the driver’s seat on the road toward a lifetime of personal and professional achievements.

At United Way, we’re working with many local schools, employers and community organizations to empower local students to take control of their futures. With 3,000 students dropping out of school every year, one of our most important community goals is ensuring that Orange County students are prepared for success in the classroom.

One of our key goals identified in our community-wide action plan is to cut the high school dropout rate in half. Because a dropout is 12 years in the making, we focus on cradle-to-career strategies to provide a firm foundation. By directing our efforts and investments in students’ education at key transition points proven to impact high school graduation, more children will succeed in school and life.

As a young leader, you have a unique opportunity to change your community by taking on social issues in your own backyard. Your passion and commitment to improving lives and strengthening Orange County can be expressed by volunteering and advocating to help ensure more children and families have access to quality education, financial stability, good health and stable housing.

I wish you the best of luck in the year ahead. Don’t forget to work hard, dream big and enjoy your exciting journey toward college graduation!

Sincerely,

Max L. Gardner
President and CEO
Orange County United Way

When it comes to college admissions, many students think they know what’s going on behind the scenes, usually because of something they’ve heard from someone who knows someone else who heard it from their cousin.... You get the idea. That’s how rumors spread and myths are born. Let’s address three common myths that lead to anxiety during the college application process.
MYTH: If I’m not admitted to the college I applied to, but I’m offered a spot on the waitlist, there are things I can do to increase my chances of being selected off of the waitlist.

BUSTED: There is absolutely nothing you can do to improve your chances of being admitted off of the waitlist. That’s because the decision to admit students off of the waitlist has almost nothing to do with the needs of the student, and everything to do with the needs of the college, which admits students from the waitlist only if and when it needs to enroll more students.

MYTH: Colleges won’t care what grades I get my senior year as long as I pass all my courses.

BUSTED: All offers of admissions from any UC and CSU come with an expectation that you will at least pass all your classes with a C or better. At some campuses, they may also require a senior year GPA of 3.0 or higher to keep your offer of admission. If you don’t want to risk losing your offer of admission, don’t slack off your senior year. Finish high school the way you started it – strong!

MYTH: Colleges only look at GPA and test scores when they select which students to admit.

BUSTED: GPA and test scores are definitely two important factors in the selection process. However, there are other factors that are just as important, like having a special talent, contributing to the community, or demonstrating special interests in a subject matter. In fact, at the UC, 14 factors can be considered in the selection process. Check out the full list here: admission.universityofcalifornia.edu/counselors/freshman/comprehensive-review/.
Many students think that the college application process is over after they receive the admission letter from the college of their dreams. Though receiving the offer of admission is an integral part of the application process, it is still just a part of the entire process. As a soon-to-be college applicant, this is important for you to know, because an unfortunate consequence of not realizing this can potentially lead to the withdrawal of your offer of admission! You don’t want that! I don’t want that! Nobody wants that!

Without a doubt, the best part of my job is being able to admit a new freshman class to the university each year. When we send you an offer of admission, we are essentially saying we think you are awesome and that you will do amazing things at our campus. For many students, the moment they receive their offer of admission is a dream come true. Unfortunately, for some, that dream quickly mutates into a dizzying nightmare when they lose their offer of admission. Yes, your offer of admission can be withdrawn.

All offers of admission are provisional and come with conditions. Here’s why: at the point when your application is evaluated and selection is made for admission, all the information that is available to us is whatever you put in your application. That’s all we have to go on. So when we give an offer of admission to a student, it’s with the understanding that everything you reported in your application is true and accurate. Furthermore, your admission also comes with a few conditions, for example, maintaining a 3.0 GPA in your senior year. It’s not until the end of the second semester of your senior year that we will be able to see and verify if everything you indicated on your transcript is accurate, and whether or not you met all the conditions for your offer of admission.

To avoid having to go through the ordeal of having your offer of admission withdrawn, here are some important tips to consider for after you receive your admission letter.

1. Realize and always remember that your offer of admission is provisional and comes with conditions.

2. Review and understand ALL the conditions of your offer of admission.

3. Regularly check your email inbox or online admission portal for communication from your admissions counselor. Pay close attention to deadlines, and respond to any requests for information or documentation.

4. Follow through with anything that’s “planned” or “in progress” on your application. If there are any changes to your applications, or your senior year plans, let your admissions counselor know right away!

5. Finally, realize your senior year is very important and how you finish high school is very much a factor in keeping your offer of admission to the university.
A personal statement is an opportunity for you to get personal and let the college admissions readers learn about you. There is not one perfect statement, nor one perfect structure. Personal statements will vary based on the applicant’s own experiences and accomplishments. Nonetheless, here are a few tips to help you organize your personal statement using the two UC personal statement prompts:

**PROMPT #1:** Describe the world you come from – for example your family, community OR school – and tell us how your world has shaped your dreams and aspirations.

- What are your short-term goals?
- What are your long-term dreams and aspirations for your life?
- How have your dreams and aspirations been influenced by your family, community, or school? (Choose one).
- How does this relate to success in college?

**PROMPT #2:** Tell us about a personal quality, talent, accomplishment, contribution, OR experience that is important to you. What about this quality or accomplishment makes you proud and how does it relate to the person you are?

- What are you most proud about yourself?
- Why is this important for someone to know? How does this relate to the person you are?

- How have you demonstrated who you are? (List three examples).
- How does this relate to success in college?

Again, your personal statement is your opportunity to tell admissions or scholarship readers what they do not already know about you from your application details. Think of it as an interview on paper and take advantage of the opportunity to present your best possible self!
Thinking about paying for college doesn’t end when you decide whether a university is affordable. As a college student, you will need to manage your money responsibly, so consider the following steps:

**STEP 1 – BUDGETING:** Create a list of your freshman year expenses including the cost of tuition/fees, room and board, book and supplies, transportation, and miscellaneous expenses. Consider creative ideas to reduce your expenses. Subtract any grants/scholarships or expenses your parents will be covering for you. What remains is the amount you might need to earn or borrow.

**STEP 2 – WORKING:** A job is a great way to cover your expenses while minimizing, or even eliminating, the need for student loans. If your financial aid package includes a work-study award, you can work up to 20 hours a week during the school year at an on-campus job or authorized off-campus site. Even if you didn’t qualify for work-study, you can likely find a part-time job either on or off campus, typically earning around $10 an hour. However, your academics should always be your first priority. In order to focus on your studies, consider working only 5-10 hours a week your first year.

If you decide to work, multiply the hours you plan to work times $10 to determine about how much you will be able to earn. Don’t forget: you can also earn money the summer before your freshman year and save it to use during the school year.

**STEP 3 – BORROWING:** Taking student loans to pay for your education is a good investment, provided that you borrow responsibly. Borrowing can help you work less and graduate sooner. Resist borrowing more than the amount you determined you will need, because you will be paying back these loans with interest after you graduate.

If decide to borrow, the best idea is usually to take federal student loans first, if they were offered in your financial aid package. Why? Because compared to private loans, they offer the best repayment terms and other benefits. Consider non-student loans or credit cards as a last resort – they usually have higher interest rates.

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**MONEY SAVING TIPS**

- **TUITION / FEES**
  - Take a full load of courses...it’s usually the best deal.
  - Consider taking additional courses above a full load after your first semester.

- **BOOKS AND SUPPLIES**
  - Rent textbooks, or buy used books.
  - Buy online – sometimes you can find a better deal.

- **HOUSING**
  - Live with roommates to share the rent.

- **FOOD**
  - campus meal plans, eating out, snacks
  - Limit the number of times per month you go out to eat.
  - Plan ahead and bring lunch and snacks with you to campus.

- **CELL PHONE AND INTERNET**
  - Take advantage of a family plan.

- **CAR**
  - insurance, gas, repairs, parking permit
  - Walk or bike to class/campus.
  - Find out if your campus offers a free shuttle service to and around campus.

- **ENTERTAINMENT**
  - Consider cheaper options like renting movies or Netflix vs. going to the theater.
  - Avoid credit cards and pay with cash in order to manage spending easier.
Being successful in college takes careful planning: planning out your classes, planning out your extracurricular activities, and planning out your college finances. As you learn more about financial aid and how it works, look into the UC Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan. The Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan will cover your UC systemwide fees if you are a California resident whose family earns less than $80,000 a year and you qualify for financial aid.

Currently, the estimated yearly fee for attending a UC campus is $14,750. The beauty of the Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan is this amount is completely covered by grants and scholarships!

There’s no separate application to fill out. Simply file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the California Dream Act Application, and submit a GPA Verification Form by March 2 of your senior year in high school. You will automatically receive the benefits of Blue and Gold, if you qualify. Many students qualify for even more grant aid that helps reduce the cost of attending a UC campus.

A great plan can lead to great success. The UC Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan may be just what you need. To learn more, go to www.universityofcalifornia.edu/blueandgold.
Not sure what to major in? That’s okay! Not everyone knows what to major in, and many students change their minds at least once as undergraduates. As an academic advisor, I regularly meet with students interested in changing their major. The following tips will help guide you in choosing your major:

1. **Get to know yourself!** What are your strengths and interests? What issues are you passionate about? Ask yourself these kinds of questions to focus your attention on researching specific careers, and from there explore related academic disciplines. Chances are, those disciplines will lead you to a major.

2. **Learn something new.** Take that class that sounds interesting. You never know what will spark your interest until you stretch your comfort level. However, proceed with caution. If you have never taken a hard science course in your life and cringe at the thought of dissecting something that was once alive, then do not do it! You know yourself best. Trust your judgment and abilities. You may pleasantly surprise yourself in what you learn and accomplish.

3. **Get involved and meet other students.** I am a true believer in extracurricular activities and the skill sets you develop from these experiences. You may find a true passion you did not know you had. Or, you might meet a peer who is in a major that you have never heard of but sounds right up your alley. Get out there and learn from others around you.

4. **Do not choose a major because you think it will lead to a lucrative career.** I see too many students pursuing a particular major because they think it will get them a well-paying job, yet they absolutely have no interest in what they are learning so they are doing poorly in their academics. Pursue something you enjoy, because you will have to read, write and breathe that subject while you are in college, and you do not want to be doing something you dislike.

As an academic advisor, I know many students come to my office due to low grades. Unfortunately for some students, these poor grades lead them to be placed on academic probation. Academic probation is an official warning that a student’s performance falls below the institution’s requirement for “good academic standing.” In some cases your financial aid and/or on-campus job may be taken away. This can be a traumatic event for some students.

One thing students fail to remember is that college is not like high school. You cannot study the night before and expect to ace an exam. The more successful students study daily. Remember why you are in college in the first place, and keep in mind that academics are your full-time job.

Generally, I advise students to expect 3 hours of study time weekly per unit. If you are enrolled in 12 units (which is typical for full-time students) that means about 36 hours of study time per week! It is fine to get involved with extracurricular activities such as a part-time job, internships and student clubs, but when those activities get in the way of valuable study time, then it is time re-evaluate what’s truly meaningful to you.

Another common trend I see is the struggling student who does not ask for help. Many colleges offer free and fee-based tutoring resources, so use them. Also attend faculty office hours. Teaching faculty are required to set aside office hours so students can ask questions. If your class has a discussion section, attend! Discussions provide an additional opportunity for students to get help. And don't skip review sessions set up for your class. These help solidify the concepts you need to know for the exam.

If you are still struggling in your courses and there are other external factors that may be getting in the way of your academics, reach out to your academic advisor. Your advisor may be able to refer you to additional resources that can help.
## College Application Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA</th>
<th>CAL STATE UNIVERSITY</th>
<th>COMMON APPLICATION</th>
<th>COMMUNITY COLLEGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WEBSITE</strong></td>
<td>universityofcalifornia.edu/apply</td>
<td>csumentor.com</td>
<td>commonapp.org</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPLICATION</strong></td>
<td>1 application for all campuses (9 campuses open to freshmen)</td>
<td>1 application for EACH campus (23 campuses open to freshmen)</td>
<td>1 application for EACH campus (500+ campuses open to freshmen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPLICATION SUBMISSION PERIOD</strong></td>
<td>November 1st-November 30th (Application opens August 1)</td>
<td>October 1st-November 30th</td>
<td>Varies by college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COST</strong></td>
<td>$70.00 per campus (fee waivers available)</td>
<td>$55.00 per campus (fee waivers available)</td>
<td>Varies by college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEE WAIVERS</strong></td>
<td>4 campuses (if eligible, apply online)</td>
<td>4 campuses (if eligible, apply online)</td>
<td>4 campuses will be awarded online through College Board if the student has taken at least one SAT or SAT Subject Test with a fee waiver, or has taken an SAT that was paid for by his or her state or school district. Note that only fee-waiver users who actually take a test will receive the online College Application Fee Waiver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENTRANCE EXAMS</strong></td>
<td>SAT Reasoning Test or the ACT Plus Writing (REQUIRED) AND 2 SAT Subject Tests from 2 different disciplines (RECOMMENDED) All tests must be taken by December 2015</td>
<td>SAT Reasoning Test or the ACT</td>
<td>Varies by college (report highest individual scores per section)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRANSCRIPTS</strong></td>
<td>Not required (self-reported grades)</td>
<td>Not required (self-reported grades)</td>
<td>Not required (self-reported grades)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERSONAL STATEMENT</strong></td>
<td>2 prompts (see personal statement article on page 5)</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Short answer and personal essay on your topic of choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOMMENDATIONS</strong></td>
<td>UCB applicants may be invited to submit 2 letters of recommendation. For further information please visit their website: <a href="http://www.admissions.berkeley.edu/freshmanpolicy">www.admissions.berkeley.edu/freshmanpolicy</a></td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Varies by college (supplemental forms available on the application)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACTIVITIES AND AWARDS</strong></td>
<td>UC wants to learn about your honors and awards, volunteer work/ community service, extracurricular activities, coursework other than A-G, educational preparation programs, and employment</td>
<td>Not required</td>
<td>Colleges want to learn about your honors and awards, volunteer work/ community service, extracurricular activities, educational preparation programs, and employment (may also attach a resume).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM (EOP)</strong></td>
<td>Must check EOP box on the UC application and provide a statement</td>
<td>Separate application link on CSUMentor application (csumentor.edu/admissionapp/eop_apply.asp)</td>
<td>Separate application; check each individual school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GPA MINIMUM</strong></td>
<td>3.0 in A-G courses taken during 10th-11th grades (must finish 11/15 courses by the end of 11th grade)</td>
<td>2.0 minimum in A-G courses (taken during 10th-11th grades)</td>
<td>Varies by college</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### STARBUCKS GIFT CARD GIVE-AWAY!

Go to [www.cfep.uci.edu/theedge/2015/survey](http://www.cfep.uci.edu/theedge/2015/survey) to find out how.

Offer ends November 30, 2015
**October**

- **October 1-November 30**: Filing period for CSU Application
- **Saturday, October 3**: SAT and SAT Subject test date
- **Friday, October 9**: Registration deadline for the 11/7/15 SAT test date and SAT Subject test
- **Saturday, October 24**: ACT test date

Continue to visit potential campuses and participate in college fairs at school and/or school district.

**November**

- **November 1-30**: Filing period for UC Application
- **Thursday, November 5**: Registration deadline for the 12/5/15 SAT test date and SAT Subject test
- **Friday, November 6**: Registration deadline for 12/12/15 ACT test date
- **Saturday, November 7**: SAT and SAT Subject test date
- **Monday, November 30**: LAST day to complete and submit your UC/CSU application!

**December**

- **Saturday, December 5**: Last SAT test date for seniors!
- **Saturday, December 12**: Last ACT test date for seniors!

Student and parent need to create a Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID) for FAFSA.

**January**

- **January 1-30**: Send your official test scores to the universities to which you applied. UC must receive your official exam scores directly from the test agencies by the end of this month.
- **Friday, January 1**: Start filling out the FAFSA or California Dream Act Application to apply for financial aid.
- **Ask your counselor about the GPA Verification Form for Cal Grants.**
- **Continue to search and apply for scholarships as well as other types of financial aid.**

**February**

Reminder: FAFSA and California Dream Act Application filing period.

Continue to visit colleges you applied to so you’re ready to make a decision when admission letters start coming in.

**March**

- **2016-17 admission applications become available for many community colleges.**
- **March – April**: Expect to hear from the campuses to which you’ve applied. Check your emails and postal mail and BE PATIENT.
- **Monday, Mar. 2**: FAFSA, California Dream Act Application, and GPA Verification Form DEADLINE!

**April**

- **Visit Campus Open Houses, participate in stay-over programs, if applicable and make a final decision about which campus you will attend.**
- **Saturday, April 16**: Celebrate UCI (annual open house and festival)!

If planning to attend a community college, take placement tests in math, English and language. Prepare ahead of time for these assessments, and take them very seriously.

Keep your grades up since you must pass all courses with a “C” or better.

**May**

- **Sunday, May 1**: Statement of Intent to Register (SIR) deadline for most UC campuses. This is your LAST CHANCE to submit your final selection to attend one campus.
- **Housing Application deadline for most UC campuses. However, dates may vary and students are encouraged to apply ASAP once they’ve been admitted.**
- **Saturday, May 14**: Analytical Writing Placement Exam (AWPE) test date for all UC incoming freshmen.
- **Reminder: AP exams**

Make sure that you take the AP exams listed on your college applications.

**June**

- **Graduation!**

Make sure to pass all your courses with grades of “C” or better to avoid jeopardizing your admission status.

Request official transcripts from your high school registrar and make sure they are sent to the campus in which you plan to enroll in the fall.

- **Taking two subject tests is recommended if you plan to apply to a UC, private, or out-of-state school**
- **Don’t forget to add the Writing section if you plan to apply to a UC**

- **UC application:** universityofcalifornia.edu/apply
- **CSU application:** csumentor.edu
- **FAFSA:** fafsa.ed.gov
- **Federal Student Aid ID:** faaid.ed.gov
- **California Dream Act application:** dream.csac.ca.gov

**July**

- **Friday, July 1**: UC DEADLINE to submit final official transcript to the campus you plan to enroll.
- **Friday, July 15**: UC Deadline to submit all other documents and exam scores to the campus you plan to enroll.
Close to home and affordable, community college is a great pathway for many students graduating from high school. If you plan to begin your educational journey at a community college please keep in mind four key steps every first-year student must complete under the new Student Success and Support Programs (SSSP). They are mandatory and help you to step forward in your college journey.

1. Complete an online admissions application, which usually becomes available early spring of your senior year.

2. Attend orientation, which allows you to learn about financial aid, registration, tutoring services, important locations on campus, types of degrees and more.

3. Take your college assessment tests, which measure your academic knowledge and skills. You might find out that you are ready for higher-level courses in some areas, or need more preparation in other areas. Your assessment results help you know where to begin in your college career.

4. Create your Educational Plan with the help of a counselor. This step-by-step guide takes into account what’s required to achieve your goals and how soon you would like to complete them. Planning ahead will ensure you take courses in the right sequence.

Last but not least, connecting to programs while at a community college is important to your success, helping you feel linked with campus and establishing a sense of belonging. You may no longer be with those familiar high school friends but connecting with a program right away will keep you from feeling alone and unsure.

Programs such as Extended Opportunity Program & Services (EOP&S) help students succeed in college by providing extra counseling, tutoring support and help obtaining books and supplies. Student life and leadership programs offer another way to connect with your campus. Participating in clubs and student government can help you make new friends, step out of your comfort zone and be part of changing the campus life. Additional activities can include joining athletic teams or using First Year Success Centers and staff. Utilizing your school’s resources is the smartest thing you can do, since many of these resources are free and all aim to help you succeed. Don’t be afraid to try new things and realize that being involved is an ongoing process. If you have not found something you are connected with, then keep looking. There are many programs offered at the community college – you just need to connect with at least one as you step forward to success.
As you navigate the rigorous path of higher education, there are many challenges presented to you in addition to what others already face—challenges such as being the first in your family to attend college and not knowing who to talk to about even the smallest issues that you encounter. What’s even more troubling is that it seems the system of higher education neither sees nor understands these challenges, yet you are supposed to somehow manage to thrive. Leadership, they say, is the key to becoming a successful student with a brilliant future. The problem is they don’t say how...

Three years ago, I faced many of these very challenges. I was a low-income, first-generation immigrant who came to UCI with nothing but a printed campus map. I knew right away that if I wanted to make it here I had to find somewhere to belong, something I was passionate about, and a place where one day I could lead others. Knowing myself and my passion for extracurricular activities, it was not hard for me to find my place. To this day, I always tell everyone that had it not been for my involvement on campus, I would not have been able to make it in this university beyond my first year.

But not everyone’s path is similar to mine. I do not have to go further than my twin brother’s story to see the differences in styles of leadership and success. Unlike me, my brother is more reserved, content with a small group of friends and a goal-oriented manner. He is not too fond of extra-curricular activities, but like me, he has found a sense of belonging at UCI, a place where he feels comfortable and confident in his success, and he certainly is a leader in his own way.

It’s true that leadership is key to success. Nonetheless, leadership is not synonymous with involvement in organizations. Not everyone needs extra-curricular activities to become a successful leader, and the number of activities certainly does not equate to the level of leadership. Leadership is the ability to form a community that you can trust, support and be supported by. How you define this community is completely up to you, whether it is in the same way that I defined mine or in the way that my brother created his. What does matter is that as long as you find and maintain this community, there is nothing stopping you from becoming an effective leader.

As for you, there lies a new world ahead of you, one full of confusion, questions and challenges. But with the support of the community that you build around yourself, your success will be inevitable.
What do I do when I encounter a roadblock to my dreams? The first time I asked myself this question was when I immigrated to the United States with my family in 2009; leaving everything I knew to work in my cousin’s restaurant. This question came up again after I learned about my undocumented status and thought college was no longer an option. At that moment, I did not know about the California Dream Act, which provides free financial aid for college, or AB 540, which provides in-state tuition for students who meet specific criteria.

Eventually, this question came up once again in the midst of my first year at UCI. Since I do not qualify for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), I cannot work legally or drive, and I’m in fear of deportation at any moment. There are always two options for me when I face a struggle to achieve my dreams: either give up or keep moving and hope for the best.

So far, I have kept moving by sharing my story and joining the movement to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform and racial justice.

Throughout my experience, I’ve been blessed with legal and moral support. My journey started in high school where I met an alumnus who educated me about the laws I could take advantage of and who, most importantly, was a symbol of hope. Since then, I’ve been involved with various immigrant activist groups such as ASPIRE-LA, Dreamriders 2015, Dreamers Advocate Program, and much more. These groups have blessed me with information regarding my rights and laws that benefit me. Equally important, they have given me a sense of community, a conscious mind, compassion and strength.

Remember that there are 11.2 million undocumented people in the U.S., and most are willing to help one another because we are all bound by the same struggle and the same dream.
From choosing a school to declaring a major, college applications can be daunting.

When I was applying, my peers opted for science programs for the sake of job opportunities. I chose to apply to the humanities, an academic discipline that had majors such as English and philosophy. Personally, I wanted to pursue my passion: history.

I remember feeling terrified for my humanities classes because of my writing skills. I was fine with reading and analyzing books, though I did not have the confidence to write a paper. I felt my prose was weak and I lacked creativity to make a strong thesis. I was unsure what my instructor wanted for each assignment. I was concerned that my shortcomings would hinder my grade for the class. Overcoming these stigmas defined my personal journey.

My first class was the Humanities Core Course, a year-long program where instructors assigned more papers than readings. My professors expected the students to know everything from basic grammar rules to proper citations. The course focused on developing an argument and revising drafts. When I received a prompt, I liked to reread it and ask my professor for clarification. That way, I could identify the prompt’s question. Afterward, I’d write my answer bluntly and succinctly. I discovered that writing in a simplistic manner was the easiest way to express myself clearly.

Aside from writing better thesis statements, the course taught me how to properly draft a paper. I learned that transitioning a working thesis and a rough outline into a coherent work was done by writing multiple drafts. This demonstrated that writing was a cycle of drafting and revising. Revisions did not always mean fixing a paragraph. Sometimes it meant scrapping the original draft and rewriting from the beginning.

Drafting also meant sharing my paper with peers and instructors for editing. This was difficult because I felt self-conscious whenever others read my work and I was hesitant to receive feedback. To combat these feelings, I reassured myself that these critiques would help me to become a stronger writer. Through editing, I was influenced by reviewers to write prose differently.

My path to writing with confidence was a time consuming practice. It took me four years, countless papers, and numerous late nights to be comfortable with my written work. Through hardships and tears, I realized writing was a life-long skill that I would continue to use after graduation. It fostered the confidence I needed. I consider these lessons learned a valuable asset for the next phase of my college career: graduate school!
**SUMMER 2016**
- Attend orientation or a summer transition program (e.g. Summer Bridge, Freshman Summer Start Program, Summer Multicultural Leadership Institute, etc.)
- Carefully review new student handbook
- Register for classes
- Research your health insurance benefits
- If you can, sign up live in the campus residence halls your first year

**FALL 2016**
- Move-in Day!
- Go to all orientations
- If you live on campus, get to know your roommate and others in your residence hall
- Check out all of the student support services available to you
- Get to know campus recreation opportunities — the gym will help relieve stress
- Familiarize yourself with the university electronic tracking system (e.g. register for classes, grades, financial aid)
- Go to class
- Develop a time management system (e.g., Google calendar)
- Become an expert on deadlines
- Find the ideal places to study
- Go to professor’s office hours
- Check out some student clubs/organizations

**WINTER 2017**
- Meet with an academic counselor and make a 4-year plan (2 for transfers)
- Participate in study skills & time management workshops
- Join a student club/organization
- Maintain a good GPA (attend class & study)
- Check out the Career Center (develop resumé, find internships or jobs)

**SPRING 2017**
- Consider taking on a leadership position within your student clubs and organizations
- Apply for summer internships or employment opportunities
- Visit the Study Abroad Office to research the process and requirements to study in another country
- Stay on campus as much as possible
- See an academic counselor about taking summer school at the university or local community college
- Talk to professors about opportunities to assist with research your second year