What Makes a Successful Community College Student

Beginning from an early age, we are always asked “what do you want to be when you grow up”. When we were in kindergarten we said “firefighter”, “astronaut”, and “ballerina”. When we were asked again in fourth grade we said “doctor”, “movie star”, and “teacher”. Fast forward to the ages of newly minted driver’s licenses and first dates. Once again, we were asked “what do you want to be when you grow up”. Suddenly, a question that seemed so simple to answer becomes nearly impossible. With fresh diplomas in hand, many of us pursued many different schools. I was always encouraged by my mother to attend community college before moving to a four-year university to make sure I was prepared the next time someone asked me that big question. At the time I was naïve and scoffed at her. Little did I know, the old saying held true. “Mother is always right”. I attended one semester of community college where I then transferred over to a four-year university for two more years and faced that question once again. When I finally realized my true and genuine answer of what I wanted to be, I realized that I needed to make a change. And so here, I find myself back at community college. The real question is, what is going to make me (or anyone else in a similar position) successful here?

Many people feel that community college is merely for “getting my gen eds over with”. Community college is seen as only stepping stone to where we really want to be. This very mindset is the downfall of many (speaking from personal experience). We often forget that it’s the accumulation of these precious stepping stones that get us to our desired destination. Contrary to popular belief, a successful community college student doesn’t necessarily need have a perfect plan of what they want to do moving forward. Community college is about open-mindedness. To maximize the success attained during those precious community college years, we must study hard while enjoying the ride and being open-minded. This is about relishing in where you are and making the most out of it to get to your destination. Join that random Japanese culture club because you once watched an anime show with your friend. Take a culinary related course because “who doesn’t love food”. Sure, take the gen eds because “you have too”, but add in a few interest classes and extra curriculars. There is no such thing as “wasted credits”. Being a successful community college student requires learning as much as you can inside and outside of the classroom. A lot of what I’ve learned about what I want to do comes from the lessons I’ve learned from teachers who lead classes that weren’t necessarily “mandatory” for me. Make use of all the resources you have whether it be seminars on how to budget money, career fairs, peer tutoring, or club meetings. This time is about meeting new people and trying new things.

So, what makes a successful community college student? Eagerness to learn and to try. The open-mindedness to try new things both inside and outside of the classroom. Study hard, try your best, and try something new! Community college is about learning what makes you excited in the morning and how you can find an occupation to make you feel that same giddiness when you start on your path to the job of your dreams. This time is about learning what you love and even what you hate. So the next time someone asks you “what do you want to be when you grow up”, you’ll know.