Seven Habits of Highly Effective College Students:

The successful completion of a degree at UTMB provides a strong foundation to reach your goals of obtaining a career that will meet a variety of needs (e.g., financial status, self-esteem, personal/academic identity). However, as you advance educationally, the coursework becomes more intensive and demanding of your abilities. Past studies have revealed that intelligence accounts for only approximately 25% of a student's academic performance. A variety of other factors (motivation for learning, persistence in study habits, emotional well-being, interpersonal skills) have been delineated in the research as key determinants of academic success. The goal of this information is to reduce the mystique surrounding success in college and to provide you with a structure to assist you in succeeding.

1. Develop Your Own Educational Goals

In order to effectively invest your energy and passion into the learning process, you need to develop your own internal goals. By taking responsibility for and “ownership” of your academic goals, your aspirations and strivings become internally generated.

2. Become an Active Participant In Your Education:

In order to succeed academically, you must take on an active, dynamic role in your educational journey. Successful students recognize that their choices and efforts will result in control of their academic destinies. Active participation includes interacting with faculty, classmates, and more importantly, participating in the classroom environment. Active classroom participation results in the improvement of grades without increasing study time. Actively listen, question, think, take notes, and be in charge of your learning experience. By actively processing the information that you are taking in, you lay down extensive memory tracks that improve your understanding and retention of the material. If you fail to do this in the classroom, the amount of study time required outside of the class to learn the material will increase dramatically. The choice in this process is clearly yours.

3. Develop Effective Study and Work Habits:

Problems can arise when you are required to impose your own structure on your education and associated demands. Successful college students develop efficient note-taking habits, time management/organizational skills, as well as overall study skills. Successful students realize that dividing their work and studying into regular, manageable periods of time is far more effective than “cramming” for exams.
4. Understand How Your Feelings and Emotions Affect the Learning Process:

Your attitude towards the learning process, in and out of the classroom, will often become a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you approach a project or task with a bored, disinterested, or closed mind, then you will likely have difficulty investing positive energy into the learning process. Challenge your negative beliefs and preconceptions regarding a course, class project, or a professor. Even the most mundane or insignificant event or project may become more meaningful to you at a later point. When you feel disinterested in the classroom, make a conscious effort to “act as if” you are interested. Make eye contact with your lecturer, interact with “alert” body language, ask questions, and take notes. If you find that a “roadblock” exists in your learning process, step back and examine the potential negative feelings or emotions that are contributing to this block and are causing you to “tune out”.

5. Accurately Assess Your Strengths and Weaknesses

Successful students view their time here as a period of transition. You will be much more successful if you have realistic expectations for yourself and if you set reasonable and timely goals for your academic performance. You will want to be careful not to overload yourself with too many extra student activities. Every person has a different limit as to how many hours he or she can handle in one semester, and you must discover what your personal limit is. You will also want to know which courses/blocks are usually the most difficult and demand the most time and effort. It is also good to be open to any constructive criticism that you receive from your professors. It is important that you do not become defensive or view their suggestions as personal attacks. Their feedback is usually meant to be helpful and to point out your strengths, as well as areas for possible improvement. It is always a good idea to follow up on any remediation that your professors recommend. Finally, you may want to take a self-inventory to assess your personal development. Ask yourself: “What qualities do I need to succeed in my chosen field and in my personal life?” and “How can I develop these qualities in myself?” The answers to these questions will take you a long way toward achieving your goals.

6. Develop a Respectful Working Relationship with Your Professors

Successful students view their professors as working partners and not as “the enemies.” Believe it or not, most professors want exactly what you want: They would like you to learn the material presented in class, earn a good grade, and grow intellectually and emotionally. Yes, your professors are the ones who eventually evaluate your work, but they can also be available to you in a variety of capacities.

7. Become Involved in University Life

Successful students will recognize that their involvement in university life is just as important as classroom attendance, taking exams, and clinical/research work. Becoming involved in student organizations and groups will provide you with ample opportunities to develop leadership skills and to relate to peers, adults, and your campus community. The interpersonal
skills gained through such involvement are highly desirable and are transferable to future career positions and activities. On a more personal level, your involvement in university life can be invaluable when you encounter personal or academic problems. If you have made a commitment to people or organizations on campus, you are more likely to try harder to overcome your problems.