

10 Bits of Wisdom I Wish I Knew When I Began My Freshman Year of College:

10 - Ask for help If you are struggling in class, talk to a professor. If you are struggling spiritually, talk to a priest or campus minister. If you are struggling emotionally/Psychologically visit your student health center to get professional health. If you are struggling in another ways and need a sounding board, seek out a friend to talk to. Remember that the older folks that work in and around colleges that are there to help you.

9 - College is not just about getting a job. Grades are important and I am not saying you don't want to get a good job but college is more than gaining skills to earn a paycheck. College is also about you learning the answers to life's big questions - Who am I? What is life about? What plan does God have for me? How do I fit into the big picture? What am I being the rest of my life? It is another 4 years of Adult Formation and maturation. If you figure this out, college will be a success. Enjoy the ride, the experiences, and friendships.

8 - You are NOT poor. You may not have as much money as your friends, drive a fancy car, and you almost certainly don't have as much as your parents. This does not make you poor, so don't say you are. You are rich - you get to go to college, you eat as much as you need, you have a place to sleep, etc. Enjoy not having a lot of extra money and be creative. The most fun I ever had was when I was a "POOR" college student.

7 - Go to Class, Participate, and Sit up front. I am assuming that you will go to every class. Here is a little motivation... Let's say the average class costs about \$100 dollars per class meeting... So if you skip or blow off class picture taking a \$100 bill and torching it. Better yet sit up front in class so you are geographically bound to pay more attention to the Prof which in turn yields better grades. You are also a more familiar face to the Prof so when you go ask for help (see #1) you are a known entity. Easier to hear, focus, and take notes.

6 - Meet new people and try new things. College is a great time to grow by experience. A great way to do this is to meet different kinds of people from a variety of cultures, faiths, ethnic backgrounds, different political ideologies and economic classes. But you need to stay grounded in your faith, morality, and family. But, you should also learn about the world through relationships with others.

5 - Good friends don't always make good roommates. Sometimes your best friend may not be a friend at all after living with them for a year. Choose your roommates wisely. If you want to study, don't room with a friend who has bad study habits. If you want to be responsible, don't room with a friend who is irresponsible.

4 - Don't go into debt on credit cards. Credit card companies are like vultures on college campuses. They are just waiting for you to say "yes" to the free t-shirt so they can have you ring up tons of debt and be locked into a crazy percentage rate that you carry for years and don't pay off until you are retired. Don't fall for it. You don't need all the toys and latest gadgets. Keep a budget and be smart about spending money

3 - Shower shoes. All that needs to be said. (The FUNGUS AMUNGUS)

2 - Have fun! Balance your academics with a good (and healthy) social life. Join a Fraternity, Club, Student Government, etc... This means you have got to learn and use major time management skills, and prioritize your activities. Part of getting good grades is putting the hours in on learning the material. Remember your FIRST priority is to learn; then have FUN...

1 - Go to Church at least every Sunday - Remain close to Jesus Christ and His Catholic Church. A large number of Catholic Youth are involved in their parish during high school and continue that while at college. Part of the college experience is exploring and should include DEEPENING your faith. Get involved in campus ministry, the Newman center, the campus parish/church. Your spiritual growth and health is just as important as your academic life. Many students lose their faith by the time they graduate college because many decide they want what the world has to offer. The sad part is many don't really know what Jesus has to offer. Following Him is the only way to real happiness, peace, and fulfillment. The rest is all fluff. I was lucky - I went to a Catholic College. My faith was nourished by these activities along with REQUIRED classes in Philosophy and Theology. It taught me that I AM responsible for my own catechetical journey; to seek out sources to learn and experience my faith.

I will never forget the graduation charge Father Theodore Hesburgh (President of Notre Dame) gave at a St Leo College Commencement (1984) when he was the commencement speaker (I am Paraphrasing from memory). "Today you are fortunate to receive a college degree; more important is that it is a degree from a Catholic Institution of higher learning. That Catholic degree is not just yours to go into the world and making a living with; that degree is to be used to go into the world and make a difference with. Christ has given you this degree to go forth into the world and to be Christ to others."

GEORGE GANO, JR, George@saintsservices.com
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