

Chapter 4: Academic Success Skills

INTRODUCTION

In addition to course content knowledge, you will learn many lessons during your college experience. Success begins with identifying the essential skills for keeping life organized throughout your college experience. Good time management, organization, motivation, and goal setting are essential throughout your college career. This chapter will identify a variety of strategies, no matter your background, to help better control your approach for academic success. Content provided in this chapter will also set a foundation for successful habits and patterns to help you excel in all areas of your life.

ACHIEVING ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Responsibility and Accountability

The first key ingredient to thriving in college is accepting accountability and responsibility for your studies. This means that you are taking ownership of your educational experience. Your level of responsibility will shape your behavior and influence how you approach your classes and other university experiences. Below are key factors to help you be responsible and accountable as a college student.

- Recognize that you are the driving force behind the process to earning your degree.
- Dispute negative, self-defeating thoughts about your abilities and replace them with positive, encouraging thoughts (see Table 4.1).
- Realize that you have a choice. You can choose to accept responsibility and engage in behaviors that positively impact your education.
- Do not complain, make excuses, or blame others. Instead, seek solutions to help you through difficult situations (see Table 4.2).
- Do not focus on limitations. Instead, focus on how to overcome obstacles by setting reachable goals.

Table 4.1

Positive Replacements for Negative Thoughts



Negative, Self-Defeating Thoughts	➔	Positive, Encouraging Thoughts
"I'm probably going to fail this assignment."	➔	"I can do well with this assignment, and I can reach out to my instructor if I have questions."
"I'm never going to learn how to write better."	➔	"I have the ability to learn how to write better, and I can utilize the available resources to help me."
"This class is too hard."	➔	"This class is challenging, and I can get through it by putting effort into reading the material and completing the assignments."

Table 4.2

Solutions Rather Than Complaints

Complaining, Making Excuses, Blaming Others	➔	Seeking Solutions
"This class is useless."	➔	"I don't know why this is a required course, so I'm going to talk to my instructor and Student Services Counselor to see how this course can be helpful to my desired career."
"I can't turn my assignments in on time because I don't have time to complete them."	➔	"I'm going to restructure my schedule so that I have designated times to complete my assignments on time."
"I'm not doing well in this class because the instructor is not helpful."	➔	"I'm going to make an effort to read the material and come up with questions that I can ask my instructor."

A STRONG WORK ETHIC

Taking responsibility and accountability for your academic success requires developing a strong work ethic. Take pride in your work in the classroom and spend the needed time to master the material. Procrastinating or doing the bare minimum might be adequate to pass a class, but students with a

strong work ethic come to school to learn lessons, grow their minds, and build professional skills. You are not going to school just to earn points and get grades. So, get to work! Master the skills and lessons you need to master life!

Some ways to demonstrate a strong work ethic include:

- Being punctual. Show up on time for class and other appointments.
- Being productive. Make the most of your time to work and study, avoid distractions, stay on task, and get things done.
- Meeting deadlines. Set and keep track of your schedule.
- Paying the price. Make the sacrifices of time and energy to accomplish your goals and complete your tasks.
- Develop a strong work ethic in college and establish positive professional habits that will set you apart in your career. A strong work ethic is an academic and professional advantage.

TIME MANAGEMENT



Like many things in life, time is a limited resource, and using it wisely is the key to becoming a successful student. There is no denying it—time is precious. Between school, work, social activities, family responsibilities, and everything in-between, your time is valuable. Finding the time to fit these responsibilities into a 24-hour period seems nearly impossible, but it does not have to be. With the right schedule and set of tools, you can effectively manage your time and balance life priorities.

With the demanding pressure of today's world, finding a reasonable life-balance is often consumed by a drift in our responsibilities that can create unwanted stress and exhaustion, leading to an overwhelmingly cluttered and disorganized schedule.

Let's review some ways to help stay on task and eliminate unwanted pressure often felt with a full list of items to accomplish in one day. The steps below will help you manage your day while accomplishing required responsibilities. These tools may seem simple, but applying them into your daily routine are often difficult for college students.

- Review your current schedule and identify unnecessary items that can be removed (time wasters). This will open and create empty time slots for school priorities.
- Identify items that cannot be removed.
- Priorities that are nonnegotiable such as sleep, class time, study time, meals, and work should always be accounted for in your daily schedule first.
- Fill in the empty slots with your school priorities.
- Be realistic. Do not try to do everything at once but, rather, establish ways you may be able to combine activities or find practical ways to multitask. For example, review your notes while eating lunch or study your flashcards between classes.
- Stick to your new schedule and execute each task.
- Evaluate your progress. Is your new schedule working? If not, make more adjustments.



- Learn to say “no.” Staying on task by telling friends or family no will create less interference with schoolwork and set an early pace in class to stay on track.
- Reward yourself. Being a college student is a lot of work. When you find your stride and complete your tasks, it is a huge accomplishment; reward yourself with your favorite activity. You deserve it!

Time Wasters

Don't get sucked into the black hole of these common time wasters, such as binge-watching streaming video services, sleeping late, hanging out with friends, playing video games, browsing social media, texting friends, etc.



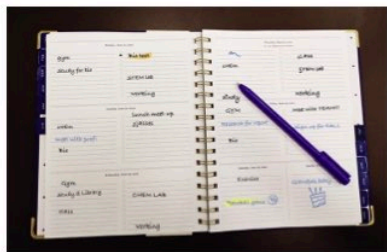
Did You Know?

Stat about how much time per day people spend on social media or streaming services.

Something to Think About

Five years from now, will you look back on the amount of time you spent on media consumption versus studying and wish you would have practiced better time management?

ORGANIZATION



Like balancing life priorities, it is important to have a well-organized schedule as a college student. There are many factors and distractions in daily life that can interfere with a schedule and create a sort of chaos, lack of organization, and goal interruption. For example, jobs, school, family, friends, church, and social events. Maintaining an organized routine is an essential part of successful independent living.

Organization during your college life helps produce high academic achievement in the classroom. Organization in your professional life will help you to maintain work–life balance and achieve your career goals.

- Schedule it! Earlier in this chapter, we reviewed your schedule and condensed it by removing time wasters, allowing your new priorities to be added. By this time, you should have a good idea of the tasks you need to complete and when they are due. Breaking down different elements of class and their due dates are important and should be added to your schedule. Some items to include in your schedule could be day/time/location of your classes, due dates for discussion questions and assignments, as well as dedicated study time to complete readings or study for a quiz, test, midterm, or final. Keeping an organized schedule decreases the chance of overlooking any important part of a class.

- Look ahead! Each class has a syllabus and weekly objectives available for you to look ahead in class and begin preparing for what's to come. If you have a larger assignment due, looking ahead is a great way to break up your week and accomplish the assignment in smaller chunks.
- Stay on track! With your newly built schedule, it is important to make it easily visible to keep yourself on track. You can print out your schedule and hang it on the refrigerator, pin it on a bulletin board near your computer, or even make it the background picture of your computer; as long as you can see it, you can achieve it.
- One day at a time! Now that you have an organized schedule, and, as you progress in class, you will find each day is a little easier than the last. You are becoming comfortable with your schedule and the way you have organized your day/week. You are beginning to find your groove and hit your stride in class. You are becoming familiar with the learning management system (LMS), locating resources, and following your schedule with ease. You are on your way to becoming a successful, organized, balanced student.

MOTIVATION, PERSEVERANCE, MINDSET



Even with the best time management plans and organizational set up, one thing is certain: Life's obstacles do not stop during the academic journey. It is important to keep things in perspective and approach challenges with a can-do mindset.

Motivation: Why Are You Going to College and Earning a Degree?

There must be a reason you signed up to do this. Why are you willing to sacrifice your time and make learning a priority? It is important to define the motivational reasons that led you to pursue a college degree. Please consider the following questions to help you to reflect on your motivation to come to

college.

- Who motivates you to earn your degree?
- Are there people you want to inspire or set an example?
- What are the skills you want to master?
- What professional opportunities will a degree create for you?
- What life goals will a degree help you accomplish?



You may find it helpful to take a moment and write out the answers to the above questions. You can even create a vision board for yourself and hang it somewhere as a frequent reminder of why you are on this journey.

You are not alone in this journey. Remember, there are many cheerleaders who will provide encouragement during the challenging times, such as family members, friends,

coworkers, mentors, church members, classmates, and professors. A positive approach to navigating the academic journey will inspire and motivate others.

A college degree will open many doors. Skills acquired during a degree program provide a competitive edge in the professional world. In addition, a college degree can provide opportunities for career growth and promotion. Higher salary and the ability to better provide for family is a motivating factor for many college students. Some students view earning a bachelor's degree as a stepping-stone for graduate school admission opportunities. However, the academic journey is not without obstacles.

Something to Think About

- Why are you earning your degree?
- Who is your support team, your cheerleaders?
- What outside factors and rewards motivate you?

Obstacles



Obstacles are often unplanned as students juggle social, family, professional, and academic commitments. These unforeseen circumstances are sometimes discouraging and overwhelming. Here are some common examples of obstacles that cause students to give up or fall behind on their studies.

- **Personal health challenges:** Illness strikes everyone from time to time. It is unlikely that anyone will be completely well and have no sick days during the entire span of the 4-year bachelor's degree program.
- **Health of others:** Many students care for parents, children, and other loved ones during times of illness and poor health.
- **Death of a loved one:** Preparing funeral arrangements and grieving are difficult enough emotionally without trying to complete academic work. Studying while grieving is a heavy task to undertake and full of distractions.
- **Home sickness:** Many college students are far away from home and living on their own for the first time, and they often struggle with home sickness. Missing family members and loved ones is a major obstacle to the academic progress of some students.
- **Work commitments:** Long work hours or unexpected events at work can disrupt routines. The added fatigue and stress may be overwhelming enough to consider quitting school.
- **Unexpected job loss:** This is a major mental and financial stressor. The focus on finding new work and the pressure to pay bills can overwhelm students.
- **Relationship problems and family trouble:** This stress can be burdensome and make it hard to focus on academics.
- **Time zone issues:** Online classes may present issues with differences in time from one place to another and add planning and logistical obstacles for some students.
- **Military students:** Unexpected last-minute missions, assignments, and duties as well as limited access to technology and internet access for periods of time are issues that military students may also face.
- **Academic content:** Sometimes, classes will be difficult. Course material or instructions may be confusing, the amount of reading overwhelming, or the academic language might be unfamiliar.

- **Extracurricular commitments:** Demands on your time for practices, clubs, and social gatherings with friends and family can present obstacles to learning and academic progress.

Why did we present such a rain cloud of a list? History has shown that there will be some bumps in the road. The academic journey is not completely smooth. This is normal and expected. We want you to know that you will not be the first to encounter an obstacle. You can push through and persevere. It can be a balancing act to complete a college degree.

How Can I Overcome Obstacles?



- **Ask for help:** Your professors and instructors know that life is challenging. Send an email, make a call, or visit during office hours. Your professors can work with you and support you through these obstacles. Learning to juggle tasks and overcome obstacles is one of the unlisted benefits of earning a college degree and a skill sought by many employers. Your professors expect you to work hard and do your best; however, when you encounter obstacles, your professors can help you chart a path forward.
- **Keep a long-term perspective:** Earning your college degree is like having a full-time job and will require great effort and sacrifice to do well. The opportunities and long-term life benefits that grace individuals with college degrees outweigh the short-term sacrifices made week by week and course by course. Take time to reflect on your academic journey when you reach another obstacle. You have overcome obstacles before, and you can overcome them again to reach your goals.
- **Pray for help:** Prayer can be a great source of strength and comfort. Ask God for help when you lack wisdom, and he will give it to you (James 1:5). And ask God for help when you are in trouble (James 5:13). You can pray when you are tired, and the Lord will renew your strength and help you not be weary (Isaiah 40:31). Remember to connect with the great Creator of the world who has all wisdom and power.
- **Remember your motivation:** If the obstacles you face are so overwhelming that you want to quit, remember why you chose to attend college. Why are you earning a college degree? Who are you earning a college degree for? What will you lose out on if you quit college? Remembering why you chose to begin this journey and reflecting on your motivation can give you the strength to struggle through temporary obstacles.
- **Persevere:** Keep moving forward and don't give up. You are 100% responsible for your academic success. No one else can do it for you. You are worth the effort. You have the power to choose and the power to change. Keep making sound, responsible choices.

GOALS

Personal Goals

Successful people set and achieve goals. Successful people do not become successful overnight; they set short-term goals and standards to reach those goals one step at a time. It is the same thing when it comes to your college career. Think about your current academic career and break down the long-term goal of earning your degree into a short-term goal.





Did You Know?

Steve Jobs started Apple in his garage.

Setting personal goals is the act of expressing ourselves through life's achievements. Goals typically originate by creating short-term or long-term goals, and they vary from one person to the next. Setting and achieving goals will take time, effort, determination, and grit, and when you complete the goal, you will feel incredibly accomplished. When it comes to long-term academic goals, wouldn't it be nice to say, "I want an A in class," or, "I want to earn my bachelor's degree," and then actually achieve that goal? This sounds amazing, but for long-term goals to be achieved, short-term goals and a strategic plan need to be established.

Table 4.3

Examples of Short-Term and Long-Term Goals

Short-Term Goals	Long-Term Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Answer each discussion question on or before the due date.• Participate weekly following your instructor's policies.• Look ahead at the weekly assignment.• Send any questions to the instructor early.• Start your assignment early.• Submit your assignment early, if possible, to alleviate any technical setback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Apply for an internship.• Finish your degree.• Apply for graduate school.• Get married.• Start a family.• Apply for a job in your field of study.• Apply for a promotion.• Make a major purchase (e.g., home, vehicle).

Smart Goals

While the obvious long-term goals for college students are graduating and starting a satisfying career, it is important to set short-term goals along the way and then celebrate those smaller victories. A widely accepted goal-setting strategy uses the SMART goals system, which was developed by the Kansas State Department of Education. The SMART goals system allows you to break down your goals so that they are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely.

Figure 4.1

SMART Goals



Student Preparation for Distance Education

Mark Taormino

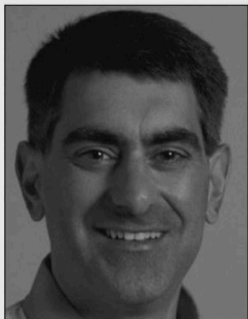
INTRODUCTION

The focus of this article is to identify characteristics of successful online students to support an informed enrollment decision when entering a distance education program. According to Boyd (2004), "there may be only certain kinds of students under certain conditions who can successfully learn via the online format" (p. 31).

The growth of online educational opportunities has provided access to many students that otherwise might not have had the opportunity for study. Morris and Finnegan (2008) stated "nearly 35% of all

higher education institutions in the United States are considered fully-engaged in offering online courses and programs" (p. 56). There are many colleges and universities offering distance education programs, often with very robust marketing initiatives to reach prospective students. For students new to distance education, a likely question for them is if distance education is a suitable learning path. More pointedly, how can potential students identify the traits, characteristics, and competencies needed for success in distance education programs?

A learning institution needs to partner with students when advising them about a specific program of study. Perhaps equally important is to counsel students on characteristics of successful online learners. Schrum and Hong (2002) suggested that potential students might not be aware of the challenges they could face in an online learning environment. Student awareness of the characteristics, traits, and skills for online learning is an important area of dialogue between the student and learning institution. According to Boettcher (2007) "The period of data gathering and decision making is an important advising juncture for many online learners; a time during which institutions have an opportunity to capture the learner and forge connections that last over time" (p. 2). Identifying desirable characteristics of online learners can serve both students and institutions to help create a strong relationship between the student and institution, leading to student persistence and successful program



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completion. Both institutions and students share a common interest in successful program completion.

A detailed and accurate understanding of online learning can help students make the right decision toward pursuing online study versus classroom based education. Howland and Moore (2002) found that “accurate expectations of learner responsibilities” was an important element for student success (p. 187). Schrum and Hong (2008) suggested that a common misperception might be that people believe that distance education is quick and/or easy. Such a misperception might lead to student dissatisfaction and attrition. Morris and Finnegan (2008) expressed a concern about higher drop-out rates in online courses than in comparable face-to-face courses, and the need to understand the linkages between behavioral factors, including those factors related to student persistence and success online. Boyd (2004) also expressed a concern about student attrition rates in online programs. Because student drop-out rates can be higher in online environments than in classroom environments, students can benefit from understanding some of the characteristics that can serve as a catalyst for successful learning. There are important characteristics of successful online students that should be shared with students throughout the recruiting and advising process.

Self-assessment to help determine suitability for online learning is not a new idea, and there are many easy to use student self-assessment tools. Examples of some sites include:

- OnlineLearning (www.onlinelearning.net);
- Penn State University (http://ets.tlt.psu.edu/learningdesign/assessment/onlinecontent/online_readiness);
- Maryland Online (http://marylandonline.org/assessments/online_learning_for_me); and
- Oregon Network for Education (<http://oregonone.org/DEquiz.htm>).

Many colleges and universities offering distance education programs have online self-assessment tools for prospective students. However, it is unlikely that these survey tools are scientific predictors, and should not be used as a predictor of success but rather as a guidepost to indicate learner suitability. In a study to evaluate the predictive value of two popular web-based surveys, “Is Online Learning Right for Me?” and “What Technical Skills Do I Need?” Hall (2008) found the instruments had “little ability to predict student performance in distance education courses” (p. 17). Hall advised that the primary value of the instruments was to raise awareness to students planning to enroll in distance education courses. Student advising with an education professional connected to the institution would likely be a preferred route to help guide new students. Because many institutions offer online programs, there are often enrollment counselors skilled in guiding students into appropriate programs of study. Nova Southeastern University employs student enrollment counselors, such as Daisy Pino. Pino earned a doctorate in instructional technology and distance education, is well versed in the characteristics of successful online learners, and the necessary prior preparation for new online students. Guiding students to online programs requires dialogue across a variety of issues, but perhaps none more important than the ability to harness self-discipline with respect to time management. According to Pino “time management is key.” Students need to plan their time accordingly to have sufficient opportunity to complete assignments and work iteratively based on feedback. Without time management, there is no time for students to consider feedback to increase their learning (Taormino, 2009).

ONLINE STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

There is a substantial body of literature focusing on the characteristics of successful online learners. Boyd (2004) created a category framework in four different areas; technical factors, environmental factors, personal characteristics, and learning characteristics. Although the characteristics within each category were not unique to the research of Boyd, the categorization offers a good method of organizing characteristics and traits of successful online learners.

TECHNICAL FACTORS

Because online learning requires the use of technology and computers, student capability with software and hardware is a central issue. Technical factors relates to the ability to use current computer and Internet technology, particularly with respect to navigating Internet and intranet sites. Whereas navigation is a broad idea, the use of Internet functionality such as hyperlinks, search engines, retrieval, and saving are some basic computer skills that are essential. Further, the ability to send and reply to e-mail using a specific e-mail system used by an institution or course, downloading and installing software, managing text/audio/video files, course management systems, and online threaded discussions are also essential technical skills for student success. Howland and Moore (2002) noted that students who found online learning difficult were significantly challenged with technical elements such as word processor compatibility, sending and receiving files, and creating file attachments.

Technical skills are sometimes viewed as prerequisite to taking an online course. Blocher, Sujo de Montes, Willis, and Tucker (2002) noted that many institutions have created instruments to provide feedback to students about technical skills used in online learning because "accessing online education opportunities often requires

specific, and sometimes, arcane technology skills" (p. 3). Possessing appropriate technical skills is highly desirable upon initial entry to a program, however Boyd (2004) stated that "in fact many students develop them while taking the course because it requires them to use the computer extensively" (p. 33). Oh and Lim (2005) suggested that pre-instructional activities should be offered prior to class to bring novice users to a minimum level of technological competency. Schrum and Hong (2002) reported that it was a significant challenge for students to learn technology along with content. Drawing attention to technical skills as a recommended condition of entry to an online program is likely a sufficient measure. A specific level of technical proficiency measured as a precondition for acceptance into an online program does not offer an assurance of program success. DeTure (2004) found that online technology self-efficacy scores were poor predictors of student success in distance education courses delivered online, and that a higher level of confidence using online technologies was not correlated with a higher grade point average.

It is worth noting that an often overlooked technical skill is typing (Boyd, 2004). Almost all communication in online environments involves typing, and it is an obvious time disadvantage for students that cannot touch type. Because online classes rely on the use of text communications, the ability to type is an important skill to help student use time more efficiently.

Even in the event of student technical proficiency, support issues related to software reliability, navigation, and access will emerge. Mupinga, Nora, and Yaw (2006) found that the most primary need of online students is technical help. Having students enter a program with a general understanding of the importance of technical skills is a logically good idea. Also important is the student expectation that technical skills are a work in progress, and

can be acquired and improved concurrently with course content.

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

Environmental factors include geography, time, and other commitments that might compete with learning time such as the support of one's family. Most students participate in online learning because of scheduling issues, and the flexibility inherent to distance education (Bocchi, Eastman, & Swift, 2004; Boyd, 2002; Richards & Ridley, 1997; Schrum & Hong, 2002). However, online learning does not mean that less time will be expended in the learning process. Time requirements for online courses vary, but estimates range from 4 hours per week to 20 hours per week (Illinois Online Network, 2007; Schrum & Hong, 2002). Students need to consider that online courses might require more time than traditional classroom based courses (Boyd, 2004; Howland & Moore, 2002). The issue of time management is closely tied to the idea of self-regulation where students must be willing and able to dedicate study time (Blocher et al., 2002; Schrum & Hong, 2002). Boyd (2004) suggested that students could benefit from setting specific study times, just like any other appointment on a calendar.

Misperceptions about time commitments, particularly when trying to balance work, family, and school, can impact online learning success. Howland and Moore (2008) stated that "students need reasonable expectations regarding the requirements of an online course" (p. 190). Further stated was that online students spend more time on courses because of the need to read what might otherwise be explained verbally in a face-to-face setting. A threaded discussion might take 4 or 5 days, which otherwise might only take 10 minutes when face-to-face.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Successful online students are highly motivated (Howland & Moore, 2002; Schrum, 2002). Online students often work individually, but also interact with other students and the instructor. Students are often surprised by the frequency of interaction in online courses (Howland & Moore, 2002). Boyd (2004) stated that "in short, successful online students are highly motivated by their goals and their ability to shape their learning experience" (p. 35).

Students might have misconceptions about distance education, including the degree of effort that is required. As stated by Schrum and Hong (2002), "people may believe distance education is quick or easy, however, they quickly learn that many programs challenge the learner with reading and writing assignments" (p. 62). One of the misconceptions about distance education as quick and easy could be because online information is ubiquitous, easily available, and can be freely used despite the importance of copyright statutes. Boyd (2004) included integrity as one of the important student characteristics. In any learning environment, including online, plagiarism, copyright violations, and cheating cannot be tolerated. Student integrity is a characteristic that should not be assumed, but clearly enumerated in any list of online student characteristics.

LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS

Learning characteristics include areas such as learning styles, written communication skills, and self-reliance/self-direction. Distance learners need to either possess or develop independent learning styles as part of their overall learning characteristics. Howland and Moore (2002) suggested that self-reliance meant that students were often responsible for finding answers to their own questions, and that successful students recognized the need to be more proactive and independent in an online learning environment. The individual

learning styles of students is an area of much interest by researchers, particularly in the area of internal locus of control. Empirical research has shown that students with a high internal locus of control are more likely to succeed in online learning environments (Dille & Mezack, 1991; Liu, Lavell, & Andris, 2002; Morris & Finnegan, 2008). However, some studies have found that different learning styles are common among student populations, with no particular learning style more predominant or preferable (Mupinga et al., 2006; Oh, & Lim, 2005).

Because of the reliance on written text for communications and academic assignments, students should possess effective writing skills. Students must be comfortable with the fact that many or most learning activities will be written assignments. Students that might have a preference for a more traditional exam-based evaluation of learning might not be satisfied with written assignments as a primary method of evaluation.

Although certain learner characteristics are beneficial to support learning persistence and program completion in online environments, classroom based learners can adapt to online learning environments with some initial preparation. Solimeno, Mebane, Tomai, and Francescato (2008) did not find any significant variance in learning despite different personality traits and learning strategies of students in face-to-face and online learning environments. The desire and motivation to learn, combined with an awareness of some of the important skills, can lead learners to succeed in a distance education environment.

CONCLUSION

Considering the review of literature, highly valuable skills, traits, and characteristics of online learners include:

1. time management;
2. motivation;

3. active participation;
4. willingness to independently seek information and research (self-reliance);
5. comfort with technology;
6. ability to communicate effectively, particularly in writing; and
7. student integrity.

Matching student learning preferences with appropriate learning opportunities is of high importance. Some students might not enjoy a high level of reliance on technology mediated instruction and communication, which could lead to a decision to pursue a more traditional education delivery path. Surely some students will recognize that a high level of self-discipline and rigorous adherence to time management might not suit their preferences. It comes down to a personal choice, and institutions can help students prepare for the online experience through effective communication and dialogue to increase student awareness.

The opportunity for students to understand and recognize the tenets of online learning, and how student roles might be substantially different to what they have become accustomed to in the classroom, can serve as a valuable decision-making opportunity. Learning institutions play a role in surfacing important information to prospective students to assure an accurate understanding of successful learner characteristics.

The most important point of all might be that with the desire and motivation to learn, anyone can become a successful online learner. There are no real barriers to prospective students given a willingness to modify learning characteristics where needed. When said that online education might not be for all, it is reasonable to conclude that the genesis of the statement speaks mostly to student preferences and desire. Recognizing the importance of technical skills, such skills can be acquired incrementally and concurrently with

course content. Certainly it would be preferable to enter an online program possessing a minimal level of technical skill, but the lack thereof is not a rigid barrier to eventual online learning success. The characteristics of successful online learners can be developed, acquired, and/or refined. There is no formula for online success, but essential ingredients surely seem to be an awareness of important characteristics, particularly student motivation and desire. Once students are aware of desirable characteristics, the process of becoming a successful online learner is something that is attainable for most all potential learners.

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