Name : _____

Conquering College, Lab 1 : Schedule to Succeed
by Jeff Anderson

In many colleges in the United States, almost half of first-year college students do not make it to graduation. Stop and think about this for a minute. Our current US higher education system is designed in such a way that it kills the dreams, hopes, and aspirations of almost 50% of the students who enter through its gates. As you meditate on this reality, let's run a related thought experiment. What would you say about an airline company that designs and flies planes that kill 50% of its passenger? Would you buy a ticket from that company? Would you allow that company to maintain the status quo?

To me, when I think about how our current policy choices fail to support so many students, I see a need for major reforms. However, I want to avoid blaming students for this failure. Instead, I believe that each one of us should learn to focus our collective energy on policy changes to better support students in our local communities. Such policy changes will require decades of sustain organization and activism at the grass-roots level. In the meantime, if you are part of the current generation of college students, I want to help you develop and refine system-navigation skills so that you can thrive in your education.

Let's define *system navigation* as the process of protecting yourself against harmful policies that you encounter in your formal schooling so that you can accomplish your academic, educational, and career goals while minimizing how much harm you internalize along the way. One of the first steps in developing your system navigation skills is to learn how to conquer college. You know how to *conquer college* when you can earn any grade you want in any class with any teacher. In other words, you conquer college when you can look at any class you want to take, state your desired grade in that class before the term begins, and then successfully earn that grade by the end of the academic term.

Let's be clear: there is a mountain of academic evidence to indicate that teachers should STOP using letter grades as proxy measurements for student learning. Decades of scientific research on the effects of the grading system on student learning indicate that the process of assigning letter grades is dehumanizing, inaccurate, nonscientific, and harms students in many ways. A major goal of these conquering college lab activities is dedicated to help you protect yourself against these harms. Part of that process is to transition away from measuring your learning and self-worth via the detrimental letter grading system. Instead, you will use the conquering college activities to create measurements of your learning based on your own internal metrics for your education.

Another goal of these conquering college lab activities is to help you enjoy more control over your future. Far too many college students get weeded out of their degree because they struggle to earn the grades they want. The moment you can control your grades in college classes, you enjoy an increased sense of freedom in your academic life. You can engage in your classes without worrying about failure and instead focus on creating the types of experiences you want for your college career. Another reason to learn how to get the grades you want is that many scholarships, fellowships, and internships have minimum GPA requirements. For example, you might apply for a scholarship that requires a 3.0 GPA or higher. As you deepen your ability to conquer college, we'll move onto more advanced system navigation techniques and help you learn how to get paid to learn. First things first: let's help you develop effective and efficient scheduling habits in working to earn the grades you want.

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1. **Create Your First Draft of Your Weekly Schedule**

   This first activity is dedicated to helping you set a foundation for deep learning and strategic studying throughout this academic term. One of the most important skills you can develop to earn the grades you want is to schedule your academic life very carefully. So much of successful studying comes down to building habits. One of my favorite quotes about habits goes as follows:

   Bad habits are easy to form and hard to live with. Good habits are hard to form and easy to live with.

   Learning how to create academic schedules to succeed in your classes is good habit that depends on deep thinking and takes lots of practice. If you do this well, you can set yourself up to thrive in your

courses and engage in deep learning for the topics that most interest you. Importantly, you can also make time to have fun, socialize, and get adequate rest. Great scheduling is all about balancing your various commitments in a proactive way so that you have more control over how you spend your time and what you do to thrive in your classes.

A. Please read more about the fudge ratio and the four fudge-ratio scenarios.

☐ (1.A.i) Read the blog post : Schedule to Succeed: Plan to Fudge It Up

☐ (1.A.ii) Fill out questions 1 - 8 on pages 1 - 4 of the following document:

Schedule to Succeed : Plan to Fudge It Up Worksheet.

B. Please make a first draft of your weekly schedule for this academic term

☐ (1.B.i) Read the blog post : Schedule to Succeed : Draft Your Weekly Schedule

☐ (1.B.ii) Using any tools you'd like, please draft your weekly schedule for the current academic quarter. If you need help creating a template for this type of weekly schedule, please take a look at the Weekly Schedule Template (.docx) document as one possibility. The exact tool you use to create your weekly schedule is less important than the process of writing down all of your recurring weekly commitments in a form that is easy to look at and is quickly accessible. One of the goals of this work is to help you rapidly identify thea times that you have weekly, recurring time commitments and also time blocks where you are free to do as you choose.

☐ (1.B.iii) Use the schedule you created in item 1.B.ii above to fill out the following table 5.1:

TABLE 5.1: ESTIMATE TIME COMMITMENTS	
SCHEDULED ACTIVITY	WEEKLY TIME COMMITMENT
Course Load:	
Weekly Work Hours:	
Other Weekly Activities:	
Total Number of Hours for Required Meetings Per Week:	

For more details about each row of this table, please carefully read Step 5.3 of the Schedule to Succeed: Draft Your Weekly Schedule blog post. If you'd like a digital copy of this table, you can find that Weekly Schedule Analyzer here.

C. Beware of Scheduling Traps

☐ (1.C.i) Read the blog post : Schedule to Succeed : Beware of Scheduling Traps

☐ (1.C.ii) Fill out questions 1 - 6 on pages 1 - 3 of the following document:

Schedule to Succeed : Beware of Scheduling Traps Worksheet.

☐ (1.C.iii) If needed, please edit your draft weekly schedule to create more flexibility.

2. **Create Your First Draft of Your Term-Long Calendar**

This second activity is designed to help you get all your important dates for the upcoming academic term in written form by drafting your term-long calendar. You can use your term-long calendar document to free up your mental energy so you don't have to stress about remembering important upcoming commitments. You can also use your term-long calendar to anticipate important deadlines, plan ahead, and make strategic scheduling decisions to stay on top of your work. This habit of writing down important information to reduce the amount of mental energy you have to spend managing your learning is known as cognitive offloading and can help you make better decisions, enhance your performance in your classes, and reduce your stress levels throughout each academic term. This activity helps you enjoy the benefits of cognitive offloading by inviting you to write down and store important time-sensitive information in a system that you can refer back to throughout each academic term. That is exactly what you do when you draft your term-long calendar.

A. Please make a first draft of your term-long calendar for this academic term.

☐ (2.A.i) Read the blog post : Schedule to Succeed: Create Your Term-Long Calendar

☐ (2.A.ii) Using any tools you'd like, please make a draft of your term-long calendar. Again, it doesn't matter which specific tool you use. However, please make sure that you can easily view, edit, and update your term-long calendar for the entire academic term. The goal of the first draft is to create a document that you can use for weeks and months to come. So, spend extra time making sure that your term-long calendar document can be useful for you in the future.

☐ (2.A.iii) Using your draft calendar, fill out your Term-Long Calendar Analyzer.

☐ (2.A.iv) If needed, edit your term-long calendar to address scheduling conflicts. If you do this work well, you will be updating this calendar many times each week as you make new commitments and navigate your current commitments. The goal here is to make a first draft so you can refer back to this document throughout the quarter. In that way, this is a live document that will be edited, updated, and changed many times as your academic term progresses.

What you should include in your learning portfolio to show you've completed this activity:

☐ Your responses to questions 1 - 8 on the Schedule to Succeed : Plan to Fudge It Up Worksheet.

☐ Your first draft of your weekly schedule

☐ Access to your entries on all tables in your weekly schedule analyzer

☐ Your responses to questions 1 - 6 on the Schedule to Succeed : Beware of Scheduling Traps Worksheet.

☐ A copy of your first draft of your term-long calendar (keep the original for yourself)

What are the next steps?

I like to say that in order to earn the grades you want, it is necessary but not sufficient to set up really strong scheduling systems at the very beginning of the quarter. In other words, if you're not thoughtful about your schedules, it's almost impossible to conquer college. But, just because you set up really great scheduling systems doesn't mean you'll get the grades you want. In Conquer College Lab 2, we will explore a lot more about how you can set up effective and efficient study routines to accomplish your academic goals. Just as important as setting up your scheduling systems is learning how to make the most of the time you spend studying. That is exactly what we focus on in our next lab exploration together.