“How can I be successful in a college course?” This is perhaps the most important practical question you can ask yourself at this point in your life. Whether you have just finished secondary school, or whether you are returning to education after a lengthy period, it is important for you to recognize that your success in higher education depends entirely on you. Higher education is not like secondary school. You are NOT required to attend college, and you are not required to succeed. You are here because you have chosen to be. You will be successful in college if, and only if, you CHOOSE to be. However, desiring to be successful will not guarantee your success. YOU MUST ACT IN YOUR OWN SELF-INTEREST. The following are some helpful suggestions on what you should be doing if you wish to be successful.

1. Read and understand your course syllabus. Your syllabus is a learning contract and it should spell out all the requirements for the course you have enrolled in. All MCC faculty are required to provide you with a syllabus that spells out the learning objectives for the course, the method of assessment for the course (i.e., how you will be graded), and any and all class policies that are required for your successful completion of the course (these are policies that go beyond the standard policies articulated in the Student Handbook which are common to all MCC courses). It is YOUR responsibility to know and understand the content of your course syllabus.

2. Attend all scheduled class meetings. Your success in a particular class is strongly correlated with your attendance. The more you attend, the more likely you are to succeed.

3. Read all assigned materials. Unlike secondary school, higher education requires students to be become independent learners. It is YOUR responsibility to read and understand ALL assigned material whether or not it is discussed in class. Just because something is not discussed in class does not mean it is not important or that you will not be evaluated on that material. You are responsible for completing all the assigned reading in your class.

4. Observe all due-dates. Complete all outside-class assignments and projects prior to their due date. The due date of an assignment is the time at which you are required to submit your work for evaluation by your professor. It is NOT the time to turn in a first draft or a cursory reading, or an incomplete project or worksheet.
5. **Be prepared for class.** It is expected that you will spend two (2) hours outside of class preparing for each one (1) hour you spend in class. Obviously the amount of time required to prepare for a particular class may vary based on subject matter and your abilities. However, it is the general expectation in higher education that you are adequately prepared for all classes. Thus, if you are enrolled in four three credit-hour courses (a twelve credit-hour load), you should expect to spend a minimum of twenty-four hours *outside* of class, preparing *for* class. Your total weekly time budget should therefore include thirty-six hours per week *dedicated solely to your education*. The degree of your success in college is directly correlated to the time you spend on your education both inside and outside the classroom. Do not take more courses than you your time budget will allow. If you spend more money than you make, you will be in debt. If you attempt to take more classes than you have time for, you will not succeed.

6. **ASK QUESTIONS!** In college you are expected to share responsibility for your learning. Your professor is supposed to be an expert in the content of their field. They are there to guide you in your learning. But your professor cannot learn for you. If you do not understand something in your reading, ask for it to be explained. If you do not understand something in the lecture, ask for it to be explained. Professors are content experts, not psychics. If you don’t ask a question, they will likely assume you understand what is being read or discussed.

7. **Take advantage of office hours.** Your professor is required to provide academic support hours to support you. If you are having difficulty understanding your reading, if you are having difficulty with assignments, quizzes, exams, papers or projects, go to your professor’s office hours and ASK FOR HELP. Your professor cannot help you if you do not ask for assistance.

8. **Do not multi-task while studying.** It is common for all of us to multi-task in our lives. We have cell phones, Facebook, Twitter, email, iPods, TV and an endless list of other distractions constantly calling upon our attention. These are great tools and you should use them. But, the more things you attempt to do at once, the less accurate you will be at each task. I know you *think* you can multi-task well; but you are wrong! Our brains did not evolve to multi-task and we are becoming aware of the limitations of our cognitive abilities as we invent new and more complex tools. Do not experiment with your time, money, and education. When you study you need to be focused. Follow these rules for success when you study.

*Do not* interrupt your reading/studying to:

- Answer the phone or text,
- Check Facebook,
- Instant message,
Do not have the Television/radio/iPod playing when you are reading/studying. If you must have some background sound, use music (at a low volume) that does NOT have lyrics. Classical, jazz, even techno can provide background noise that allows your brain to focus on complex tasks like reading and problem solving. Lyrics are the key. Your brain is wired to pay attention to language. This priority has evolved over millions of years and it has not changed with the advent of micro-computing (though it is certainly probable that we will continue to evolve and our descendents may have abilities we do not). When there is language in the background, it WILL lower your level of concentration and limit your ability to solve problems, read complex material, and perform difficult tasks.

Following these guidelines will not ensure that you will succeed in college, but they will help! Do yourself a favor, take this information to heart and follow these suggestions.