

Learning To Learn

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Quite possibly the most important things you will gain from college will *not* be the information you learn in your courses or the assignments you complete in the disciplines you study. They will not be the connections to students and faculty that you gain in the years you spend in school or the grade point average you earn—even if it is high. All of these things are significant aspects of attending college, but they will likely change and fade over time, becoming all-to-soon forgotten or out of date. For example, how much do you actually remember now about the last course you took or the people you met a couple of semesters ago?

No, the most important things you can gain from a college education are the ability to think more thoroughly, learn more powerfully, and act more effectively in the pursuit of your goals. The abilities to think critically and creatively, take charge of your own learning process, and set compelling goals that you achieve, will never be obsolete and will, in fact, benefit you for the rest of your life as you navigate the changing circumstances of your own personal journey wherever it leads.

Unfortunately, many students do *not* succeed as well as they might at these valuable tasks. In spite of years of education, most students haven't been exposed to or explicitly taught what researchers and experienced teachers and learners have discovered about the process of learning itself, especially as it relates to one's individual learning situation. When asked about the most effective approaches for taking in, understanding, and integrating new knowledge, many students simply describe what they have always done, not what they *could* be doing. What would your answers be to questions like these? How much do you know about how learning occurs and how to make it last?

Fortunately for students across the country, there are a growing number of opportunities to “learn how to learn” through student success or learning strategies courses. The Human Development department here at ACC, for example, offers PSYC 1300 Effective Learning: Keys to College Success, a 3 credit-hour transferable elective course that is designed to address the range of knowledge, skills, and behaviors that can enhance a student's success now and in the future. The course is ideal for entering students, returning students, or those who want to “work smarter, not harder” and create better outcomes for their efforts.

Learning does not happen by itself. It takes attention, effective action, and time on task. Make it your goal to learn about learning so your efforts pay off now *and* in the future!