



The Power of Focus for College Students: How to Make College the Best Investment of Your Life

By *Les Hewitt, Andrew Hewitt, Luc d'Abadie*

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Les Hewitt is one of North America's top business coaches and creator of the international bestselling series, *The Power of Focus*.

Andrew Hewitt is a college graduate and a professional speaker who has developed a unique approach to college education. This led to nationwide recognition and paved the way for him to become successful speakers on the college circuit. You can learn more about him and his co-author Luc d'Abadie at www.focusedstudent.com.

Luc d'Abadie travels the world alongside his business partner Andrew Hewitt, in their mission in helping students discover and reacher the full potential. He has been featured in Chicago Tribune, Denver Post, Calgary Herald, and Canadian Business Magazines, as well as countless other publications and magazines across North America. He is the co-instructor of the Trump University Audio Business Course, **Start Right! How to Launch a Great Career**. Visit his website www.focusedstudent.com.

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FOCUSING STRATEGY #1

Making College Count in the 21st Century

A lot of fellows nowadays have a B.A., M.B.A., or Ph.D. Unfortunately, they don't have a J.O.B.

?Fats Domino

Let's tell it like it is. You can either go through the motions of college and end up with a degree, or you can maximize your college experience and end up with an abundance of cool career opportunities doing something you will love. The reality is, most students just go through the motions, defaulting into one of three postgraduate scenarios. The following are real-life examples.

NAME: Teresa Martin SCHOOL: University of Texas, Austin

DEGREE: Psychology DEBT: \$0

STATUS: Working at a local sports bar in Austin and still living at home. Has been working part-time since her junior year, and this evolved into a full-time position after graduation seven months ago. Under pressure from her parents, she is considering going back to school to study law.

FRUSTRATION: Although Teresa doesn't mind working at the bar, it isn't where she pictured herself ending up. Her parents, after paying the big tuition bills at a reputable college, are naturally disappointed. They wish she was applying her degree, pursuing a more attractive career and living independently.

Constant pressure from her parents is driving Teresa up the wall. She simply doesn't know what career she wants to pursue and is struggling to find a way to apply her degree. She wishes she had put more thought into this and explored her options in greater depth while in college. Applications are due for law school in a few months, but she is paralyzed with indecision.

NAME: Taylor Smith SCHOOL: New York University

DEGREE: Finance DEBT: \$67,000

STATUS: Working as a securities analyst for a large bank in New York. With a serious girlfriend and 18 months in a stable career, he is well-settled into postcollege life.

FRUSTRATION: Although successful in the eyes of his friends and family, Taylor has great disdain for the career path he chose.

Long hours and routine work are wearing him down, leaving him with little energy for himself and his girlfriend. He now realizes that the image of the finance field he carried through school was candy-coated by the high salary and prestige.

Taylor wishes he had pursued something he was truly interested in and excited about?sports broadcasting perhaps, or journalism. With growing expenses and a seemingly inescapable debt load, Taylor feels stuck. He would love nothing more than to be able to go back to college and do it all over again.

NAME: Steven Lee SCHOOL: Colorado State University

DEGREE: Comp. Sci. DEBT: \$31,000

STATUS: Finished school eight and a half months ago and is still unemployed. Sent out more than 120 resumes, yielding only two interviews with no callbacks. Now spends the majority of his days playing computer games. Has basically given up on the job search, having recovered from the shock of realizing there was no corner office waiting for him upon graduation.

FRUSTRATION: He knows he has the skills to excel in a variety of information technology jobs and is deeply frustrated about not being able to get his foot in the door. He blames the economy, but knows there is more to the equation. As the weeks drift by with no job in sight, his self-confidence and self-worth continue to plummet. The only thing getting better is his computer game scores.

What's wrong with these pictures? Why didn't those thousands of tuition dollars propel Teresa, Taylor and Steven into more fulfilling futures? Sadly, Teresa, Taylor and Steven are only three of the millions of college graduates who each year fit similar profiles. A great many of us drift through college hoping that life will work out later, hoping that the degree we earn will be a ticket to a successful and fulfilling future. In the last century this approach may have worked. Now, however, things are much different. In this first focusing strategy you will learn a new approach to college. Adopting this new approach is an essential step in making college the rewarding investment it should be. By putting these concepts into action, you will begin discovering what career you really want to pursue and start developing experience that will make you invaluable to employers. Best of all, college will become less stressful and a lot more fun. But first we owe you an explanation on why this new approach is so badly needed.

The Information

AGE

The Information Age has taken the world by storm. The black-and-white televisions, typewriters and snail mail that our parents grew up with have been replaced by plasma TVs, cell phones and the Internet. Think for a minute?what would this week be like if you didn't have a cell phone or an Internet connection? Weird, isn't it?

The Information Age has changed the way the world operates. Global borders have become almost invisible, competition has soared both locally and internationally, the pace of life has picked up speed, and keeping up with technology has become as hopeless as chasing a Ferrari Testarosa in a Ford Tempo. Buying purses to match shoes has evolved to include matching cell phone face plates and top-40 ring tones. Also, kids in Malaysia now bob their heads to Jay-Z and buy chromed-out rims for their mopeds.

Let's take a look at what else has changed since the disco days of the '70s:

- In the '70s there were less than 800,000 college graduates per year; today this number has more than tripled to 2.4 million.
- In the '70s the average 38-year-old had changed jobs 4 times; today the average number of jobs is up to 10!
- Since the '70s, more than 1,000 new colleges have sprouted up across the country.
- Since the '70s, the number of 26-year-olds living with their parents has almost doubled.

In this age of information we have more of everything?400 channels on the TV, 10 different flavors of Coke, more life opportunities, more available jobs and more job shopping.

The times of stability and predictability that our grey-haired parents lived through have morphed into a fast-paced flurry of information and innovation.

This new era is different in another significant way. Distinctions alone are not enough. The value you offer a company is less and less dependent on what degree you have and what college you attend. Companies want people who can think outside the box, identify their own strengths and weaknesses, work well in teams, adapt to change, and communicate effectively . . . and that's just the start. Aspiring artists and ambitious entrepreneurs also need these skills to succeed and survive in this new world.

What Employers Want:

Getting Hired in the Information Age

'It's not the pedigree?the school, degree or GPA?that is important. It's what the person brings to the table. Internship experience, extracurricular activities and sheer enthusiasm for the job are what I consider the most important.'

*—Judith Harrison, Senior Vice President of Human Resources,
Ruder Finn Worldwide*

'Employers want focused individuals who know what they want and who can clearly state goals in field-focused terms.'

*—Burt Nadler, College Career Services Professional, author of
The Everything Resume Book and The Everything Cover Letter Book*

'The students who impress us the most are those who have shown real passion and delivery in some field of their life. They may have led a team on the sports field, changed lives through a community project or increased sales in a part-time job. The actual activity is less important than the energy and enthusiasm they put into it.'

—Linda Emery, Head of Recruitment, Unilever UK

This new era has not only changed the needs and desires of companies, it has changed the needs and desires of individuals as well. People want more because they see that more is possible. Opportunities and knowledge are no longer dependent on social status, family name or material wealth. Today, people want more out of life than a safe and secure job. On average, people will change jobs 10 times to seek work that is more fulfilling. The pursuit of wealth, quality of life and Louis Vuitton accessories is widespread and achievable by anyone with a strong enough drive.

The World Has

CHANGED

Life was much different in the Great Depression of the 1930s?workers were laid off in droves, businesses closed their doors, and those who could find work were few and far between. Jobs were almost impossible to come by and so were cheesy accident lawyers. Job security was a rare luxury. Basic survival was the focus. But after the Depression and World War II the economy took flight, creating an explosion of jobs and a phenomenon known as the Baby Boom. The workforce demanded more skilled labor, and as a result more colleges were built to train people to become everything from doctors and lawyers to engineers and accountants.

As the hippies and peace signs of the 1960s turned into the disco jockeys and afros of the '70s, college enrollment continued to soar. In the decade between 1970 and 1980, college enrollment shot up 31 percent. By the year 2000, over three million more students were enrolled in North American colleges than there were in 1980. The prestige of a college degree was being diluted by the day.

The times, they are a changin'.

?Bob Dylan

The education system has not changed. Once upon a time, college was a means to an end. The system worked like a well-

oiled machine, where the world needed workers trained in specific skills and colleges were the places that trained students to fill this need. For the most part, baby boomers were more than happy to accept the jobs for which their college education had prepared them. Most stayed in these jobs for the majority of their working lives. The world has since changed?people want more and employers want more?but the education system has stayed pretty much the same. The gap between the demands of the world and the offerings of the education system continues to widen.

The most dangerous way to approach college
is with the idea that all you need to do is
pay your dues and get your degree.

?Patrick Combs

Few colleges have programs and courses that help students determine what field of study best fits their talents. Nor do they teach them the life skills needed to excel in this competitive environment or encourage them to pursue their dreams in this new age of opportunity. A dangerous scenario has been created. Students who approach college with the same mentality as their parents or grandparents are preparing themselves for a world that no longer exists?leaving them unable to capture the plentiful opportunities available.

College Success in the Information Age

The good news is that college can still be an incredible investment?arguably the best investment of your life. How-ever, to make college a good investment in the Information Age, one change is critical?a change in mindset. You can have one of two mindsets toward college: a *degree-focused* mindset or an *experience-focused* mindset.

The Degree-focused Mindset

This is the traditional way of thinking, passed down through generations. This mindset is founded on the belief that *degree qualifications* are the ticket to a promising career and a bright future.

How to recognize a Degree-focused Mindset:

SAY THINGS LIKE . . .

'Getting involved in school activities and clubs is a waste of time.'

'I hear that Art 202 is a guaranteed A!'

'I'm studying to be an accountant because there are a lot of accounting jobs available.'

'I just want to be finished with school . . .'

ARE KNOWN TO . . .

Compete with their class-mates and constantly dispute their grades.

Take two majors to increase the prestige of their degree.

Take additional courses or study in the summer so they can get their degree sooner.

Do the minimum required courses so they can finish as fast as possible.

Most students start college with a degree-focused mindset. If this is the mindset you currently have, don't sweat it. It isn't your fault.

This mindset has been passed down from your parents' generation because it was the mindset in their time. Some students have a change of mindset during college, but many never make the transition at all.

Three Misconceptions of the Degree-focused Mindset:

SELECTING YOUR MAJOR IS A PRIORITY

About 75 percent of students will change their major at least once during college and, according to career expert David Swanson, 75 percent of jobs are filled by people without the proper degree qualifications. That means only 25 percent of people actually work in the field they studied in college. Don't sweat your major.

YOUR GRADES ARE WHAT MATTER MOST

Yes, grades are important. You need to meet minimum levels so they don't kick you out, and if you choose to go to graduate school you may need a certain average to get in. Cassandra McCarthy, a highest GPA award winner from Edinboro University says, 'As exciting as it was, my award for the highest GPA has done little for me. What continues to bring the most opportunities my way are the extracurricular activities I was involved in, the people I met and the real-world experience I gained.'

A survey conducted by Stanford University in 2003 found that GPA was ranked 11th on a top-20 list of what employers look for when hiring. The top three were communication skills, integrity and interpersonal skills.

FINISHING FASTER IS BETTER

College is the best place to make mistakes. Use your college days to determine what career you want to pursue. You can get qualified people to help you without being invoiced for their time. You can also participate in internship programs, international exchanges and a variety of events that will help you discover an ideal career. You can build connections and experience that will help get your foot in the door. When you rush to finish in four years, you limit the number of experiences you can have. However, be warned?when you start receiving more invitations to weddings than keg parties, it's time to move on.

The Experience-focused Mindset

The experience-focused mindset didn't exist a few decades ago?it didn't need to. Students with this mindset anticipate that the *experience* they gain in college will contribute most to accelerating their careers. By experience we mean much more than work experience?we are referring to the college experience as a whole.

Experience-focused students want more than an 8½-by-11- inch piece of paper in a fancy gold frame?they want to determine their interests, improve their skill set, build a network of valuable contacts, create opportunities for them-selves after graduation and have fun at the same time. They look at college as a window of opportunity. To them, college is not a means to an end; it's a journey of discovery and development. They don't rely on their degree alone to showcase their credibility. Instead, they differentiate themselves from the pack through the experiences they seek out, and through the knowledge and skills they learn along the way.

How to Recognize the Experience-focused Mindset

SAY THINGS LIKE . . .

'I'm running for a VP position on the student government.'

'I hear you can learn a lot in Public Speaking 101!'

'I chose to major in architectural design because I have always been interested in it.'

'I don't mind taking an extra year to finish.'

'I only get one shot at college. I better make the most of it.'

ARE KNOWN TO . . .

Volunteer for several events, clubs and activities.

Have multiple groups of friends and contacts.

Take fewer classes to free up time for extracurricular activities.

Change majors, spend a year working and/or studying abroad.

Seek out internships to develop new skills and clarity on career interests.

Andrew:

The university I attended had one of the most innovative programs in the nation. It had won several awards for excellence and had received rave reviews from student participants. The course prided itself on putting theory into practice?using case studies and community projects as teaching tools, rather than overbearing text books and boring professors. It came time to make a decision. Do I participate in this highly regarded, award-winning program and enhance my experience or do I double-major and increase the prestige of my degree? At the time, I was inebriated by the degree-focused mindset?taking more classes than I could handle and guarding my GPA from any courses that could be a threat.

The grades and the degree won me over. I panned out. I was more concerned about what my degree would say on it than what I was learning in the process. By the end of the year my poor decision was painfully obvious. More than half of the students in this innovative program were selected to compete in the country's most prestigious case competition.

To make a long story short, they ended up dominating the competition. They were flown across the country on an all-expenses-paid trip, featured in magazines, news-papers and on TV, and after it was over they had numerous employment opportunities. Do you think I had regrets? You better believe it! It was the second-worst decision I had ever made in college (second to a not-so-inconspicuous attempt to relocate a vending machine to my dorm room).

Maximizing Your Return

On Investment

Investing in college is much like investing in the stock market. Your investment approach depends on market conditions and your desired rate of return. Market conditions of the Industrial Age favored workers who were trained in specific skills?the return on investment students desired was a safe and secure job. The degree-focused mindset was the investment approach that best met these market conditions.

But what are market conditions like today? An interesting phenomenon is taking the world by storm . . .

A new demographic has surfaced that is continuing to grow in greater numbers every year?not only in North America, but across the world.

This demographic has caught the eye of the media and been assigned interesting labels:

The victims who wear these labels are the struggling college grads whose college education didn't pave the way into promising futures, as they had hoped. Twentysomethings Inc. found that 64 percent of college grads move back in with their parents ?a percentage that has nearly doubled since the 1970s and is continuing to rise each year.

Parents feeling squeezed by rising tuition fees are growing frustrated with their children's struggle to become self-sufficient after graduation. They don't understand why a college degree isn't leading to good opportunities, like it did back in their day.

Graduates are also frustrated. Their expectations of life after graduation are being crushed by not landing a job or not knowing what they want to do. The longer they live at home, unemployed or working at meaningless jobs, the more their confidence and motivation erodes, thus compounding the problem.

College investors everywhere are frustrated with the market conditions and the new phenomenon that is taking place.

Interestingly, in the midst of the current volatile market, some students are managing to make college an amazing investment. They clarify what career they want to pursue, develop the real-world skills employers want, are recognized for their involvement, meet tons of interesting people and thoroughly enjoy college life. These students have discovered the investment approach that works best today. What investment approach are they using? You guessed it?the experience-focused mindset. This mindset allows you to discover the real-life skills you can combine with your academic learning so you can walk out of college into a career full of opportunities . . . and avoid having to move back in with your parents. Students who adopt an experience-focused mindset are the most savvy investors. Not surprisingly, they are earning the greatest returns.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the average cost of an undergraduate college education is just shy of \$60,000. How you approach this investment is your choice. If you want to become a savvy investor, we recommend you read the next section carefully. You will learn what only a small percentage of successful students know?how

to use the experience-focused mindset to make college the best investment of your life!

The Experience-focused Formula

Those who approach college with an experience-focused mindset will see a playground of opportunities before them. From internship programs and international exchanges to extracurricular activities and innovative degree programs?college offers a variety of fun and invaluable opportunities. You can discover what careers interest you most, build life-long friendships and gain experience that will guide you along the path to success.

Andrew:

It wasn't until halfway through my sophomore year that I had my first glimpse of an experience-focused mindset.

I attended a five-day student business conference in the Rocky Mountains of Jasper, Alberta. At the conference I met a different breed of student?a breed I hadn't seen before. They had a different outlook on college and did more than just study (which at the time was my compulsion). They ran student clubs, organized student events, attended conferences and had a good understanding of what they wanted to do upon graduation?not to mention they were having the time of their lives!

What also intrigued me was the fan club of corporate recruiters present at this conference. They paid a lot of attention to these proactive students. By the end of the conference my mindset toward college had done a complete 180. I realized that college had more to offer than boring books and long lectures, and that it was involvement in these events that impressed companies. These students were learning real-world skills. The day after I returned from the conference I applied for an executive position with a club on campus. By the time I graduated I was club president, had started a variety of new events, programs and clubs, attended more than 15 student conferences nationwide, and had been recruited by over half a dozen companies. This simple change in mindset literally changed my life.

Ready to learn the magic formula? Here we go The experience-focused formula contains the following key components:

International Exchanges + Internships and
Co-op Programs + Extracurricular Activities +
Innovative Courses and Programs =

The Experience-focused Formula

1. International Exchanges

Getting sick of your campus scenery? Thinking it's time you made a trip to a beautiful tropical beach with mesmerizing white sand and crystal clear water? Imagine you could get course credit for doing such a thing... you can! Believe it or not,

every college student is capable of doing an international exchange to destinations as far north as the Canadian Rockies or as far south as the Australian Outback. It's a pretty cool setup?you fill a seat at a college overseas and in exchange an international student fills your seat at your home college. In addition to studying abroad, programs exist that allow you to work abroad in an international setting. You might be thinking: 'My GPA isn't high enough to be eligible for these,' or 'My faculty doesn't offer these types of programs.' Even if your college doesn't offer an exchange program or has a long list of bureaucratic criteria that could prevent you from being eligible, you can still go!

Treasure #1, your first free gift, awaits you at *The Focus Zone*. Go to www.focusedstudent.com to receive 'Exchange Your Life?eight ways to study or work anywhere in the world.'

Andrew:

With my new experience-focused mindset I became an eager beaver, looking to take advantage of every interesting experience my university offered. I decided to go on the 'five-year program' and extend my studies to allow enough time for an exchange program . . . or two . . . or three. A year and a half later I had gone on three different international exchanges, visited more than 12 countries and could mimic the airline safety instructions.

My experiences abroad were nothing short of AMAZING?the most enriching experiences of my life. Words cannot describe how much I learned, not only about other cultures but about myself as well. Exploring tropical islands and shopping in exotic markets wasn't too shabby either.

Many benefits come with studying abroad:

- You gain real-life experiences that can't be learned from a textbook, no matter how overpriced or overweight.
- You demonstrate to employers that you have experience adjusting to unfamiliar circumstances and handling unpredictable problems?traits needed in this new era of rapid change.
- You'll meet new friends from across the globe?it's always nice to have a place to stay when the travel bug hits you.
- You'll acquire interesting stories and memories to last a lifetime?yup, expect to be sharing travel tales with your kids.

2. Internships and Co-op Programs

According to a study done by Northwestern University, these two exciting opportunities?internships and co-op programs?have a 64 percent chance of landing you a full-time job. So what are they exactly? Internships are short-term jobs that are unpaid and offer you experience in an industry of interest. You can find internship opportunities through school programs, or by contacting companies directly or searching online. Co-op jobs also offer real-world work experience but are

usually longer term, paid and offer course credit. To gain access to co-op opportunities look for a co-op programs office on your campus.

LUC:

When it was time to apply for college, my strategy was to look through magazines and Ivy-league listings for the most reputable schools. I figured that the better the school, the more valuable my degree, and the more plentiful the job opportunities would be. A few weeks before I started my college application blitz, I was at my aunt's house for dinner and met Todd, a well-dressed guy in his late twenties who had an attractive girlfriend and drove a flashy sports car. I instantly admired the guy, or should I say I admired his lifestyle. Over the course of the evening Todd recommended that I go to a school with a great co-op program?not surprisingly, he highly recommended the university he had attended. He ranted and raved about how important work experience was, and not the degree.

A few weeks later when I started the application process to all the high-profile schools, I added co-op programs to my list of criteria (now I had two). A few months later, to my delight, I received acceptance from all the reputable schools I had applied to, but I was most excited when I got accepted into the school with the best co-op program in the nation?the school Todd had recommended. It didn't take me long to choose which offer I was going to accept. Although I didn't know it at the time, I had taken my first step in the direction of the experience-focused mindset.

In addition to the future hook-ups that internships and co-op jobs offer, they also provide fantastic opportunities to discover your interests and determine what type of work you enjoy. It's kind of like shopping for clothes?before you commit to a purchase you get to try on different sizes and styles until you find the perfect fit. Your college (or its career center) is like the shopping center; it has a selection of good jobs to choose from, and it ensures they meet specific standards.

By enrolling in an internship or co-op program you save search time, gain great experience and develop a better understanding of what type of career is a good fit for you. They also are a ticket to working at some of the coolest and most cutting-edge companies around. When it comes to finding a summer job, check out these opportunities?it's hard to go wrong.

LUC:

During my second co-op term at the height of the dot-com era, I decided to jump on the bandwagon and get into Information Technology. I spent four months bored and frustrated as a programmer. I used to gaze out at the marketing department across the hall, dreaming I could be on the other side. When I got my review at the end of the co-op placement it read, 'Luc is a hard-working employee, but not cut out for IT and should consider something different. Overall rating: Satisfactory.' Satisfactory was the lowest possible rating and really was a synonym for *you suck!*

My next co-op term I got a marketing job and absolutely loved it. Not to mention I got a much better review and the highest possible rating?Outstanding. It's chilling for me to even imagine working as an IT programmer full-time. I'm glad I tested the waters before diving in.

Some amazing internship and co-op programs are largely unknown and not specific to any college?all students can apply. These programs give every student an opportunity to land a dream job in Hollywood, or to work in a skyscraper in New York City, or to help staff one of the most advanced research facilities on earth.

on the planet. Check 'em out to make your job search exciting rather than exasperating.

3. Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities can include things like clubs, conferences, sports teams, fraternities and sororities. If you have survived the first week of college, you have likely been bombarded by these organizations begging you to sign up for an event, join their club or brand yourself with their apparel. It's easy to turn a cheek to these sometimes overbearing volunteers, pick out faults in their organization or make excuses why you don't have time to get involved. Retreating to your next class is the easy and painless solution. As a result, many students overlook and miss out on the HUGE benefits these extracurricular activities offer. The best thing to do is to join something that interests you. If necessary, persuade a friend to join as well.

ANDREW:

In high school I thought I was too cool for school. I avoided extracurricular activities and student councils like the plague and hung around with the 'tough crowd' to try to sustain a cool-kid image. College was a much-needed wake-up call. Employers weren't going to care how big the subwoofers were in my buddy's car or how crazy my friend's cousin was. Employers cared about practical experience. Volunteering and student clubs ended up being my ticket to a much cooler future.

If you are interested in marketing, you might join a student association like a marketing club or an advertising society. This is a tremendous start for taking advantage of extracurricular activities. If you want to take your experience to the next level, there is another type of association you can join that is arguably the best and quickest way to network with people in the industry, remain up-to-date on the latest trends, meet people working in your dream job and add killer lines to your resume. Over 90 percent of students don't know about these associations, and for that exact reason they are your opportunity to really stand out from your peers.

These are called . . . (drum roll, please) . . . professional associations! So, if you want to 'go pro' then join a professional association that meets your interests. Everything from the American Marketing Association to the Video Game Developers Association exists?there are literally thousands to choose from. Flick through the *Encyclopedia of Associations* at your local library or do a search online for professional association lists.

Traveling the Nation on a Shoestring Budget

You might have caught wind of a little something called conferences. Typically weekend events organized by student clubs, they are usually focused on a specific topic and include well-known speakers, entertaining events, four-course meals, hotel accommodations, and nightly parties. Students from across the country are invited, and travel fees are often subsidized by your school or covered by corporate sponsors. Attendees get to meet like-minded students and mingle with recruiters from the nation's largest companies. In short, these events are action-packed with amazing experiences and a lot of fun!

THE CATCH

To be in the know about these conferences and sometimes to be eligible to attend, you need to be involved with student organizations.

Here are a few of the benefits of extracurricular activities:

- Differentiate your resume by adding impressive lines like 'Coordinated budgeting and event logistics for a fundraiser hosting over 400 students and university faculty,' or 'Managed a team of 12 executives responsible for five committees and a \$150,000 budget.'
- Meet students with similar interests and ambitions.
- Improve your communication/interpersonal skills.
- Get first dibs on cool events like listening to famous speakers, hosting wine and cheese gatherings for corporate recruiters, BBQs, attending all-expenses paid conferences across the nation, attending sporting events and intercollege parties (to name a few).
- Gain leadership and teamwork experience that employers and grad schools are looking for.
- Make a positive difference on campus and in the community by putting your ideas and skills to the test.

4. Innovative Courses and Programs

Are you fed up reading boring textbooks for the sole purpose of regurgitating the information you memorize on the next exam? only to forget 90 percent of it a few weeks later? Sadly, this situation can't always be avoided, but it can be offset with innovative courses and programs. Most colleges have started to realize the void in the system and are now implementing education alternatives that involve hands-on learning through projects, real-world applications or educational competitions. These might take up more time in your schedule or involve additional effort to get enrolled, but in the end you will learn far more, enjoy the process more, develop greater experience and better retain the information. In addition, these programs often lead to prize money, free trips, job offers and nationwide exposure. These innovative programs, classes and competitions exist on all college campuses; however, many can also be found off-campus.

Being a child of the theatre, I was excited to get accepted into the Trinity College La Mama Program. It took me to New York City to study the performing arts for an entire semester. I got to see over 60 different performances, work at a well-known theater and meet some of the most accomplished performers in the city. At the end of the semester my supervisor offered me a full-time job. I haven't stopped smiling or dancing since.'

–Jill Weinstein, Trinity College

Courses and Programs (*continued*)

'Having an entrepreneurial spirit, a class called New Venture Analysis caught my eye. In this course we developed a business plan then competed with the plan against other students from all over the world. We ended up winning over \$70,000 in cash and prizes, and twice qualified to enter the Super Bowl of business plan competitions?Moot Corp?where we won best-written plan. Our success at these competitions attracted over a quarter of a million dollars in seed capital, allowing us to turn this school project into a full-time business. This class was the foundation of my entrepreneurial future.'

—Kevin Michaluk, I.H. Asper School of Business, University of Manitoba

'The best course I ever took didn't have boring lectures or a daunting textbook. We had one assignment for the entire semester: to create a full-fledged PR campaign on the topic of education and ethics. For the second half of the course we competed against schools from across the country and ended up with an honourable mention from the Public Relations Society of America. I learned more in this course than I did in my entire freshman year. More importantly, I discovered that I loved PR and that it was the career I wanted to pursue. The following summer I landed a job in New York working for one of the largest PR firms in the world. The lady who interviewed me happened to be a judge from the competition. Taking this innovative course definitely paid off.'

—Jaci Herbst, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Treasure #3 in *The Focus Zone* contains a top-10 list of the coolest college courses and competitions worth their weight in gold. Go to *The Focus Zone* at www.focusedstudent.com to find out what they are.

There you have it?the four key components of the experience-focused formula: International Exchanges + Internships and Co-op Programs + Extracurricular Activities + Innovative Courses and Programs. But even after learning about these exciting opportunities many students still don't pursue them. This happens for two reasons?time and fear. Participating in these experiences requires reallocating time away from your daily study routine. It may also require pushing back your graduation date. Students who use the time excuse usually feel that high grades are a better option for securing a good job after college. Unfortunately, this assumption is false.

The second reason students shy away from the experience-focused formula is due to fear and a lack of confidence. Electing to participate in these experiences, and taking the initiative to get involved, often requires that you JUMP out of your com-fort zone. The next section will show you how to do this easily.

Step Outside Your Comfort Zone

'The eagle gently coaxed her offspring toward the edge of the nest. 'Why does the thrill of soaring have to begin with the fear of failing?' she thought. As in the tradition of the species, her nest was located high on the shelf of a sheer rock face. Below there was nothing but air to sup-port the wings of each child. 'Is it possible it might not work?' she thought. Despite her fears, the eagle knew it was time. Until her children discovered their wings, there was no purpose for their lives. Until they learned how to soar, they would fail to understand the privilege it was to have been born an eagle. And so one by one she pushed them, and they flew!'

?Excerpts from *Even Eagles Need a Push*,
David McNally

For baby eagles to spread their wings and fly, they have to leave the comfort of the nest. The nest is their comfort zone, a place where they feel safe, at ease and free from risk and fear.

Like baby eagles, we enjoy staying in our comfort zones. Why wouldn't we? It's more comfortable there. We talk to the same people in class, buy the same style of clothes, work at the same jobs and eat the same food. This placid existence is our comfort zone?our nest.

You miss all the shots you don't take.

?Wayne Gretzky

Are you happy with your current knowledge, accomplishments, experiences, friends and bank balance? Do you have absolutely no interest in growing as a person and in achieving new things? Not likely . . . or at least we hope not! You know that those who never take risks will never reap the potential rewards. Those who never visit unexplored territory will live boring lives. Those who do not challenge themselves will never grow wiser, and those who do not shoot will never score. To grow, you'll need to step outside your comfort zone into the area of uncertainty, risk and challenge. What would happen to the baby eagles if they never left the nest?

LUC:

When I moved away from home, my mom accompanied me on the cross-country trip to help me move into my anything-but-elegant dorm room. After three days she left?pushing me out of the nest. I stood alone in the parking lot waving to her as she drove away. It was two days before introduction week, and the school was deserted. I did a slow 360, examining the foreign environment. I didn't have my familiar car, I didn't have my trusted friends and now I didn't have my mom. I was 100 percent outside my comfort zone. Although I felt naked, I knew I had been

What Does Your Comfort Zone Feel Like?

Try this:

1. Fold your arms in front of you. Feel comfy? Natural and ordinary? Good. This is what your comfort zone feels like.
2. Now try folding your arms the other way?the opposite arm on top. Feel strange? Uncomfortable? This is what stepping outside of your comfort zone feels like.

pushed out of the nest and it was my time to fly!

What's cool is that the more experiences you take on, the more challenges you tackle, the more times you feel naked, the larger your comfort zone becomes. For example, after moving away from home you gradually become comfortable with the change and could do it again with ease?your com-fort zone has stretched to include this new experience.

*The more one does and sees and feels,
the more one is able to do.*

?Amelia Earhart

Once stretched, it stays bigger. Constantly stretching your comfort zone moves you toward your full potential, gives you more experience to draw on and allows you to enjoy the many riches that life has to offer.

The experience-focused mindset gives you access to the finest opportunities college life offers, but you'll need to step out of

your comfort zone to seize them. In the bigger life-picture, college is a brief window of time. It's easy to let it fly by, only to regret later that you didn't take advantage of the unlimited experiences and opportunities available to you as a student.

*Ships in the harbor are safe, but that's
not what ships are built for.*

?John A. Shedd

IT'S EASIER . . .

It's easier to settle for average than strive for excellence.

*It's easier to be saturated with complacency than
stirred with compassion.*

It's easier to be skeptical than successful.

It's easier to question than conquer.

*It's easier to rationalize your disappointments
than realize your dreams.*

It's easier to belch the baloney than bring home the bacon.

?Author Unknown

In college, it's easier to stay in your comfort zone than to step outside into the world of risk and uncertainty so you can grow and experience new things. What are you going to choose? Easy or experience?the choice is yours.

In the next chapter you'll discover the importance of finding your passion. You'll get to complete a puzzle that will help you define the best career choice for you, one that is totally in synch with what you love to do.

CONCLUSION

College can be the best investment of your life . . . but only if you maximize the experience.

Take Note?The World has Changed.

- The wants of individuals and employers have increased, and for the most part the education system has stayed the same ?a void has been created.

College Success in the Information Age

- People who have the degree-focused mindset anticipate that degree qualifications are the ticket to a promising career.

- People who have the experience-focused mindset anticipate that the experience they gain in college will contribute most in accelerating their careers.

The Experienced-focused Formula

- Work abroad or study abroad? or do both.
- Participate in extracurricular activities such as clubs, conferences, sports teams, frats and sororities, etc.
- Gain practical work experience through an internship or co-op program.
- Sign up for innovative courses and programs. Step Outside Your Comfort Zone and into the World of Opportunity
- The world of new growth and opportunity always lies outside your comfort zone.
- Stretching your comfort zone accelerates your progress and gives you more experience to draw on.
- The experience-focused mindset requires that you step outside your comfort zone constantly.

Are you ready for the first round of Action Steps that will help you accomplish what you really want? They start now.

ACTION STEPS

Online version available in *The Focus Zone* at: www.focusedstudent.com

The Experience-focused Formula

Expand Your Comfort Zone

The Experience-focused Formula

Write down the component of the experience-focused formula that appeals to you most. (Example: international exchange, extra-curriculars, internships and co-ops, or innovative programs.)

Describe the specific experience you want to have using this component. (Example: going on an exchange to Paris, running for president of the geography club.)

What is one specific thing you can do this week that will move you closer to implementing the experience you described above? (Write this in your calendar so you don't forget.)

Expand Your Comfort Zone

What is something you would like to do or feel you should do that will require you to step outside your comfort zone? (Example: ask a question in class, move away from home, go to a conference.)

What are the benefits you will reap by taking action?

If you want the benefits above, describe what you will do to take action. Be specific. Include the date you will take action and

the steps you will take.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Rita Heil:

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David Brouwer:

Are you kind of busy person, only have 10 or perhaps 15 minute in your morning to upgrading your mind proficiency or thinking skill possibly analytical thinking? Then you are having problem with the book in comparison with can satisfy your small amount of time to read it because all of this time you only find reserve that need more time to be go through. The Power of Focus for College Students: How to Make College the Best Investment of Your Life can be your answer because it can be read by you actually who have those short time problems.

Alma Miranda:

The book untitled The Power of Focus for College Students: How to Make College the Best Investment of Your Life contain a lot of information on that. The writer explains her idea with easy method. The language is very simple to implement all the people, so do not necessarily worry, you can easy to read the item. The book was authored by famous author. The author provides you in the new age of literary works. You can actually read this book because you can continue reading your smart phone, or gadget, so you can read the book inside anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can wide open their official web-site and also order it. Have a nice read.

Hilary Winters:

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