

Subject: Welcome to Winter Quarter 2024 with Jeff Anderson: here are the first few assignments

Date: Monday 1/1/2024

Hello amazing learners,

My name is Jeff Anderson.

I am a math instructor at Foothill College. You're receiving this email because you're either enrolled in or you're on the waitlist for one of the Foothill College classes I will be teaching during this quarter.

Thank you for your interest in this class and cheers to your learning.

Attached to this email you'll find an introduction to some of the most important assignments that I will be asking you to finish this quarter. You'll also find links to a bunch of resources that are designed to support your work as a student.

Please read the entire attachment. Then, please feel free to get started ASAP.

My previous students report that the more work they did before the quarter started, the easier their quarter became. Like the old saying goes: the early bird gets the worm.

Below are my expectations for students I work with this class.

A. For students who have never taken a course with me:

Please use this quarter to focus on finishing Conquering College Labs 1 – 5 on pages 7 – 11 of the attachment. The first three conquering college labs will be due by the end of week 2 of this quarter. Moreover, I do expect that you will finish that work as part of our time together this quarter. This work is designed to set a foundation for the more advanced assignments that I offer on pages 12 – 14 of this attachment.

B. For students who have taken a course with me before:

If you have already finished Conquering College Labs 1 – 5 on pages 7 – 11, please read Advanced Assignments 1 – 5 on pages 12 – 14. There, I offer you advanced assignments to continue to develop and deepen your meta-learning routines this quarter and beyond. Please choose which ever advanced assignment(s) you feel most strongly about and get started on those. I recommend starting with Advanced Assignment 1 and working forward from there. I will be asking you to report which of these activities you plan to complete as part of our work together.

Note: If you've taken a course with me before and you did shallow work on any of the Conquering College Labs 1 – 5, please re-visit the assignment(s) that you feel you have not finished with your best effort. Then, complete those assignments by engaging in deep work to transform your approach to learning in college and to improve your ability to learn in the future.

C. For folks on my waitlist, I'll be sending you a separate email to communicate [my add code policy](#) and provide options for finding ways that we can work together. Please look out for that email. You're welcome to check out the assignments in this attachment. If and when you take a class with me, I will be asking you to finish this work. The sooner you start, the more freedom you'll enjoy.

I know there is a lot of information in this email and attachment. We'll work through this together during our time in class. My most dedicated and hard-working students take a few quarters to get through all these resources. Students who do this well tell me: "this work changed my life."

Here are some of the outcomes my students have achieved by completing this work:

1. A Foothill student ([Mark](#)) who barely graduated from high school with a 2.0 GPA used the Conquering College process to become a top performing student who graduated SJSU with a 3.7 GPA and went on to earn his MBA at the top of his class. Mark reported to me that he used the learning skills that he created via Conquering College to position himself to earn much more than \$100K per year doing work that he cares about.
2. A Foothill student ([Henry](#)) used the lessons I teach in my Get Paid to Learn project to make over \$20K in scholarship money at Foothill and more than \$50K during his undergrad. Henry graduated debt free with a BS in Computer Science from SJSU in Spring 2023 and is planning to earn graduate degrees (like a Master's and PhD) in Computer Science to launch a career teaching Computer Science at Foothill College.
3. A Foothill student ([Natalie](#)) got hired at a local engineering firm using the skills she built in our class. Natalie completed my [Electrify the Linear Systems project](#) by combining the learning she did in this project with content from Physics 4B, Engr 11, Math 1C, and Math 2B to create her work. Natalie then spoke about this experience in her job interview with the technical director of her target program and used this as a platform to get technical experience as an engineer while still in college.
4. A Foothill student ([Maria](#)) who used the learning skills she developed in our class to thrive in upper division math and CS classes at UC Davis and earned a nationally competitive summer [Research Experience for Undergraduate](#) funded by the [National Science Foundation](#).
5. Two Foothill students ([Hayden and Chris](#)) helped build a commercially viable [Power Block product](#) to transform a 9V battery into a dc power source for hands-on laboratory experiments for in-class learning in lower division math & engineering classes. This project led to over \$20K in purchasing by Foothill College to provide at home laboratory kits to students in Foothill's Math 2B, Engr 37, Engr 11, and Physics 4B classes during the COVID 19 lockdowns.

I have many, many more stories from my previous students to show that Community College students like you can achieve the highest levels of excellence and distinction that you desire in your career. I have seen my students from Foothill out-compete students from places like Stanford, MIT, Harvard, and UC Berkeley. I mean this literally: I have seen some of my previous students go onto graduate from four-year schools and then compete against Ivy League graduates in final interviews for their dream jobs. In this competition, my previous students are the ones that earn the job. When I ask these types of students why they feel they achieve this outcome, they attribute their success to knowing how to learn quickly and effectively, to their work ethic, to their grit and determination, and to the strategy of spending many years preparing themselves to do their desired work instead of only betting on their credentials alone.

My Conquering College Labs 1 – 5 and Advanced Assignments 1 – 5 are designed to help you develop these skills and give you a competitive advantage in your future learning.

I want to be honest and vulnerable here. Personally, I avoid spending time at Ivy League institutions. I find those spaces to be psychologically harmful and designed more to indoctrinate me into a pre-existing wealth hierarchy than to nurture my creativity in solving problems I care about.

As a coach and mentor, I often counsel my students to avoid competing for elite status by playing someone else's game. I do not believe in the ideas and myths of [wealth supremacy](#). I much prefer to set modest financial

goals that support my [professional vision statement](#) and allow me to enjoy the type of work-life balance that I desire. With that in mind, I do not feel a need or desire to hoard wealth and compete for membership to ultra-elite circles via Ivy League institutions.

As a coach, I encourage my students to create your own vision for what success looks like and the type of work you most value. I coach you to create world-class educational experiences without demanding acceptance into Ivy League institutions. I believe this approach has led to much more creative thinking, autonomy, and financial flexibility in my career than one that centers expensive, elite education.

No matter what your approach, I will work tirelessly to help you make progress towards your goals and to help you become the most effective and powerful learner you can be. In my heart, you are the best and brightest in our nation not only because you are smart, powerful, and strong, but also because you are at a school where you get a [better educational experience for much less money](#) than you'd pay at an [R1 institution](#).

The point of sharing all this is to show that I believe you are capable of anything to which you set your mind. I will be working hard to help you develop ultra-effective learning habits that liberate you from the oppressive policies that define our school and economic systems. My goal is to empower you to change your world and to fight for others who have less systemic power.

To do this well, I need all the help you can give me. Please do your best to work hard and have fun! Please let me coach you and work hard to finish the work I expect you to finish.

If we do good work together, you can use the experiences you build in this class to change the rest of your life.

In this email and attachment, I highlight some of the most important learning-skills work I will ask you to complete to help you thrive in your education. I love giving students advanced access to this material so that you can get ahead and make the time you spend invested in your education more meaningful.

Finally, many of my students tell me that when they thoroughly complete the work outlined in the attachment, they are more effective and efficient learners. I routinely have students tell me that this work propels their learning not only in our class but also in their other classes. I hope to help you make this a reality also.

Cheers to your learning and I look forward to supporting you.

Best,

Jeff

PS. If possible, I kindly request that you minimize your emails to me. You can read more about my email policy below:

<https://www.appliedlinearalgebra.com/blog/jeffs-email-policy>

Introduction to Conquering College Assignments

I say that 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. I know you can conquer college. My *Conquering College* project helps you develop highly effective, efficient, and powerful learning strategies to earn the grades you want while also developing the type of content expertise you value for your future academic and career interest. The goals of my conquering college project include:

1. Encourage you to become a knowledgeable and sophisticated deep learner.
2. Inspire you to develop time-tested, effective, and efficient learning strategies that are founded on researched-based principles of learning.
3. Help you develop strategic system navigation skills so that you can thrive in any classroom especially in classes where your teacher is not a skilled educator or cares little about your learning.

I define *system navigation* as the process of protecting yourself against harmful policies that you encounter in your formal education so that you can accomplish your academic and career goals without internalizing the harm you suffer along the way. We explore the topic of system navigation more deeply in the conquering college project.

You might ask yourself: why am I expected to finish the conquering college labs as part of the way I learn math in this class? This is a great question and below is my answer.

Colleges and universities often do not deliver on the promises they make to students. Our society sells a narrative that students who earn a college degree will enjoy higher salaries, increased financial stability, and a more fulfilling career than their peers who do not have a university degree. However, many colleges fail to provide the types of support students need to achieve their dreams. Across the entire US higher education system, we create policies that overvalue research, undervalue teaching, under-invest in the hard work of creating relevant curriculum for students, and force students to pay huge out-of-pocket expenses for the privilege of attending college. This system puts the burden of success onto individual students and increases income inequality by making it much harder for the bottom 99.99% of earners to graduate debt free.

I am of the opinion that at a fundamental level, the core purpose of a college or university should be to empower you to become a sophisticated learner, to engage in [anti-oppressive education](#) via [critical andragogy](#), and to help you learn skills that are directly relevant for the life you want to live. The fact that many colleges do not live up to these responsibilities is a travesty. However, I refuse to wait for colleges to reform to give you the support you deserve. Instead, I want to do with you what our college systems should be doing. I want to help you figure out how to effectively leverage the resources available to you at your college, successfully earn your degree, and to create a foundation for financial security in a career that you love.

In my Conquering College project, I create resources that support you in learning how to navigate your degree at whatever institution you choose while learning the content in your classes at a much higher level than most students do in traditional classrooms. I do this by sharing a set of research-based learning principles that will help you learn how to learn. I work hard to make sure that the principles that I share with you are universal and apply to anyone who has an interest in learning anything.

I also present you with a collection of effective learning practices that have helped hundreds of my students navigate their college experience. Many of my students leverage this work to get better grades with less stress,

to develop deep understanding and master difficult content, to earn scholarship, internships, and to work experience, and create a foundation for a career that they love.

As part of this project, I capture student voices and stories to inspire show what is possible when you use this project to your advantage. This work is designed to help you tap into your [intrinsic motivations](#) and to center the values you hold most dear in your heart. While doing all this, I encourage you to develop [critical consciousness](#) and to identify ineffective policies that inhibit your growth as you work to earn your college degree.

I am very excited to have the opportunity to be in contact with you and to serve you in your education. I feel so blessed that I get to work with powerful and thoughtful students like you. I believe you are smart, strong, and capable. I also believe you can accomplish anything you set your mind to. I encourage the students I coach to build a [blue-collar work ethic](#) while developing white-collar productivity strategies. I want to help you find and strengthen your reasons to work hard in very smart ways to create the type of world you want to live in. When you work hard using effective strategies over long periods of time, you can accomplish your dreams and build a life you are proud of!

In my work as a teacher, I have spent the last 15+ years of my life developing a teaching philosophy that is centrally focused on helping you to liberate your mind and to empower you to live a life you love. I have based my teaching philosophy on research in cognitive science and the psychology of learning as well as scholarship in anti-racism and anti-oppression. I sum my approach to teaching up with a series of five learning objectives that I hope to co-create with you during our time together. I'll have you read those for yourself below. Notice that I write these in the first person so that, as you read, you can think about what these goals mean for you.

Jeff's Hope for Our Learning Objectives

“When I finish my learning journey in college, I will:

1. Belief: Develop deep belief in myself, faith in my abilities to accomplish anything I set my mind to and hope for my future.
2. Purpose: Create and refine a deeply held sense of purpose for my life that reflects the values I cherish and includes my thoughts about myself, the people I love most, my communities, and my society. Moreover, I will be able to draw on this purpose and use multiple sources of intrinsic motivation to give my best effort with both grit and tenacity to overcome any obstacle I face and drive my learning far into the future
3. Meta-Learning Practice strategic deep learning skills so that I can teach myself anything I want to learn at any level, build teams of people around me to support my learning, and manage myself like a professional to successfully navigate my world as I work towards the goals I care most about.
4. Expertise Cultivate and reinforce content expertise and mastery in subjects that I care about that relate to my academic, career, and personal goals, improve my capacity to grow and learn, and help me enjoy freedom in my life.
5. System Transformation Know how to advocate for system transformation so that I can use my hard-earned knowledge, strength, and wisdom to empower future generations, create the world I want to live in, and fight for people in my communities who have the least systemic power.”

Here is access to our first few conquering college assignments.

In honor of these learning objectives, I want to give you advanced access to the first few conquering college assignments and some more advanced assignments that I offer my students. The goal of my conquering college project is to encourage you to develop highly effective learning systems so that you can get any grade in any class with any teacher. Below I share a description of these assignments, some possible due dates for this work, and some coaching on how you might think about these assignments.

Here are a few things to remember as you look at this work:

- A. The more thoughtfully you do this work now, the easier and more powerful your future learning will be.
- B. Do your best to complete this work thoughtfully, slowly, and for yourself. If you do this work well, you can refer to these introductory assignments throughout the quarter and for years to come.
- C. I have been using these assignments for about 2 years. In that time, some students did this work for me (their teacher) rather than for themselves. These students reported that they did the work as quickly as possible and then moved on. In other words, some students did shallow work rather than deep work. As the quarter went on, these students reported feeling regret. They also reported that their goal to minimize effort during the first few weeks of the quarter caused more pain and suffering later in the quarter. I encourage you to learn from their mistakes: take this work as seriously as you can. Do this work for yourself and be as thoughtful as you can to complete this work.

Conquering College Lab 1 - Schedule to Succeed

Assignment 1: [Conquering College Lab 1 – Schedule to Succeed](#)

What is this: The goal of this work is to help you build highly effective time-management and scheduling systems. This first conquering college lab sets the foundation for more advanced conquering college activities where you'll learn how to learn more deeply and stay focused for longer periods of time.

To complete this first conquering college lab, you'll read five blog posts. After you read each blog post, I ask you to complete a reflection activity where you recapitulate what you read and to customize the ideas you read about to your own situation.

How long does this take to finish: My previous students tell me this takes them between 4 - 8 hours to complete this activity. Some of my most motivated, privileged, and hard-working students who push themselves to create learning-systems for long-term growth & success say they spend up to 12 hours on this work. I usually spend between 8 – 12 hours on my own scheduling systems before the start of each quarter.

What is Jeff's Suggested Due Date: I will ask every student in this class to finish this assignment by the start of our second in class meeting at the end of week 1 of this quarter. Once you finish this, please feel free to move on to Conquering College Lab 2. Note: you don't have to wait for me to get started on this work: you can finish as fast as you'd like. But, don't rush. Do this work slowly and deliberately with a focus on setting up your systems for long-term use.

Why is this worth your time: Creating a schedule for success in college STEM classes is not an easy thing to do. Moreover, our college system does not do a good job of coaching you through this process.

I want to help you develop productivity systems that propel your learning and help you accomplish difficult tasks. This Conquering College lab 1 activity helps you create more effective scheduling routines to improve/enhance how you schedule your time and manage your energy. If we are serious about helping you learn deeply, you must manage your time and energy like a professional. Students that do this lab well report feeling less stressed, feeling more in control, having more free time, and getting more sleep. These students also say they learn more deeply and achieve higher outcomes than they did before completing this lab.

This first lab helps you think deeply about your commitments. I also ask you to create scheduling tools that you can use throughout your academic terms including a weekly schedule and term-long calendar. As you create these documents, recognize that I want you to be able to use, edit, update, and return to this work throughout the quarter. This activity is important if we are to unleash your potential.

Conquering College Lab 2 - Prepare for Deep Learning

Assignment 2: [Conquering College Lab 2 – Prepare for Deep Learning](#)

What is this: The goal of this activity is to help you get informed about how learning works and which learning strategies you can use to learn more deeply, wield more control over your academic life, and feel less stressed. If you are serious about getting good grades while learning deeply, you need to develop highly effective and efficient learning strategies while avoiding strategies that lead to shallower learning. This is exactly what we explore in this activity.

To complete this second conquering college lab, you'll read four blog posts. After you read each blog post, I ask you to complete a reflection activity where you recapitulate what you read and to customize the ideas you read about to your own situation.

How long does this take to finish: My previous students tell me this takes between 6 - 12 hours. Some of my most motivated, privileged, and hard-working students who push themselves to create learning-systems for long-term growth/success say they spend up to 16 hours to complete.

What is Jeff's Suggested Due Date: I will ask every student in this class to finish this assignment before the start of our third in-class meeting at the start of week 2 of this quarter. Again: you don't have to wait for me to get started on this work: you can finish as fast as you'd like. But, don't rush. Do this work slowly and deliberately with a focus on setting up your systems for long-term use.

Why is this worth your time: This lab helps you learn how to talk and think about learning. One of the major goals of my work with you is to center authentic conversations about learning without using letter grades. Sadly, most students have never had the chance to think deeply about what learning is, how it works, and what systems they use to learn deeply.

The letter grading system avoids dealing with this problem. Our entire education system uses grades as a tool to ignore our responsibility to explicitly center conversations about how learning works and to help students develop research-based learning techniques. In fact, many college teachers have not studied this stuff deeply. We use grades to motivate students to do work out of the fear of punishment. We use grades to manipulate and control students.

I will no longer conform to that model for human behavior/motivation. Instead, I will provide you with alternative, research-based models for how learning works and what you can do to be a more effective, efficient, and engaged learner. This conquering college lab 2 activity is designed to help you develop vocabulary, ideas, and techniques to learn more deeply, more effectively, and to direct your own learning experiences.

The blog posts for this lab are based on a bunch of books in cognitive science, the psychology of learning, and the science of expertise. [How learning works](#), [Make It Stick](#), [Deep Work](#), [Creating Self-Regulated Learners](#), [The Talent Code](#), [The Little Book of Talent](#), [Peak](#), [Drive](#), [Grit](#), [Ultralearning](#), [Talent is Overrated](#) are some that come to mind. I'm sure if I thought harder, there are more books that influenced me as I wrote those blog posts.

I won't ask you to finish reading those all those books in one academic term. I have worked very hard to write a series of thoughtful blog posts that distill many of the important lessons in those books down into manageable chunks. Now, I ask you to engage with these ideas. This is exactly what lab 2 is all about.

Conquering College Lab 3 - Prepare for Flipped Learning

Assignment 3: [Conquering College Lab 3 Activity – Prepare for Flipped Learning](#)

What is this: Our class will be a flipped learning, ungraded environment. *Flipped learning* means that we will develop the expectation that you do deep learning outside of class and come to our in-class meetings ready to ask questions, teach and learn from your classmates, share your progress with me to get feedback during learning conferences, and do collaborative work to deepen your learning. *Ungrading* means that we will effectively minimize our use of letter grades as tools to guide your learning. In fact, assuming you do your work well on your conquering college and math learning activities, the only time I will worry you with grades is during our final in-class meeting at the end of the academic term when I'll ask you to assign your own grade. If you give me your best effort and can finish your work, I recommend but do not require that you give yourself an A. Given that this type of learning environment is very different from what most students have experienced, Conquering College Lab 3 is designed to help you get ready for our class and to come up with a specific plan to thrive in our class.

How long does this take to finish: My previous students tell me this takes between 6 - 8 hours. Some of my most motivated, privileged, and hard-working students who want to push themselves to create learning-systems for long-term growth/success say they spend up to 12 hours to complete. This lab is due at the start of our fourth in-class meeting.

What is Jeff's Suggested Due Date: I will be asking all students in this class to finish Lab 3 by the start of our fourth in class meeting in week 2 of this quarter. Work on this lab is crucial for helping you figure out what type of work you want to do outside of class during your deep learning time and for planning your in-class collaborative group work. The sooner you finish this lab, the easier time you'll have getting started on the mathematical work we'll do for this quarter.

Why is this worth your time: For many, many reasons, I ask my students to create a portfolio of work that you can use as the foundation for all the learning you in each class you take. In fact, I challenge you to create your own "textbook" for each course you take. To guide your work, I challenge you to create a resource that you can look back on 10 years from now and, when you look back, you should be able to understand your work at a deep level just by looking at it. I want you to create written evidence that documents your journey of building real, meaningful, and deep expertise in our course content. I want you to do this so well that you can look back at many years from now.

This portfolio-based learning process is novel for many students. Lab 3 helps you get your head around how our course works, how I expect you to learn, and what I will be looking for in your work. If lab 2 an overview of the theory behind our work, then lab 3 are the practices that I encourage you to create based on that theory. In other words, this is where you start to put theory into your learning practices.

Conquering College Lab 4 - Create Your Dream Binder

Assignment 4: [Conquering College Lab 4 Activity - Create Your Dream Binder](#)

What is this: This assignment is designed to help you define and refine your vision for the next 5 years of your life. One of the most powerful practices we can use in our work as learners is to cultivate a deep sense of purpose for our work. To do this well, I encourage you to think about the various time horizons you are working towards in college as well as the reasons why you believe your learning matters. This activity helps you do that.

How long does this take to finish: My previous students tell me this takes between 10 - 15 hours. Some of my most motivated, privileged, and hard-working students who push themselves to create learning-systems for long-term growth/success say they spend up to 20 hours over multiple quarters to complete a first draft. The goal is that you create a living document that you can update, edit, and enhance for years to come. Your first draft for this lab is due by the end of finals week.

What is Jeff's Suggested Due Date: I will ask every student in this class to finish this lab by the end of finals week this quarter. The goal is to help you create a dream binder so that you have a vision for the next 5+ years of your career. Remember, the goal of this lab is to help you create a first draft of your academic plan. As you do so, I will coach you to make this draft easy-to-edit so that you can continue to improve this plan for years to come.

Why is this worth your time: When you enroll in college classes and seek a college degree, you are signing up for years of intense struggle. Many students take 4 – 7 years to finish their college degree and another few years to get set up in their first job. This requires an insane amount of hard work, sacrifice, and dedication. When things get hard, it's important to remind yourself why you're doing this work and what your plan is for your future. By creating a dream binder, you create a physical object that can keep you grounded for the tough times ahead and that reminds you what you are fighting for. This can be a huge source of motivation.

Moreover, when you write down your 5-year plan, you can more easily strategize and make wise decisions. If you know you want to get a job at a particular company 10 years from now and you have that idea drafted in your dream binder, you can reverse engineer from that stated goal backwards to plan for internships, classes, and academic opportunities that will strengthen your resume and increase your chances of landing your dream job. Writing down your major goals in a document that is easy-to-see and easy-to-edit empowers you to keep your eye on the end game as you hustle every day.

Conquering College Lab 5: Read Ultralearning to enhance your learning skills

Assignment 5: Read [Ultralearning: Accelerate Your Career, Master Hard Skills, and Outsmart the Competition](#) by [Scott Young](#)

Why is this worth your time: The best learning happens when you direct your own mind to ask and answer your own questions. Many of the lessons that [Scott Young](#) presents in his fantastic book [Ultralearning](#) empower you to take control of your learning and to strategize for long-term career growth. You can use this to become a more effective student and to position yourself to enjoy higher earnings in your future as you build your skills throughout your college degree.

Moreover, when you build your reading systems, you liberate yourself from the confines of the school system. I'll send a different email to help you target your reading systems so that you can read quickly and effectively to grow your learning skills. More to come on that soon.

Note: Reading a book is something to do over many weeks. I encourage you to read 20 – 40 pages per week while working on other material. I also recommend that you get access to this book ASAP. If you're worried about how to afford your own copy, please visit your local library.

How long does this take to finish: This book is 283 pages long which corresponds to 260 pages of content followed by 23 pages of back matter (acknowledgements, index, references). The audiobook for this title is 7 hours and 46 seconds long when played at 1.0 speed. I tend to play my audiobooks at 1.4 speed corresponding to 5 hours and 33 mins for this title. In my own life, I could finish this book in less than a week if I play it during my commute hours (I commute about 6 hours per week). I have had many students finish their first read of this book in less than two weeks during a regular quarter.

What is Jeff's Suggested Due Date: I usually ask my students to finish at least one book each quarter (which correlates to reading 1 book every 12 weeks). Every quarter, I have 10+ students who finish this Ultralearning book before the end of week 8. I also have students who get really excited about the idea of reading for themselves (rather than doing reading that other people force onto you). Below are some records that students in past quarters achieved for the reading they were doing in their “free” time:

Spring 2023: Beck read 15 books in 12 weeks

Winter 2023: Yamm, Leah, David all read more than 3 books in 12 weeks. I also had over 12 students finish at least 2 books during that quarter.

Fall 2022: Nathan read 10 books in 12 weeks

Spring 2022: Ben read 8 books in 12 weeks

Remember, this type of reading is dessert. Your course work is your vegetables. Like anyone who cares about you, I recommend that you eat your veggies before you enjoy dessert. I will give you a bunch of good ideas about how you can learn to read a lot without having to spend a bunch of new time reading. Instead, I'll show you how you can repurpose time you currently have to be able to read a lot. I'll also show you how you can do almost all of this reading for no out-of-pocket cost by using your local libraries. For more about this, please see the blog post below:

<https://jeffandersonmath.wordpress.com/2022/12/13/40-books-to-enhance-and-deepen-your-college-education/>

Introduction to Some Advanced Assignments

Below I provide several advanced assignments for students who have already completed Conquering College Labs 1 – 4 and finished their first read of the book *Ultralearning*. If you have not yet finished that work, I recommend that you do so *BEFORE* you begin your work on these more advanced assignments. Learning how to thrive in school while also engaging in self-directed learning to set a foundation for a career that you love is a process, like getting into good physical shape. If you're new to this type of process, I encourage you to start with the basics in Conquering College Labs 1 – 5. Once you've done your first pass through that work, then I invite you to level up with the more advanced learning skills that I highlight below.

Of course, I do expect every student to finish some version of Conquering College Lab 1 every single quarter you take classes. Moreover, I hope you continue to improve your scheduling, time-management, and productivity systems for years into the future through active self-reflection and by incorporating new ideas, skills, and techniques into your practice. Perhaps the most important skill for learning how to thrive in college and create a foundation for a career you love involves proactively managing how you spend your energy. As you complete Conquering College Lab 1 each academic term, my hope is you will learn to be very strategic and effective in allocating your energy towards the projects you care about most. One of my favorite pieces of career advice goes like this: "In life, there are always going to be things that you must do that you do not enjoy. The key to a meaningful career is to position yourself so that as you grow, you spend more and more of your time doing the things you love to do and less of your time on the things that you dislike."

Advanced Assignment 1: Develop reading systems to enhance your learning.

Assignment: Build your reading systems by doing each of the following:

- Read Jeff's Blog Post: [What is deep reading?](#)
- Watch Jeff's YouTube video: [Develop your deep reading systems \(37min, 07sec\)](#)
- Read Jeff's Blog: [40+ books to enhance and deepen your college education](#)
- Create a first draft of you answers to these [Key Questions to Build Reading Systems](#)

After you read those blog posts, watch the YouTube video, and draft your answers to those [key questions](#), begin reading the next title on your list. Set a stretch goal for your reading this quarter by pushing yourself towards a challenging but achievable reading goal. For example:

- If you've never completed an entire non-fiction book targeting your learning skills, then set a goal to finish your first exploratory read of one book this quarter.
- If you finished exploratory reading one book last quarter, try to finish exploratory reading two books this quarter. Or, perhaps exploratory read one book and filter read another one.

Here are some rules Jeff uses that you might find helpful in your work:

- I am not allowed to start exploratory reading my next book until I finish my current book.
- I am not allowed to deep read more than two books per year. Deep reading is a very intense process and, if I am doing it correctly, I will not have the bandwidth to deep read more than two books per year.
- The best deep reading happens over many years so it's ok if it takes me many years to finish deep reading a single book.

The major goal of this assignment is to help you improve you learning skills outside of your normal course work. For more about meta-learning, see Jeff's model for [the 10 categories and 4 parts of learning](#).

Advanced Assignment 2: Learn to Dominate In-Class, Timed Exams

Assignment: Jeff will not use high-stakes, timed, in-class exams as a vehicle to collect evidence of your learning or to give you feedback on your work. Instead, as highlighted in Conquering College Labs 2 – 3, you will share your learning progress with Jeff via your learning portfolio process and you will get feedback on your work from Jeff during the in-class learning conference process.

However, just because Jeff refuses to do harm to your learning by using high-stakes, in-class exams doesn't mean you are free from this type of suffering. As you are probably aware, many college STEM teachers cling to the practice of using timed, in-class assessments. The good news is that, given the right type of coaching, you can learn to dominate high-stakes, timed exams.

Below are several resources you can use to consistently achieve high marks (above 93%) on high-stakes, timed exams in STEM classes with less stress, more control, and more confidence.

- [Study Skills Activity 4: How to Organize your Course Binder](#)
- [Study Skills Activity 5: How to Utilize Suggested Problems](#)
- [Study Skills Activity 6: How to Prepare for a Math Exam](#)
- [Study Skills Activity 7: How to Manage Yourself Before an Exam](#)
- [Study Skills Activity 8: How to Thrive on In-Class Exams](#)
- [How to Make the Most of Office Hours](#)
- [Deciding Who to Ask for a Letter of Recommendation](#)
- Read the book [How to Solve It](#) by [George Pulya](#)
- Practice your How to Solve It Skills using [Calculus: Early Transcendentals \(9E, 2021\)](#) by [James Stewart](#) et al. (Focus on Problem Plus sections at end of each chapter for good problem solving practice)

Notice that none of the activities are covered in the conquering college labs 1 – 4.

For those of you who are interested in creating a systemic approach to organizing your course materials and thriving on in-class exams (especially in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics courses), I encourage you to read through these activities in the order that I provide above (start with Study Skills activity 4 and work your way down).

Before you do this, I highly recommend you finish Conquering College Labs 1 – 5 and then moving onto these more advanced activities. Learning to thrive on in-class exams in ways that set you up for significant learning for your future requires an ability to differentiate between deep and shallow learning. It is possible to dominate in-class exams while doing shallow learning. However, if you're not careful, this myopic approach will come back to haunt you in the future. I have seen many students who get straight As in classes, graduate college, and have no useful skills or job prospects. In-class exams are tools of domination and control that do not lead to the types of learning that matter most to you in your life.

By focusing on Conquering College Labs 1 – 5 before you engage in the exam training in this advanced assignment, you'll be sure to focus your energy on building skills for your future as you learn to dominate in-class exams (thus avoiding the trap of learning to get straight As while doing nothing useful for your future).

Advanced Assignment 3: Get Paid to Learn

Assignment: Build your scholarship, internship, and work-study systems so that you earn money to do the type(s) of learning you want to do to launch your career. Below are some resources you can use to get started:

- Read Jeff's Blog Post: [Introduction to the Get Paid to Learn project](#)
- Read Jeff's Blog Post: [Get Paid to Learn: Advocate for Change](#)
- Read Jeff's Blog Post: [Get Paid to Learn: Six Practices to Earn Scholarships](#)
- Read Jeff's Blog Post: [Get Paid to Learn: Essential Check Lists to Earn Scholarship Money](#)
- Complete every item in [this essential check list](#) including:
 - Read the book: [The Scholarship System](#) by Jocelyn Paonita
 - Read the book: [How to Write Winning Scholarship Essays](#) by Gen and Kelly Tanabe
 - Read the book: [The Ultimate Scholarship Book 2024](#) by Gen and Kelly Tanabe (or find the most recent version and read that one)

After you finish your work on Conquering College labs 1 – 5, I have more gifts to share. Specifically, my Get Paid to Learn project is designed to help you learn how to minimize your student debt, quit your day job so you can be a full-time student, and to get paid for the time you spend in school.

During my education, I learned how to make enough money via Scholarships, Internships, and Paid work study to avoid debt and get paid to learn as I set up for the next steps in my career. In the 10 years I spent in my undergraduate and graduate education, I estimate that I made over \$250K. I graduated debt free with my BS, MA, and PhD in Mathematics. I traveled to Japan to learn Japanese for no out-of-pocket cost and launched my career during this time.

I don't tell you this because I'm special. I'm not. You are smarter, cooler, more powerful, stronger, and more capable than I am. I tell you this because I believe that anything I can do, you can do better. Over the last 6 years, I have helped many students make thousands of dollars each in scholarship money. Some of the students who have taken this work most seriously have made over \$50K since I started coaching them. I'll share more about their stories during our in-class work.

Note: Every day you give me the privilege of spending time by your side, I work hard to earn your trust. Assuming I can earn your trust and become part of your learning team (which I want to do), I ask you to complete the conquering college work first. For hard working and dedicated students, this usually takes about 1 quarter. After I see that you've thought very deeply about your Conquering College skills that I'm trying to help you learn in conquering college, then I am willing to speak with you deeply about the lessons I impart in the Get Paid to Learn project. In other words, if you want to learn how to make thousands, maybe tens of thousands, of dollars and graduate debt free, then I ask you to take Conquering College very seriously and do that work slowly and deliberately. The skills you build in the Conquering College process form the foundation upon which more advanced system navigation skills can be built.

Advanced Assignment 4: The Three Resume Trick

More on this later. For now, read [Designing Your Life: How to Build a Well-Lived Joyful Life](#) by [Bill Burnett and Dave Evans](#)

Advanced Assignment 5: Conduct Your First Informational Interview(s)

More on this later. For now, read [Informational Interview Handbook: Essential Strategies To Find The Right Career & A Great New Job](#) by Jeff Neil