Module 2 Part 1 – College Goal Setting

Introduction

Objective: By the end of this activity you should have set at least 4 goals for college.

This lesson is designed to bring attention to establishing clear goals along with concrete steps to accomplish those goals. Without goals it is easy for students to get lost in the sea of opportunities that college offers. Working through this lesson will enable you and your parents to establish expectations for communication with one another when you are in college. Students, you should be honest with your parents in discussing your actual college goals, and parents, be prepared to accept what your student tells you. As you work through setting goals together you will have an opportunity to talk through things and come to some consensus about these goals.

Estimated time needed: 30-40 minutes

Materials included:
- Goal-Setting Worksheet
- Sample Completed Goal-Setting Worksheet

*Please click the text above to view the video*
Learn About It

Wish you had a crystal ball to see what is to come in the future? Don’t we all!

Many high school students (and college students, too!) find goal-setting to be a very daunting task. They may not know yet what they want to do with their lives, and they may think that only people who already know “what they want to be when they grow up” can set clear goals.

But…. Nobody expects students to know these things yet!

However, even though students may not have a clear view into the future, that doesn’t mean that they can’t set specific goals. In fact, setting tangible goals may be one of the things that will help them most with academic and personal development during college.

- If you have a pretty clear picture of where you are headed in life, you can skip this step and go directly to the goal setting section.
- If not try this next section of pre-goal setting activities to get ideas about what kind of goals you want to set.

Parents Chime in

- If family members have attended college, share some of the goals that you set or wish you had set. Explain how you arrived at that goal or why you wish you had set that goal.
- Talk about goals that your child may have set in the past (long term assignments, senior project, making a team, fitness or weight loss, goals related to hobbies or interests).
- Talk about your thoughts related to setting good goals (based on your student’s abilities, interests, needs, and desires – goals that are specific and measurable, firm but flexible).
- Emphasize that in order to achieve goals a plan or steps for completion need to be done. This will be completed in another lesson.
- Set some family goals for the next few weeks/months, and practice tracking progress toward these goals.
Pre-Goal Setting

For many high school and college students, the “mental picture” they have of their future is still fuzzy. They don’t necessarily have concrete ideas about what they want their life to look like in the long term. This is not at all unusual, and students, you need not worry if you’re unsure about future plans. In fact, even students who do have specific ideas about their goals at this point in life often end up changing or at least revising those goals anyway.

Lacking clear picture of your aims in life is not a reason to avoid goal-setting. In fact, it opens up your options because you can explore many different possibilities and base goals on a better understanding of yourselves, instead of on a pre-defined assumption.

Choose one of the activities described below. These activities are not directly about setting goals, but are instead focused on thinking purposefully about yourself in order to gain insight that will help lay a foundation that can be used later to set more concrete goals.

• What qualities do you like most about yourself? What qualities would you like to improve?
• What qualities do you admire in others? (i.e., qualities you see in specific people, and/or those you admire in general)
• Identify your top 5 values. What is most important to you? Why?
• What are you good at? (strengths) What is difficult for you? (challenges)
• Identify things you strongly like and dislike (e.g., places, activities, classes, foods, events, people, etc.) Why do you like/dislike these?
• Imagine that you’re a superhero. What would your superpower be? What would your “kryptonite” (vulnerability) be?
• Picture yourself 5 years from today and consider where you would like to be, who you would like to be with, and what you would like to be doing. Then ask the same questions for 10, 20, and even 50 years down the road.
• Imagine that you have just passed away at the age of 100, and someone close to you is about to give the eulogy at your memorial service. What do you most want them to say about you?

Parents Chime in

If your student needs additional guidance to understand how these activities relate to setting goals talk through some specific examples, such as:

• If a student indicates that one of the qualities they would like to work on is becoming organized, help them discover that an appropriate goal might be to start using a daily planner to keep track of dates.

• If a student indicates that in 20 years they would like to be the CEO of their own company, guide them to create a goal of shadowing a business professional for a day during their first year of college or declaring a business major.

• If a student says that one of their top 5 values is service to others, talk about ways they could set a goal of volunteering for a specific organization for a certain number of hours each month.

Feel free to bring in additional examples from your family’s experiences.
**Parents Chime In**

- Have your student complete at least one of the pre-goal setting activities mentioned above.
- Using the Goal-Setting worksheet, brainstorm with your student to complete the strengths and challenges portion.
- Ask your student to tell you what they see for themselves when they think about college. Remind them to talk straight with you, not to just tell you what they think you want to hear (and be prepared to accept and work with what they say).
- Work with your student to complete the first column of the Goal-Setting worksheet listing at least one goal in each strand. You can also complete the first column with their goals for your child. This is your opportunity to help your student think of goals that he/she may not consider. Goals should be listed for the first year of college. After you and your child have listed goals in each area discuss why each of you listed the goals and decide whether the goals are specific, realistic, and reasonable. Decide with your student which goals from each of your lists that he/she would like to keep, combine or revise.
- You can also set 2-3 family goals to be completed before your child begins college. These could be recreation/leisure goals, fitness goals, daily living goals, academic goals, project goals (e.g., take a family vacation, develop a family fitness plan, try one new recipe each week, take a continuing education class at the local community college together, complete a home/garden project together, etc.). In addition to practicing goal setting, these can be a great opportunity to spend time together before your student begins college.

### Goal-Setting Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Goal(s)</th>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Goals</td>
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<td>Health and Wellness Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Living Goals</td>
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</tbody>
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**My Strengths**

**My Challenges**
Why set Goals in College?

You may feel that you have made it this far in life without ever really setting concrete goals. Although this may work in high school, college is a different situation. It is much more important for college students to set goals for the following reasons:

- **College students have a great deal more time on their hands and freedom to decide how to spend it than high school students.** Without having goals and a plan of action to accomplish those goals, it is very easy to waste time and end up not accomplishing much.
- **College campuses have an overwhelming number of opportunities and options.** Without goals to focus their attention, students can easily get lost and become overcommitted or completely overwhelmed. Goals help students focus their energies into the opportunities that are most productive and enjoyable for them.
- **College academic requirements are difficult and demanding.** In order to complete the academic requirements to earn a college degree, students must consistently and deliberately set goals. College classes are difficult and require much more commitment than high school classes. Without clear goals, most students will not succeed academically.

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See some sample college student goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Academic Goals</th>
<th>Social Goals</th>
<th>Health and Wellness Goals</th>
<th>Daily Living Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Create a “big picture” of class expectations at the beginning of the school year. - Make a weekly study schedule. - Find and use tutoring services for classes that are in my area of challenge.</td>
<td>- Plug in to campus opportunities and explore organizations on campus. - Explore campus intramural (e.g., volleyball).</td>
<td>- Find out about campus intramural (e.g., volleyball). - Build exercise into daily schedule at least 5 days each week.</td>
<td>- Learn location of all classes in fall schedule. - Learn bus routes that apply to my classes and schedule.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Create a “master syllabus” in my planner by the end of the first week of classes. - Weekly self-evaluate how closely study schedule was followed. Follow up with email to parents for accountability until at least 90% accuracy with following the schedule is reached for 30 days. - Visit the math tutoring center to learn how to use this resource. - Take my first English paper to the English tutoring center to receive feedback prior to submitting it to the instructor.</td>
<td>- Check to see if the campus supports a student organization relevant to my intended major. If so, find the meeting schedule for the upcoming semester. If the schedule is not posted, find the name of the contact person (usually the president or secretary of the organization) and send an email to inquire about the date of the first meeting and express an interest in attending. - Attend at least one campus organization prior to first semester midterms. - Check out volleyball intramural schedule and decide whether to participate during the first semester.</td>
<td>- Check out volleyball intramural schedule and decide whether to participate during the first semester. - Begin following daily exercise routine in the first week of school to establish a habit.</td>
<td>- Walk through schedule before the first day of classes. - Ride through bus route before the first day of classes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My Challenges</td>
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<td>I am skilled in social situations and make friends easily. I enjoy English and history in school. I learn best by listening and I can remember things for a long time once I’ve memorized them. I enjoy playing sports, most specifically volleyball. Academically, writing and reading comprehension are areas of strength.</td>
<td>Math, science, and foreign language are the biggest learning challenges for me. Additionally, organization is difficult, and I tend to procrastinate on school work. Although my strengths in working/organizing with others are helpful, when I spend too much time on these things, I don’t get my own work completed.</td>
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Goal Setting Worksheet

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<td>School website, math department office</td>
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<td>- Walk through schedule before the first day of classes. - Ride through bus route before the first day of classes.</td>
<td>School website, student organization office/student life</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>School website, school recreation facility</td>
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See some sample college student goals
**Good Goals Are....**

Some students perceive a great deal of pressure to set lofty goals that they think will impress other people. It may be helpful to note that in this context, “good” means that the goal meets the criteria below and is appropriate for you as a college student. There’s no value judgment...at this point a goal of “cure cancer” is not necessarily a better goal than “make a B on my next math test.”

- Realistic based on your abilities, interests, needs, and desires
- Specific and measurable
- Firm, but still flexible

Goals do not simply materialize out of thin air. Good goals are based on who you are and what you need and want. Ex: If the Cookie Monster from Sesame Street sets a goal to become a nutritionist, this is not a realistic goal because the requirements are completely opposite of his strengths and wants. A better goal for him would be one that is based on his love of cookies...become a pastry chef or own a bakery.

Goals can be set based on outcomes or processes:

- Be as specific as possible. “Do well in school” is not a clear goal. “Earn at least 85% on all my math tests this semester” is both specific and measurable. This goal is set based on a specific outcome. Remember, if there is no way to measure a goal, you will not know for sure whether you have achieved it.
- You can also set goals that are focused on a process (i.e., study language flashcards for one hour tonight). Both outcome and process goals are beneficial; students may use either or both, as long as they meet the other criteria.

Once goals are set, you should certainly stick to them, but also recognize when a goal needs to be modified or changed. Don’t give up on goals each time you encounter obstacles along the way – but goals should be firm enough that they can withstand challenges and changes in your priorities and plans for the future.
Categories of Goals:

There may be some overlap between categories – just use your best judgment to classify them. For example:

- Employment goals – getting a job could go under academic (if it’s an internship or closely related to their career goals) or daily living (if it’s just a “pay the bills” kind of job)
- Goals about joining or participating in groups – these could fall under academic (joining a professional group for your major), social (skydiving club), or health/wellness (a religious organization)

Don’t get too caught up in which category the goals fall under, as long as you have goals in each category. If you have difficulty thinking of goals in each category, click on that category in the pie chart and see some prompts to get you thinking.

Parents Chime in for ideas and prompts to help your student brainstorm goals for each category

**Academic Goals - Areas to Consider**

- Getting started academically on campus (e.g., locating and getting familiar with supports, goals that will be most pertinent at the beginning of college)
- Academic campus resources (e.g., finding and utilizing resources such as disability supports, tutoring, etc.)
- Time management and organization (e.g., allocating adequate time for studying, keeping up with syllabi, etc.)
- Communication with faculty members (e.g., writing professional emails, talking to professors, finding out office hours, etc.)
- Academic collaboration with peers (e.g., forming study groups, finding note-takers, working in group projects, etc.)
- Assistive technology resources (e.g., finding and utilizing resources such as smart pen, speech-to-text software, audio books, etc.)
- Study skills, habits, and strategies (e.g., learning and using strategies for reading/test-taking/etc., establishing a study schedule, etc.)
- Self-advocacy (e.g., accessing academic supports proactively, taking initiative to speak to professors/DSS, etc.)

**Social Goals Areas to Consider**

- Getting started socially on campus (e.g., locating and getting familiar with social events/supports/etc., goals that will be most pertinent at the beginning of college)
- Social campus resources (e.g., finding and utilizing social groups, organizations, events, connections, etc.)
- Connecting & communicating with peers (e.g., meeting new people, making friends, staying in touch with old friends, etc.)
- Communication with family (e.g., staying connected with family members, etc.)
- Hobbies and interests (e.g., anything related to personal interests and hobbies that students may want to continue doing or new things they’d like to try)
- Time management (e.g., balancing social pursuits with academics, budgeting time for social events in addition to academics, etc.)
Goal Setting Worksheet

It’s not enough to brainstorm and talk about goals. In order to make them concrete and look back at them periodically, let’s write them down. Use the attached Goal Worksheet to list the goals you brainstormed in each category. For now, just fill in the “goals” column (on the left). We will get to the rest in a later lesson.

Remember, set goals for yourself that are specific to what you want to accomplish during your first year of college.

Have you Accomplished Today’s Objective?

Objective: By the end of this activity you should have set at least 4 goals for college.
If so, congratulations! If not, try to go back and ensure you have at least one goal in each category. Use the examples we provided for ideas.
For more information...Digging Deeper:

- Visit http://www.cfnc.org/index.jsp and set up an account. There are many helpful tools on the site to help with planning for college. Have your child complete an interest and abilities profiler to help find out what your child’s strengths and challenges are.
- Visit https://caseylifeskills.secure.force.com/clsa_homepage and set up an account. Have your child complete the “Education: Postsecondary or Training Assessment”.
- Watch the Hear It From Our Students videos that are available at http://dso.dasa.ncsu.edu/hear-it-our-students.
- Another great place for hearing advice directly from college students is http://students.collegestar.org/.