Common challenges students face in college: SC4 Solutions

While time spent at college is a fond memory and a happy experience for most, student life is not without its rough patches. Consider some of the common challenges below that most students face.

1. Time Management

Problem: College is academically challenging. For many, college courses require much more effort than high school classes did. Many students take a full 15-credit semester, while others try to cram in up to 18 or even 21 credits. At times, it may seem nearly impossible to cover it all in the time allotted.

Solution: Know your limits. If you can't handle 15 credits in one semester, it is worth it, in the long run, to slow down and take 12. A student is considered to be full-time when they take 12 credits per semester at St. Clair County Community College. While the purpose of a college education is to learn as much as you can, that doesn't mean studying all the time. It is important to schedule time for fun and to take breaks to keep your mind fresh and clear. For more ways to manage this kind of academic stress, contact **Student Wellness** at (**810) 989-5552** to learn how to better manage your time and schedule. You can also email studentwellness@sc4.edu for more information or to schedule an appointment.

2. Debt

Problem: Tuition costs are rising at alarmingly high rates. Add to that the cost of housing, meals, supplies, transportation, and textbooks, and you have a recipe for unmanageable debt. Most financial advisors recommend borrowing no more than one expects to earn during their first year out of college. However, soaring tuition costs make this rule difficult to follow. Attending St. Clair County Community College is typically only 25% to 30% of the full cost of attending a university in the first two years.

Solution: Student loans are relatively easy to get. Many students, however, don't know how repayment works and how many years they may spend paying off their loans. This lack of understanding only adds to the stress. An important part of your education is educating yourself about the structure of the loans you take on to pay for that education. Sit down with a financial aid advisor to get a firm grasp on the debt you're taking on. You can also visit sc4.edu/money to apply for various forms of financial aid including grants and scholarships that do not need to be repaid in many instances. Contact **Financial Aid** at (**810) 989-5530** for more information or to schedule an appointment or financialaid@sc4.edu.

Also, consider an on-campus job. Working on-campus will cut out potential transportation expenses and help you stay more focused academically. If you had a job in high school and are going to college locally, see if you can continue working while in school. Additionally, create a budget for shopping trips, college supplies, eating out, entertainment, gas, utilities, car payments, rent, etc., and above all - stick to it!

3. Spreading Yourself Too Thin

Problem: To afford the high price of college tuition, many students must get jobs. Juggling a job, athletics, 12 to 15 credits, relationships, and extracurricular activities is extremely difficult. Many students try to cram all activities into one day and do not get enough sleep. Without proper rest, students are vulnerable to physical and mental health problems. Just like an automobile needs a full tank of gas to keep going, so too a student needs adequate rest and healthy nutrition to keep functioning successfully at college.

Solution: Decide what is important. Prioritize and schedule events, games, meetings, social events, and studies accordingly. Also, be aware of your options when getting a job. Colleges often offer jobs that fit into a student's schedule. Contact the **Work-Study Program** at (**810) 989-5530** for more information.

4. Anxiety and Depression

Problem: Every problem on this list can raise a student's stress level and contribute to emotional lows. Some find temporary relief in partying which, in excess and in the long run, may contribute to depression. In the United States, 20% of all people will be diagnosed with anxiety at least one time in their lives, while 10% of all people will experience an episode of depression. With this being the case, at least 30% of the U.S. population at one time or another experience anxiety and/or depression at some time in their lifetimes. Significant changes like being away from home, having high expectations for academics, relationship/social issues, etc. can all contribute to anxiety and depression.

Solution: If anxiety and depression are an issue, seek professional support. St. Clair County Community College offers community support and referral services for students in need. The Director of Behavioral Intervention is here to assist students with getting back on track. Anxiety and depression are common problems faced by college students across the country. Contact **Student Wellness at (810) 989-5552** or studentwellness@sc4.edu for more information and supportive services.

5. Relationships

Problem: Relationships are good, but they can be overwhelming. Sometimes they take a lot of time and can begin to encroach on your education. There are times in every relationship when friends or a couple will have a disagreement which can distract us from schoolwork and add to stress levels. Friendship troubles and break-ups can drive some students into depression. Some students feel totally disconnected from others. Consider joining a student club and becoming a part of fun-filled and educational student activities on campus. For more information about student clubs and fun on campus contact the **Coordinator of Student Activities at** sartman@sc4.edu or (**810) 989-5560**.

Solution: Relationship advice is hard to give since the solution varies on a case-by-case basis. Establish a clear communication of your needs and expectations from the outset. If you do have troubles with a friend or experience a break-up, consult with a trusted friend, your advisor, or a member of the BEST team to work through the experience. Also, if you're feeling isolated and alone, then seek out others by joining a student club, exercising in the SC4 Fieldhouse, or attending an art, music, or theater event. The goal is to get connected with others, work through your differences, and move forward.

6. Choosing an Academic Plan/Degree and Career Path

Problem: There is a lot of pressure to choose an academic plan/degree and career pathway. It is easy to think that your academic plan/degree and career choice need to be made today! The correct and final decision feels hugely important and can be very stressful. Some students feel immobilized here.

Solution: College academic/degree planning and selecting a career direction are both important, however, try not to overwhelm yourself by choosing these paths immediately. If you are unsure about what career path to follow, consider selecting something broad, begin by taking courses to complete MTA or think broadly about taking classes in health care or business. Focus on gaining knowledge and life skills. Go to sc4.edu/careercoach and take a self-assessment and explore careers related to your interest areas. For more information, contact advising@sc4.edu (Updated May 2022).