

**Welcome to C.O.L.L.E.G.E.**  
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[ updated: Friday, July 9, 2010 ]

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**Course:**        *UNIV 100*  
**Title:**         *Freshman Seminar (3 units)*

“Never regard study as a duty, but as the enviable opportunity to learn to know the liberating influence of beauty in the realm of the spirit for your own personal joy and to the profit of the community to which your later work belongs.”

---*Albert Einstein (1879-1955)*

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to enumerate how one professor, Wayne Smith, might use “COLLEGE” as an acronym to help new students understand the role of the University in the life of a student. Naturally, there is no single viewpoint on this subject.

## **C - Choices**

My hunch is that college is more about the choices you make—psychological, social, economic, political, technological, etc—than anything else. And even a small choice can have large consequences. You can either learn this the “easy way” *during* College, or the “hard way” *after* College.

## **O - Opportunities**

College can be thought of as a set of opportunities. Just the “list of events” at a large, urban University is overwhelming. The most important aspect of opportunities is to prepare yourself for them—you keep your “butterfly net” open at all times. Of course, the best opportunities are often the ones where the precise value or outcomes is not known in advance. Choose the opportunities that you have based chiefly upon your intellectual passions.

## **L –Learning**

Learning is not teaching and vice-versa. A student crafts her or his learning. Instructors at college differ markedly from instructors in high school. In college, instructors are more like “guides”, at least they appear that way through each year of college. Your task is to learn how to learn. Many staff and faculty on campus can help, but in the end, students define, describe, and defend their own learning to themselves and to others.

## **L –Love**

I think each student should fall in love at the University. Not with an individual or an event, but with at least one substantive idea. There should be an idea that you have known for some time is *right*, but you just never had seen the evidence or understood the analysis. Also, there should be an idea that you have known for some time is *wrong*, but you just never had the opportunity to collect evidence or perform an analysis. Each type of idea needs someone to fall in love with it. And you will be a different individual once you do.

## **E - Energy**

Of course, energy is important and that includes physical energy such as health and wellness. But students also need to attend to their emotional or cognitive energy. You need to get enough sleep each night so that ideas from working memory can be “consolidated” (“transferred”) into long-term memory. You need to deliberately make decisions to persist and persevere in very trying situations, such as “crunch time” for finals. Your success in college is directly tied to both your overall energy level and your ability to control the direction and magnitude of your energy changes.

## **G - Groups**

Groups (or rather, “teams”) are a funny thing. Students often dislike them. But here is the thing—humans *only* learn through feedback. So the most valuable role that play in a group is to learn to listen. You listen for feedback, in all of its dimensions. And you take that feedback, and improve on the next task, activity, or assignment. And part of what you get with good feedback is that you get better at giving good feedback (“constructive criticism”), again, in all of its dimensions. Both of the cycles interact, often in subtle ways. When done correctly, group work will accelerate learning for both curricular and extra-curricular activities.

## **E - Engage**

CSU Northridge, like many other higher education institutions, values community service and leadership roles. One of the reasons for this is that “activities” matter at least as much as “grades.” A student can only learn so much about leadership from the theory of theory in a class; the motivated student will leverage that in-class theory with out-of-class practice. And the practice needs to be gained before it’s needed. Of course, just understanding that last sentence is a leadership issue in itself.

Engage with your on-campus and off-campus community. Or else your in-class learning with fade rapidly.