

Intentionality: *A Key to Success*

Congratulations! You made it through your first semester at college - or you have just arrived and are ready to begin your college experience. Either way, this folder is intended to provide you with some concrete suggestions for making the most of your time in college. Our goal is to ensure that you are well prepared for success in and beyond your undergraduate experience.

You might be wondering, *why is this called a RAP course if the students are not living together?*

It's all about the instructors and how they teach. Instructors of RAP courses are passionate about working with first year students and are trained in ways that help you think about your study habits, encourage you to get involved on campus, and support your continual engagement with college life. Also, RAP courses are structured to enable students to have meaningful discussions in a safe, supportive environment. And, given the small class size, RAP students form strong connections with their RAP instructors and peers in the class.

Learning From Your Experience

Use this three-step formula to reflect on what worked last semester (and/or in your past academic experience) and what you want to improve:

1. REVIEW

Look back on your academic experiences.

2. REFLECT

Think about which areas/things went well, and what areas you struggled with.

3. REVISE

In the areas you experienced success, find ways to continue those patterns. In areas that didn't go so well, consider what changes you can make.

Here are some sample questions to support your reflection process, organized by different areas in your life:

Academics & Co Curricular

- ◇ Where did you do your work? At what times were you most productive? Did you study best with classmates, or alone?
- ◇ Did you meet with your academic advisor?
- ◇ Which clubs, group meetings, or activities did you attend?

Socially & Personally

- ◇ Did you face any social challenges?
- ◇ Did you get support from a friend, counselor and/or res hall staff?
- ◇ Did you have enough time for fun and relaxation?

Resources & Support

- ◇ What valuable advice did you receive? Who was it from?
- ◇ Who was an unexpected source of support for you?
- ◇ What areas of your life do you need more support in? Academic, career-based, social, emotional, extracurricular?

Intentionality & Planning

Now

Create A Schedule ... and be flexible about it!

Homework

- Plan on an average of 3 hours of work outside of class for each hour of time spent in class.
- Choose the times of day when you are most productive.
- Identify a study space — consider the library, a study room in your residence hall, an academic building, outside on the grass, a café in town...switch it up and be creative!

Healthy lifestyle:

- Be sure to balance the pressures that life may bring with activities that are just for fun.
- Hang out with friends, participate in clubs and intramural sports, take time to relax.

Daily life:

- Plan time for meals, laundry, and errands. And don't forget to eat and sleep well!

Soon

The Semester Ahead

January							February							March						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6				1	2	3							1	2	3
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28				25	26	27	28	29	30	31

April							May							June						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	S	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5						1	2
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
29	30						27	28	29	30	31			24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Making Gen Ed's work for you

On the surface, Gen Ed courses might just seem like another college requirement. But look a little deeper and you'll see that there is something to be gained from every Gen Ed course — be intentional.

When you're sitting in your Gen Ed courses, consider these questions:

- ◇ What new skills are you learning?
- ◇ What kind of knowledge are you gaining by being in this course?
- ◇ How can the material you are learning broaden your perspective?
- ◇ Are you enjoying the content enough to turn it into another major/minor or certificate program?
- ◇ How could this apply to your professional goals?
- ◇ Who in this course are you connecting with? This is a chance to develop friendships outside your academic department!

Remember: You are paying a lot for your college education - nothing should be done simply to check a box!

Making Use of Course Syllabi

You now know how important course syllabi are in your preparation and planning of the coming months. Reading your syllabi carefully at the beginning of the semester will give you a sense of the workload expected of you for each course, and allows you to plan ahead.

Step 1: Gather your syllabi and look carefully at the course expectations and workload.

Step 2: Plot your exams and due dates in your planner, noting when you have overlapping deadlines. *If you know that you have two papers due the same day for two different courses, start your writing process early!*

Step 3: If you have any concerns about your assignments or overall course load, speak with an advisor before Add/Drop on 2/5.



What's Coming Up On The Horizon?

Intentional planning makes achieving goals much easier! Many academically related programs require advance planning — even a year or more. Here are some examples of goals and ways to move towards them. Read through, and then set some of your own goals below!

<i>What</i> What goals do you want accomplished by the time you graduate?	<i>So what</i> Why does it matter?	<i>Now what</i> Concrete steps you can take to accomplish these goals
To travel!	Broaden my perspective, gain life experience, expand my community	Plan to attend an info session, figure out what semester I need to apply to an abroad program, set up a meeting with financial aid to clarify my funding options
To become more informed about social justice issues and/or have impact on campus culture	Develop a critical lens, make a difference in the community, gain valuable organizing skills	Take an identity-based social justice course through the College of Education, or CESL, join an RSO, UACT, and/or Eco Rep
Have a clear sense of my career path	Allow me to move forward in post-graduation plans: a job search, graduate school, moving to a new place	Visit Career Services to start looking for an internship or build my resume, visit OURS to check out research opportunities, meet with my academic advisor to discuss grad schools
(your goal here)		
(your goal here)		

Planning Intentionally

Now is also a good time to think about what you want to do over Spring Break & this summer: Do you plan on visiting family & friends? Would you be interested in participating in an Alternative Spring Break? Do you want an internship this summer? Will you need funding for that?

Finding Courses for Future Semesters

Go to "Course Guides: Search for Classes" on Spire & set these criteria:

- Term: choose the correct semester
- Course Career: "Undergraduate"
- Session: "University"

Try these two different searches:

1. Look for a new academic area to explore:
 - ⇒ Scan all the departments in "Course Subject" and choose from the drop down menu. Search and see what piques your interest. Think outside the box!
 - ⇒ In "course number," choose "begins with" and type a "1" into the box on the right. This will ensure that you are searching for intro-level courses. Repeat with the number "2" if you want!
2. Look for a course in a particular Gen Ed category:
 - ⇒ Leave "course subject" blank.
 - ⇒ Scan the options in "Gen Ed Category" and choose from the drop-down menu

Intentionality & Relationships

Taking Care of Yourself *(the most important relationship!)*

If you notice yourself feeling off-balance or overwhelmed, consider these ideas for self-care:

Boundaries - It is great to be engaged academically and socially, but too much engagement can lead to feeling stressed or anxious. Make sure to practice saying “no” when your plate is full!

Community - There are lots of identity/culture-based spaces, activity-based spaces, and activist-based spaces for you to connect with people who share similar interests as you. Finding community can be a shortcut to self-care. Looking at the list of RSO’s and offices on campus is a good place to start.

Mental Health - There is no shame in needing some extra support during your time at UMass. Friends, relatives, advisors are all people to lean on during your time at college. The Center for Counseling and Psychological Health is also a wonderful resource for all students - more information on the Resources insert!

Action & Interaction



Every interaction is an opportunity to strengthen a relationship with someone. *Here are some of the many reasons to make an effort & connect with your...*

- ⇒ **Professors and Teaching Assistants (TA’s):** Research shows that students who meet with professors and TA’s achieve higher grades. Meeting with an instructor will help your motivation, engagement, and can direct you to more efficient study methods/time. And, when instructors know you, they can write meaningful reference letters!
- ⇒ **Academic Advisors:** It is important to connect with your academic advisor at least every semester! The advising staff from your major/college (listed under “Primary Advisor” in the Student Center section of Spire) can ensure that you are on track toward your degree, help you identify a minor or certificate program, and assist you in expanding your academic horizons.
- ⇒ **Mentors:** Be creative when you think about mentors. Mentors can be and often are professors and formal advisors, but some of the best mentors are upper class students, TA’s, Res Life staff, etc. Don’t hesitate to let more people be part of your community network! This can lead to more research opportunities, letters of recommendation, and job possibilities later on.

Communication with faculty and staff

How we communicate really does matter. Here is a sample email with refresher etiquette points to make sure your communication style is professional!

Dear Student,

Be sure to send messages from your official UMass email address to avoid the spam folder. ALWAYS put your name (and course name) in the subject line.

Begin all emails with a formal salutation like ‘Dear Professor Lee’ (not ‘hey’). Make the body of your email short and grammatically correct.

Remember to proofread – autocorrect can be dangerous! In your closing, use: *Sincerely, Best, Regards, or Thanks*, your full name and your Spire ID number for professors and advisors.

DO NOT “reply all” unless requested to do so. Don’t expect a professor to respond instantaneously – many professors state their expected email response time in their syllabus.

Sincerely,
RAP Staff