

## New Student Guide for Doing Well in College

Welcome to Walters State! You are entering a community of learning and the faculty and staff of Walters State wants you to succeed. Lectures, class notes, papers and projects...all of these are bound to be part of your academic experience. Yet, overall, collegiate learning focuses more on personal responsibility and taking initiative. Whether you are a recent high school graduate or a working adult with a family, following the guidelines in this publication can greatly increase your chances for success at Walters State.

### Know What to Expect in College

1. College course work is typically based more on independent study than on lectures. You need to do that “outside of class work” *plus* attend class lectures and take good notes in order to succeed.
2. Attendance is very important. Instructors do take attendance! If you have excessive absences it will not only affect your grades but could also affect your financial aid! College classes are paced 3 to 5 times faster than high school classes. Therefore, if you miss one class, you have missed about 1 1/2 weeks of work by high school standards. Showing up late or leaving classes early also affects attendance.
3. Some classes begin at 8:00 a.m. and other classes begin at 6:00 p.m. If you are a late riser, don't schedule an 8:00 a.m. class unless you can be on time and stay alert during the class. You cannot get to class late every day and expect to pass it. The same goes for leaving class early or cutting out during break if it is a 6 – 9 p.m. class.
4. If you have small children, are working full time and/or are juggling a lot of responsibilities, plan the number of hours and the classes you are taking accordingly. When students stretch themselves too thin, something must give—and often—it is grades that suffer.
5. In college, you have a tremendous amount of freedom. No one will be looking over your shoulder, urging you to complete assignments or study for exams. You need self-discipline and goal-setting skills.
6. You should study 2 hours for each hour that you are in class. Cramming for an exam at the last minute usually does not work. Expect your first week to be a bit overwhelming but don't worry, it's only the first week and by the end of the second week you will feel more comfortable with your schedule.
7. Keep your timetable of classes each semester. Important dates and information such as college closings, final exam dates, and the drop deadline are included in the timetable. Also, each building is equipped with televisions that broadcast important dates coming up throughout the semester via Info-Sys.
8. Each semester there will be a drop deadline. If you are not making satisfactory progress, you have until this date to drop the class(es). After this date, you are expected to stick with the class. If uncertain about withdrawing from a class(es), your instructor, advisor, or retention services can provide input regarding your decision. If you have scholarship or grant funding make sure before dropping a class how it will not affect your status.
9. Included in your tuition are many helpful resources designed to help you succeed. It is your responsibility to seek these services when you need them. Also, if your instructor refers you to one of these services, you need to follow through with the recommendation. Free students support services include:
  - A. Disability Services 423-585-6892
  - B. Counseling Services 423-585-6800
  - C. Health Clinic 423-585-6820
  - D. Tutoring Services 423-585-6920
  - E. Retention Services 423-585-6925
  - F. Math Learning Lab 423-585-6872
  - G. English/ Writing Lab 423-318-2575

H. Placement/Career Services 423-585-6801

I. Student Success Center 423-318-2337

10. Find and get to know someone on this campus that you feel comfortable talking to and speak with this person when you need guidance. Often this is someone in one of the offices mentioned above, an instructor, or your academic advisor. This can make a difference in your success.
11. Set up a daily, weekly, or monthly schedule, and stick to it. You need to be a good time manager. This will help you to reduce a great deal of stress. Again, refer to the list of campus resources above for assistance with creating a schedule, goal setting or developing effective time management habits.
12. Get involved with campus activities. Studies show that students who join at least one group stay in college longer and are more satisfied with school. Join a study group; students who study together often earn better grades.

### **Faculty Facts**

- They expect respect and attention. Don't talk in class if your conversation is not part of a classroom discussion. Talking when someone else is talking--be it the faculty member or another student in class--is rude. Similarly, inappropriate dress and offensive statements or depictions on apparel can be disruptive to the learning environment and faculty members expect you to dress accordingly.
- They provide a syllabus (course outline) to help you map out the semester. Study it and refer to it periodically to make sure you're on track. Learn your instructor's testing format, grading system, and expectations. You will be able to tailor your work to meet your instructor's requirements.
- They have set office hours when they are available to meet with you and answer questions. When you receive a class syllabus, be particularly sure to hang on to it as this information is also included. Faculty who hand out a syllabus may not bother to announce in class what the next assignment is, when they are available after class, or when the next test is scheduled--it's on the syllabus.
- They do not want to be interrupted by a cell phone ring and text messaging during class is a definite no-no. Turn your cell phone off.
- Children may not accompany adults into the classroom per Walters State's Minors on Campus Policy.
- They expect you to be an active participant in your education. Most instructors value student initiative and interest and most college courses encourage you to be an active, critical thinker. Sitting passively in class doesn't take full advantage of the opportunity you are given.
- They assume that everything they have scheduled for a class is important. If you miss class, don't go up to the professor and say "Did I miss anything?" Other variations are "Did we do anything important?" or "Are we going to do anything important tomorrow?" Most faculty members have heard these lines so often that they've stopped being funny to them. Instead you should say "I'm sorry I had to miss class. Are there any assignments I need to make up?"

### **What You Must Know if You Receive Financial Aid**

- Apply Early! The FAFSA application becomes available on January 1<sup>st</sup> of each year for the next academic year ([www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)). Some grants are awarded on a first come first served basis. We recommend students apply no later than February 28.
- Students must file the FAFSA every year.
- Financial aid includes a variety of grants, scholarships, loans and work study programs. Each has specific rules and eligibility requirements. It is the responsibility of the student to know the requirements necessary to maintain eligibility for the programs in which they are receiving funding.

- Not all types of financial aid require full-time enrollment. Some types of aid allow students to attend part time. Contact the Financial Aid department for specifics.
- Be aware of deadlines. Check the timetable, the Bulletin and the Walters State website (www.ws.edu) for important dates to remember.
- Students receiving the Tennessee Lottery Scholarship MUST file the FAFSA every year. Students enrolling in the fall term must complete by Sept.1; those enrolling in the spring term must apply by Feb.1.
- Students must list Walters States school code (008863) on the FAFSA in order for our financial aid department to receive their information from the Department of Education.
- Students can receive Financial Aid for a maximum of 100 ATTEMPTED hours at Walters State.
- Students receiving any type of scholarship or aid should ALWAYS check with the Financial Aid Office **before dropping a class**. Some grants and scholarships require students to be enrolled full-time to maintain eligibility.
- Students receiving financial aid that withdraw from all their classes or cease attending may owe a repayment to WSCC and/or the Department of Education.
- Walters State does not encourage student loans. However, we do recognize that some students must have them in order to pursue their college goals. Therefore, we offer Federal Stafford loans only and they must be processed through the Financial Aid department. Students must be enrolled at least half-time to be eligible for a student loan (6 hours).
- Disbursement of aid beyond the cost of tuition/fees occurs one week after classes begin. Students must have attended all classes at least once. Information regarding when and where financial aid checks will be disbursed will be posted through out the college at the beginning of each term.

### **Policies That Affect You**

Walters State Community College is committed to providing an environment where all members of the campus community enjoy the rights of free speech as well as freedom from harassing or discriminating behavior including sexual harassment and hate crime offenses.

Walters State has policies and support structures to enable everyone on campus to work and learn in an environment free of harassment. WSCC and TBR policies provide specific guidance in dealing with these issues.

### **Definition of Sexual Harassment**

- The Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education has issued the following definition: "Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. It can include verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
  - Unwelcome conduct is behavior that is not solicited and not wanted by the offended person. Even though you may perceive your behavior to be friendly and harmless, others may find the behavior offensive, so it is important to think before you act in a way that could be reasonably perceived as sexually offensive.
  - It is important to understand that intent is not relevant in determining whether or not a behavior is sexual harassment. All that matters is the impact of the behavior on the work/study environment. Regardless of intent, the behavior will be judged on its impact upon the recipient. The statement, "I didn't mean anything by it," is not a valid defense.

### **Definition of Hate Crime**

- Federal law defines a hate crime as a criminal act committed against someone because of that person's race, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, gender, or disability.

- Hate crimes can include assault, vandalism of property, threats, and harassment. Not only do they cause emotional and psychological harm, but they also can exacerbate racial, religious, or ethnic tensions in the community.

### **Code of Computing Practice, FERPA, and Student Handbook Responsibilities**

- Unauthorized copying or distribution of music, video, or software programs via the TBR or WSCC computing network is prohibited.
- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provides for the confidentiality of student records and information for students 18 years and older. In compliance with this federal regulation, the Office of Student Affairs requires that in order to discuss a student's progress with a parent/guardian, the student must complete and sign a form authorizing the release of such information. Student Progress Release Forms are available in the department of Retention Services.
- Students are responsible for reading the WSCC college catalog so they are aware of policies and other general and student conduct regulations.
- Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty are not allowed and subject to sanctions. See your Walters State catalog for more information.

### **Tips to Reduce Test Anxiety**

While a little anxiety before a test improves concentration and alertness, excessive worry, or test anxiety, can lower one's test scores. It is possible for students with test anxiety to get themselves so worked up that they can't think clearly. The brain is like a computer in that it contains a great deal of information. The information is useless, however, if you're not able to "access" it when you need it. Having test anxiety is like not having the password to a computer. The information is there, but you can't get to it.

To reduce test anxiety, study enough to feel confident that you know the material. Then try to replace the worry and negative thinking with thoughts that are positive and relaxing. Some of the following suggestions may help you.

- Start studying early. The night before a test, review the material and get a good night's sleep. Cramming increases test anxiety.
- Mentally practice going through the testing experience. Close your eyes and see yourself walking confidently into the test, answering the questions correctly, and receiving the grade you want.
- Walk into the test with your head up and your shoulders back. How you act can affect how you feel. If you act confident, you just may find that you feel more confident.
- Try these five relaxation techniques: 1) Take a deep breath, hold it, and then slowly release your breath along with the tension. 2) Start at the top of your head, flexing, and then relaxing each part of your body. 3) Close your eyes and visualize warm sunshine washing over you, melting away the tension, and relaxing all of your muscles. 4) Close your eyes and let your arms hang down at your sides. As you relax, visualize the tension from your head, neck, and shoulders flowing down your arms and out your fingertips. 5) Think of a place where you feel very relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being in that place.

The more you practice positive thinking and relaxation techniques, the better you'll get at using them. If you continue to have problems with test anxiety, talk to your advisor or to a counselor. Libraries and bookstores also have books and tapes that can help you.

## College Terms You Need to Know

**Academic Probation-** Students are placed on academic probation when they are in danger of being dismissed from school because of low grades. Walters State's retention standards are listed on page 19 of the WSCC college catalog.

**Accreditation-** If a school is accredited, it means that the school has met the accrediting organization's standards.

**Advisor-** A faculty member who advises students about their individual academic program. Each semester you must be cleared by an advisor to be able to register for classes.

**Articulation (Transfer) Agreement-** This is an agreement between a community college and a four-year college regarding the transferring of credits. It is a present outline of the courses you will need to take at Walters State. It's easier to make sure all credits are transferred and counted if a student has an articulation agreement.

**Associate's Degree-** Students who complete a two-year program, example: nursing, receive an associate's degree. \*All Associate's degrees cannot be earned in two years.

**Audit-** To take a course without credit. The student is not required to take exams or submit work for review. See the Records Department to complete an audit form.

**Bachelor's Degree-** Students who complete a four-year program, example: education, receive a bachelor's degree. \*All Bachelors degrees cannot be earned in two years.

**Bursar-** The bursar's office collects money for tuition, fees, etc. The bursar at Walters State is located in the college center Business Office.

**Call Number-** The five digit number given to each academic course that a student must have and use in order to register for that course. They can be found on STAR\_NET or in your Timetable of classes.

**CLEP Tests-** Tests developed by the College Entrance Examination Board which determine the extent of a student's knowledge in a particular subject area. These tests are used to award college credit in certain subject areas. See Counseling and Testing for CLEP testing.

**Course (or class) Load-** The number of semester hours for which a student is registered in a semester. Course loads can be Part-time (less than 12 semester hrs.), Full-Time (12 or more hrs.)

**Co-Requisite-** A course which must be taken at the same time as another specified course.

**Credit-** The numerical value awarded upon completion of specified studies, usually based on class meeting length and frequency. At Walters State, credit is stated in semester hours.

**Credit hour-** As a general rule, the number of credit hours assigned to a course also indicates the number of hours the class meets per week. A three-hour course, for example, usually meets for three hours a week. The class could meet 11:15-12:10 M, W, F, 11:10-12:35 T, R, or every Monday from 6-9 p.m. Class offerings vary. (Note: T, R means the class meets every Tuesday and Thursday) Lab classes are the exception; they usually meet for longer periods of time once a week.

**Curriculum-** The whole body of courses offered by the college, or by one of its divisions or departments.

**Department-** An organizational unit representing a discipline or related disciplines, such as Department of Mathematics.

**Developmental Studies Courses-** Courses designed to equip students with essential skills in math, reading, writing and learning strategies that they will need in order to succeed in college level courses. Remedial and developmental courses do not compute in your GPA, are not counted as college level credit, and do not count toward graduation.

**Drop/Add-** Students who want to drop or add a course must do so before the drop/add deadline(s) noted in the timetable of classes. Note: Lottery scholarship recipients must see the Financial Aid office to drop below 12 credit hours.

**Elective-** A course not specifically required for a particular major or minor. College students must take a certain number of required courses. College students also have courses that they're able to choose, or "elect" to take. These courses are called electives.

**Exam-** Typically, a comprehensive test at mid-term, at the end of the course, or at the end of some significant section of the course.

**Exit Exam-** A mandatory exam, taken during final semester, required by all Associate of Science degree completers. Results are used for gathering statistical data.

**Fresh Start-** Academic Fresh Start is a plan of academic forgiveness provided for students who have a record of poor academic performance. This program is designed to assist students by allowing calculation of grade point average and credit hours toward graduation to be based on only work completed after returning to college under the Academic Fresh Start policy. See the Office of Counseling and Testing for more information.

**Full-Time Student-** While students must generally be enrolled in 12 credit hours to be considered full-time students; many full-time students take 15-18 credit hours each term.

**General Education Core-** Courses designed to help students acquire a broad base of knowledge and capabilities fundamental to the concept of a college education.

**High School Unit Deficiency-** As part of the admissions requirements, students are expected to have a specific number of high school courses in certain academic areas. See catalog pg. 20 for listing.

**Hold-** A restriction that is put on your student account that will temporarily prohibit you from certain WSCC services, such as registering, graduating, obtaining transcripts or financial aid checks, etc. Examples of holds include: advising hold (you are required to meet with an advisor before registering for courses to clear this hold), admissions hold (if you have not submitted all your inoculation records or transcripts), business office hold (if you have not yet paid all of your tuition/fees or have unpaid parking fines), and financial aid hold (if you owe a Pell grant or loan repayment).

**Major-** A major is the academic area that a student has chosen to study in-depth.

**Midterm-** The approximate halfway point of a semester.

**Non-Credit Courses-** Courses offered by the Office of Community & Economic Development which address the professional development needs of the WSCC community but do not carry college credit.

**Orientation-** Activities and programs designed to help the new student become acquainted with the college.

**Prerequisite-** When students must take one course before they are allowed to take another, the first course is considered a prerequisite. For example, ENGL 1010 is a prerequisite for ENGL 1020.

**Registration-** Before the beginning of each term, students must meet with an advisor to be cleared to register, pay their fees and sign-up (register) for classes.

**RODP (Regents Online Degree Program)-** RODP courses and degree programs are courses exclusively taught online that were established by the Tennessee Board of Regents in conjunction with their participating technology centers, community colleges and universities.

**Schedule-** The courses for which a student is enrolled during a semester or summer term

**Semester (Term) -** A portion of the school year in which courses can be completed. Spring and fall semesters are about 15-16 weeks: summer semesters are much shorter.

**Special Student-** A student who has been admitted for the purpose of taking courses of interest, but who is not working toward a degree at WSCC.

**STAR-NET-** The Internet-based link to the registrar's office. On STAR-NET you can process registration, drop/adds, pay fees, view your schedule, obtain your grades, request a transcript, and review your financial aid information. You can also view and search course listings that are offered during a particular semester.

**Syllabus-** A syllabus is an outline or other brief statement of what a professor expects to cover for the entire semester. It will often include an exact schedule of assignment due dates, test dates, grading system, attendance policy and any issues a professor wishes to make absolutely clear.

**TBR (Tennessee Board of Regents) -** The governing board for WSCC.

**Transcript-** A transcript is a copy of a student's cumulative academic record. It lists all courses taken and all grades and credits earned.

**Tuition-** Tuition is the amount charged for academic instruction.

**Undeclared or General Major-** A student who is undecided about his/her major.

### How to Figure Your GPA

Your GPA, or grade point average, is the average of your end of term grades. Using this method explained below, you can figure your GPA for one term, or your cumulative, or overall, GPA.

Assume, for example, that you received the following grades for the fall term:

3 credit hour English course- C  
3 credit hour computer course- B  
5 credit hour math course- B  
3 credit hour business course- A  
1 credit hour A&P lab course- A

To figure your GPA for this term, first multiply the number of credit hours for each course times the numerical value of the grade (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0). This will give you the *quality points* for each course. (For example, to determine the quality points for English, multiply 3 X 2.) Then divide the total number of credit hours (15) into the total number of quality points (46). This will give you your GPA (3.07).

<u>No. of Credit Hrs.</u>		<u>Numerical Grade Value</u>	<u>Quality Points</u>
3	X	2	6 (English)
3	X	3	9 (Computer)
5	X	3	15 (Math)
3	X	4	12 (Business)
<u>1</u>	X	4	<u>4</u> (A&P Lab)
Totals 15			46

$$46/15 = 3.066 = 3.07$$

---

### Comments and Advice from College Students

*"I used to put off doing my assignments at the beginning of the semester. Then around midterms, the coursework would catch up with me, and I'd be swamped. I learned the hard way how important it is to get off to a good start and to keep up with my assignments."* Jennifer

*"Attending class is really important. When you miss a class, it's hard to get back on track."* Drew

*"Get to know your professors and instructors. Most of them want to get to know you, and they want to help you succeed. Make it a point to visit each instructor at least once a semester during his/her office hours."* Andre

*"In college, there is much more reading, and it's not the kind of reading that they have Cliff's Notes for. I've found that it helps if I outline everything I have to read. Then when I have to study for a test, I can just review instead of reread."* Tamika

*"You have so much freedom in college. The freedom is great, but you have to be responsible enough to make good choices. Missing too many classes and going to too many parties can easily lead to poor grades."* Nick

*“Be aware of drop/add dates. My freshmen year I signed up for a course that was hard for me and that I missed because of the flu. By the time I realized that I was in over my head, the drop date had passed and I was stuck. I ended up barely passing the class.” Sarah*

*“College work is hard, but if you’re organized, you attend class, and you study, it’s not hard to get good grades.” Bill*

### **Regarding Learning Styles...**

ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΑΥΤΟΝ

Socrates

(Know Thyself)

If we understood how we learned, could we improve learning? If we understood our professor’s teaching style would the ability to learn improve? The Greek philosopher Socrates was devoted to education. He realized that understanding oneself opened opportunities to learn both the internal and external wisdom. Knowing oneself is one of the keys to facilitate learning.

Understanding those who are around us would be another important key to learning. Using a self-evaluation instrument is one avenue to finding out what learning preference(s) you may have. Further exploration of those related instrument materials would provide, through observation, some indication of the style that others (including your professor) around you may possess.

A third part of the learning process is to become an active learner. It becomes quite imperative that we are regularly engaged in active learning, if the in-class environment does not perpetuate an active learning model then we need to create that environment. It becomes important to both the students and faculty to understand that to a great extent we need to develop our own engagement in the process of actively inquiring, taking risks, learning from being wrong, and persistence in spite of failure.

Therefore, to enable you, the student, to partly “Know Thyself” we would suggest the following web sites. These instruments are not intended to classify you or limit your abilities to learn material. Its sole purpose is to understand your comfortable learning zone and allow to you reflect on ways to move out of that comfort zone to expand your learning experience.

<http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html>

<http://www.agelesslearner.com/assess/>

<http://inst.santafe.cc.fl.us/~mwehr/HumanRel/6persteW.htm>

[http://www.metamath.com/multiple/multiple\\_choice\\_questions.html](http://www.metamath.com/multiple/multiple_choice_questions.html)

<http://www.vark-learn.com/english/index.asp>

Once again, these are only a few suggested sites to help you develop the best learning experience in your college years. We hope this guide will be of benefit during your academic career. Walters State is happy to be your college of choice.