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## I Wish Someone Had Given Me This Advice Sooner About College

By Heather Waymouth  
UCF Forum columnist  
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As a senior graduating from UCF in May, I recently have spent a lot of time reflecting on my college experience – and boy, I wish people had told me a lot of things sooner about college!

Other than the expected advice of “Don’t party too hard” and “Stick to the books” – which certainly are good things to remember – there are plenty of tips I wish someone would have shared with me four years ago.

So here are a few things I’d like to pass along that may help other students in their early years of college:

### **Keep in touch with friends and mentors**

Freshman year is generally the time for meeting new faces and having fewer responsibilities compared to senior year. Every year will become busier and harder academically and extracurricularly. Make sure to keep in touch and make time for your friends and those who inspire you along the way.

### **Just because you choose a major doesn’t mean you’re locked in to it**

I’m not talking about the fact that students can switch their major at any time. I am talking about afterwards when getting out into the real world, and realizing that career is not what you want to do. Never feel like you might choose the wrong path. I know professionals who studied performing arts and eventually found their way to physical therapy graduate school. It’s never too late in life to make a switch. And it’s not impossible. So, as a freshman or sophomore, try not to freak out about finding the perfect study, because it probably doesn’t exist. Plus, how are you supposed to decide

what you want to do with the rest of your life at 19 years old? Just try to focus on your interests and see where they lead you.

### **Ask for help and build strong relationships with professors and advisors**

If you are having a hard time in a course, instead of resenting the professor, visit him or her during office hours and ask for help. I'm sure you'd be surprised at how willing they are to sit down with you. On another note, getting to know your professors and advisors in your major will help you stay on top of course material, stay connected to academic affairs, and open doors to opportunities. Sometimes the best way to build a relationship with faculty members is to join a club they advise, too.

### **Get involved. At the same time, don't get too involved**

Joining an organization is an easy way to meet new friends, give back to the community and feel a part of something extraordinary. I recommend getting involved in two organizations at a time, and do them well. Maybe choose one related to your studies and one related to a campus organization. If you are someone who tends to overwhelm yourself — don't push your limits. Try to only take on as much that won't spread you thin. Find only a few leadership positions and put 100 percent effort into them. Mental breakdowns are not worth the stress.

### **Apply for scholarships each semester**

There are many scholarship opportunities just waiting for students to claim. And I'm just talking about the ones offered by individual universities — not even those offered by other organizations on a national level. I suggest keeping a list handy of scholarships available and their deadlines. Even if you don't have time to apply to all, make it a goal to apply to at least one scholarship each month. I wish I had started trying to find as many scholarships as I could earlier on.

### **Don't stress over that one bad grade**

You are either the student who obsesses over grades or doesn't care at all. I'm sure if you are part of the "don't care" group, you probably wouldn't even stumble upon this article in the first place. So for the ones who are perfectionists when it comes to schoolwork, if you are worried about an upcoming test and feel like the world is going to end, just

remember that in a year, you won't even remember stressing over that midterm. Take a deep breath, study hard and try your best. I promise you will still be breathing in a week.

I don't expect my advice to apply to every college student, but I hope there is a message to guide at least someone.

And just remember: We're all at school to learn, whether it's academically or personally.

Now if only someone would tell me how to survive after graduation in a few months!

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