

College 101

How to best prepare yourself for the college experience in terms of time management, study strategies, and mental health

Welcome to College!

Now That You're Here, What Can You do to Prepare for Your First Semester at CSU?

This document is designed to help you with the transition from high school or smaller universities to a larger university such as Colorado State University. Think of this booklet as a simplified guide to help you be aware of what the best ways to go to college are! College life can be really stressful at first due to all the changes that are happening, so it's a good idea to read on to learn how to alleviate that stress!



This document is split into three parts; time management, study strategies, and mental health. Don't worry, it's not a textbook but rather an informal guide to what research (and your fellow students) has to say on the three parts. Helping you know the best was to study, manage your time, and take care of your mental health!

We are just starting the conversation, it's up to you to take the information given throughout this booklet and apply it to your own experiences. You can choose what to adapt into your life, though it is highly recommended to try and apply all this information, as it is meant to help you out!

Life is trial and error, so if you find yourself struggling with incorporating the advice into your daily life give yourself a break! Life changes take time to develop and don't be afraid to try new things! The important thing is to not give up, as the advice given here is meant to help you succeed, not just in college, but in future careers and life overall!

And remember- you are not alone! Campus is full of people who want to help you and see you succeed. Reaching out and asking for help can be scary but please do so. We all want to see you on the stage at graduation!

Why Should Incoming First Year Students Benefit From This?

College is stressful enough! You're on your own (and for some of you it's the first time) and there's so much to do and experience. This booklet is meant to help elevate some of that stress and make sure you are ready and equipped to deal with college stressors.



What students are saying?

The stress is due to college being a time where students “are starting to be independent so it can be somewhat hard to deal with their own problems”.



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Chapter 1: Time Management

There's 24 hours in a day, how do we get everything done?

What is the Importance of Time Management?

It goes without saying that daily life is hectic. There's so much to do, from work tasks, to daily chores, to social events, to taking some time for yourself. It sometimes feels that there is no end to long list of everything that you want to do or needs to get done. Thus, people tend to try to find anyway to help them remember what needs to get done, when it needs to get done, and how to balance daily tasks (such as eating, sleep, and daily chores) with the larger stressors in life.

Time management, or time management strategies, refers to how people plan out their day in order to make sure they achieve every goal they need to. However time management is also defined as an essential skill that people build up over time, via the techniques mentioned previously. This is something that many college students often find themselves battling with as they begin and continue through their college experience. It goes without saying that many college students face large amounts of stress caused by the increase in responsibility they may face. Many college students discuss the level of intensity and the rewards at stake make college a much more stressful and emotionally draining experience.

What students are saying?

"The stress of always having the pressure to be successful and the amount of work we get that's told is extremely important for our future" makes college much more stressful than what they had thought prior to attending.

With large workloads and the encroachment into adult life with all its many responsibilities, it's clear that many students are left struggling with accomplishing all they need to do.

So What Should You Do About it?

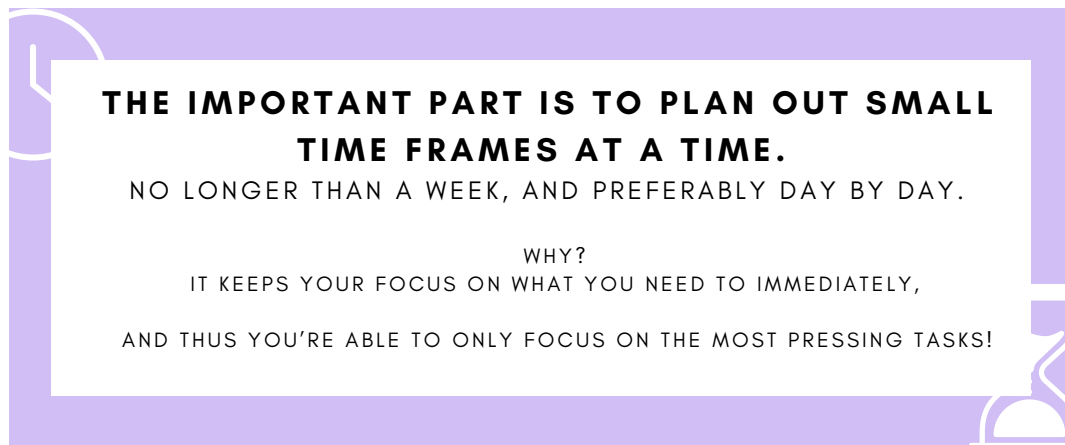
As stated previously, time management is a skill that you can start building up right now. Why now? It's important to get a good handle on making sure you can meet your deadlines for class work, have time for your job (if you have one), and still be able to be social! College is not just about your education, it costs a lot of money, so make the most of your time!

Ways to Build up Time Management Strategies!

Understand that What Works for Someone Else Might Not Work for You!

There are so many different strategies; from to do lists to calendars. Listed below are a couple different resources and what upperclassman have to say about them!

- To-Do lists
- Plan out your day
- Google Calendar/ Physical Calendar
- Planners
- Reminders
- Canvas pages



This is a Skill, and You Need to Work on it a Little Bit Every Day to See Results

Think of time management like working out. You can't jump right in and expect instant results, you need to build up your abilities and practice or else you get hurt. It's the same principle!



It's Okay to Make Mistakes

Working on time management takes time, and you might get a few weeks in and see that it's not working. It's okay. Make adjustments as you go until you have a good idea of how you best work!

Prioritize What Needs to get Done


It's good to understand that you might have more motivation to do a different project. Work with that! Work with your motivation levels, not against them! You'll find that, often times, once you get into the groove of working on one project, you might just get the motivation to work on another!



With this strategy, the same idea can be applied to your creativity! Sometimes it's good to work on a project or assignment that offers you more creativity and flexibility first. That way your thoughts get a chance to try something new instead of going straight into another research paper or essay.

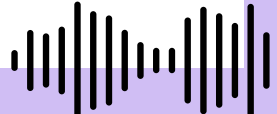
Find Your Tolerance for Distractions

Try out different spots to work.

 **DO YOU NEED COMPLETE SILENCE?**
TRY THE CUBE AT MORGAN LIBRARY!

DO YOU NEED SOME NOISE?
TRY THE LORY STUDENT CENTER OR BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES BUILDING!

DO YOU NEED STUDY BUDDIES?
PLAN OUT WITH FRIENDS OR OFFER TO MEET WITH STUDY GROUPS FOR YOUR CLASSES!



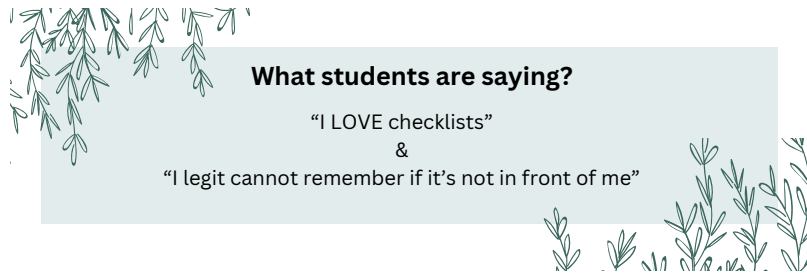
Everyone has a different tolerance level and it's only by testing them out do you see what works for you!

Set Time Limits/ Take breaks

You will do your best when you're not tired, hungry, or burnt out. Work for periods of time and take breaks when you need it. Ensuring that you get the right amount of sleep, nutrition, and physical activity can take time, but it is important to do so to keep your body healthy and happy!

What students are saying?

“Keeping track of assignments using to do lists and planning with my calendar works well for me!
Lets me know what I have to do for the week.”



So, take the students’ advice! Keep track of your work and get assignments done on time (or even ahead of time!) to lower stress! Some students even proposed using pop up reminders on their phones to remind them of what they need to work on! Find what works for you and don’t be afraid to try new things. Who knows, maybe you’ll find something that works even better than your previous strategy!

Dealing with Concentration

Have you ever had difficulty concentrating on one task at a time? Feeling restless, like you can’t sit still for long? Maybe you get easily distracted? If you are struggling with any of the symptoms listed, this section is to help you work out the best way to go about working on your time management skills! Well, there are a couple of ways to boost time management.

One of the biggest ways is to **increase motivation**. In numerous studies, motivation has been found to be positively correlated with a student’s commitment to a time management strategy.



Another option would be to **increase self-efficacy**, a person’s belief in their abilities.

How do you do this?

Remind yourself that you made it to college for a reason! You can do this!

And if you feel lost, ask for help! There are plenty of resources here at CSU meant to help you. Talk with friends and learn what works for them, discuss options with professors at office hours or talk with TAs about how to best manage your time!

Finally, **use delayed gratification**. Essentially putting off a desired outcome because you know you'll enjoy it more without the looming dread of the project or assignment.

Want to go out with friends?

Make a deal with yourself that you can only go out if you get your work done.

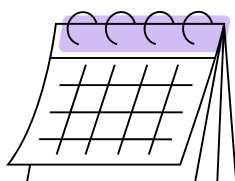
Create little treats for yourself while studying

(ex. grabbing a dessert from the dining hall if you finish an essay).



So overall, to increase one's time management skills, you need to increase the person's perceived time control. While there are many ways to do so, one method sticks out as the best option for college students. The concept of 'a sweat treat.' This idea has been circulating among social media platforms as a way of coping with stress; however, before being a social media trend, research looked at reward-based systems to increase productivity.

Resources:



Here at CSU, **Microsoft 365** is included in student fees. This grants you use of Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and most importantly for this section, Calendar. This is a great tool that you have access to that can help you keep track of what you need to get done. It can also help lay out your availability for work or group project meet ups, as it will notify others when you have free time or when you are busy.

Another option would be to utilize **Canvas's calendar** function as well. The advantage here is that your assignments are already laid out in terms of due date and the "to do" list feature can let you know a week before an assignment is due.

Google calendar is also a great function for organization of classes, assignments and work periods. While CSU does not give you a google account, they are free to make and grant a good amount of storage in terms of the amount of documents, PowerPoints, and more.

The final option discussed here would be to utilize a **creative software** to make to do lists or calendars. These programs are free to sign up, though some features may be restricted behind a paywall, but allow you to craft your own schedule based on what is important to you. Some examples are listed here:

Easel.ly

Infogr.am

Piktochart

Canva

Understand It's Not Because You Don't Care

The idea of procrastination gets a bad rap in academics. It's often associated with the idea that if a student procrastinates it means they are **lazy** and **unmotivated**.



THIS IS NOT TRUE

Often, it means the person is too focused on the assignment. You may have avoided doing a project because you aren't confident in your abilities, or don't know how to get started, or even you want it to be perfect and are stressed about how to accomplish it.

Just know that you are not alone. And that it is perfectly normal to be fully able to complete an assignment but procrastinate on it. Here is one major way to help you get out of that mindset and start your project:

Write everything down

Sit down and spend 5-10 minutes writing down everything you know/ want to say in the project. Pay no attention to what's already written, just type or write and only focus on what you will say next. Think of this a brain dump or a rough draft. You'll come back to edit and perfect it in a bit.

It can help to start a project by seeing what you already know and moving from there.

It might also showcase that you are fully prepared for the assignment- which might be able to motivate you to get the assignment done

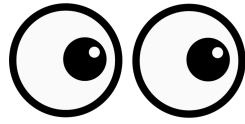
It can also visually provide confidence- showing you that you have everything you need to succeed!

Take A Break

Once you have everything written down- take a break. Go for a walk, take a shower, eat some food, or talk with a friend. The idea here is to reset your brain so that you can come back to the project with a fresh pair of eyes.

Note! Sometimes people work best in just sprinting through the assignment all at once. While I don't endorse this strategy as it can be damaging to your physical and mental health- it can help to keep you motivated enough to get the assignment done

Just make sure to take breaks to maintain good health and edit the assignment later on after a long break- you want to get the fresh pair of eyes!



Organizational Tips

Plan ahead. It's important to know when assignments and projects are due to better understand and utilize the time you have. Planning ahead also gives you the ability to find the best way to work on your projects and **avoid procrastination.**

Schedules can help keep you on track as well. Most people find life to be much easier by planning out what they will be doing ahead of time. Things such as meal plans or meal prep, chore charts, sleep schedules and more can help ensure you maintain both your physical and mental health as well as give you motivation and energy to complete whatever you need to get done.

Maintain a **clean environment.** This can help ensure you know where everything is for when you need it, as well as maintains good physical health (for example less dust in the area is better for your lungs). Clean and organized environments can decrease anxiety and have positive effects on mental health.

Chapter 2: Study Strategies

How to get the most information out of your classes and make it make sense

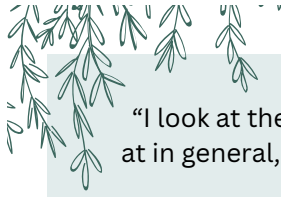
Study Strategies

One of the major aspects of college is how you will be tested to show you learned the necessary information to get the degree of your choice. While many students dread the test taking process, it is a fact of college that you will be taking one at some point; whether that be a short quiz or a final exam. But don't stress! This section is meant to help you feel confident that you know the material and ace your exams!

What students are saying?

"If I'm not sure if some tactic will work, I try it out, sometimes to the point of receiving a good/bad grade on an exam. If it doesn't work, I pivot"

So, what do you need to do to get the course material to stick in your brain? You need to get the concepts and information to stick in your long-term memory. That might sound intimidating, but don't fret, researchers are here to save the day and let you know, scientifically, the best ways to remember that information!



What students are saying?

"I look at the class content and if it's a class I am not the best at in general, I'll try to take good notes during lectures that will help in the future for exams.
If it's a class I feel confident in, I'll look over my notes and try to memorize important keywords"



While this may work for one student, the suggestion isn't fully recommended. The best way to study is through a process called **elaborative rehearsal**, this means that you take new information you are trying to learn and apply it to what you already know. So comparing a chemical reaction to baking- as it uses up the ingredients (elements) and it can be difficult if near impossible to separate the different parts back to their original form.



Now that you understand what elaborative rehearsal is, here's some ways to apply it to your own studies!

Connect the Information to Your Own Experiences

Maybe what your studying can be applied to your own life?

Ex. Baking is a type of chemical reaction, so relate parts you're struggling with, to baking a complex dessert!



Maybe you've experienced what you are studying and can apply how you reacted to the concepts

Ex. An accounting class regarding how to work with tight budgets

Maybe you've already talked about similar concepts in a previous class!

By connecting to new information to previous experiences or knowledge you strengthen the bonds created in the brain, making it easier to recall information. Therefore, it is a good idea to be on the look for those connections in any class you might be struggling with!

Mnemonic Devices

This is a much more fun way to memorize information. Essentially these are words, lists, sentences, or even songs that are meant to help break down information to more manageable pieces so that they are easier to memorize.

Chunking information: separating information to similar groups and memorizing them. Example memorizing phone numbers in three parts rather the entire thing:



Acronyms: can be a great way to understand the order of a larger amount of information.



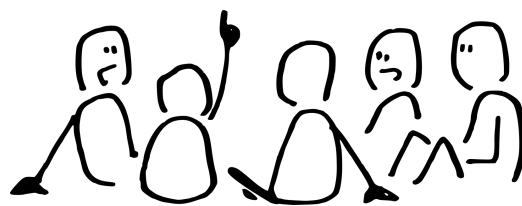
Set the information to a **song** so you can hum it and remember!

The alphabet song is still in most people's heads because it works to remember the order!

Explain it in Your own Terms

Use a friend or buddy to teach the information.

If they start to get confused or you have a hard time explaining certain parts, you know what might be information you don't have a full grasp on.



Make examples of definitions.

Don't use examples or the definitions from the text or class. Reword it in your own terms and memorize that.

You're more likely to remember a definition or example you created and thought about then one that was given to you

Test yourself!

Flash cards will be your best friend. It's a great way to help you memorize information quickly.



Ask professors for practice tests or study guides, look at textbooks to see practice questions/examples, and use them to test how much of the information you understand!

It's also easy to take breaks in between the different practice tests or flash card sets! This allows your mind to process and categorize information.



What students are saying?

What to do when taking different subjects?

“Science/math I do more practice to study, art/history I more just review notes”

&

“Mostly in history/French lit courses, I don't have a good memory of how I studied for others”



Get Motivated!

Very similar to what was discussed in the time management section, a person's motivation is the main driving force behind how successful they are in what they are attempting to do. But how do you get motivated to study? Here's some key factors to keep in mind!

Set goals and monitor them

Everyone comes to college wanting different things and different outcomes in each class. Maybe you want to get straight As in every class, maybe you're okay with a couple Cs or just want to pass your classes. No matter the goal, keep track of it and your progress.

When you know what you want and understand how to get it, you become more motivated to make it happen!



Look at your grades

Pay attention to the assignments you turn in and look at any criticism or suggestions on improvements. This will help you do better in that class and other classes!




Talk to your professors! It helps build connections you can use to help with graduate school or career applications, and allows you to see what parts you might be struggling with and get help!

Intrinsic motivation

This is a complicated way to say you are normally motivated to do things because you enjoy or are interested in it, or you see the benefit of doing it.




You're most likely not going to be interested in every class and every topic covered, so instead of relying on enjoying it, try to remind yourself why it matters to you.



Maybe you need to pass the class to take a more interesting class later

Maybe the information is useful for a future career or for grad school

And sometimes it's as simple as trying to pass the class to get a degree



Some people have higher levels of intrinsic motivation than others, so it's best not to compare to other students. We all move and learn at our own pace, and while it's tempting, try not to compare your status with others.

Take Breaks! (Cliche But It Works!)

Another key aspect of good study strategies is to take breaks. It's cheesy and many people tell you to do so, but science backs it up. By taking breaks, you allow the time for information to be processed in your brain.

Sleep can be a good way to ensure information stays in the brain longer as it slows down the forgetting process. This makes sense as the brain does a lot of work on itself while you sleep, that's one of the major reasons why it's so important to do so, especially after a brain injury.

So, when you sleep right after studying it gives your brain a chance to connect that new information through more neural connections.



It's complicated, but in essence it's like your brain is working out and by sleeping, it gives the muscles a chance to relax and not strain anything. So remember to take breaks and try to schedule your studying so that you don't do it all in one sitting. When you do this, it cuts down on the stress of the test being soon, gives you time to ask questions to the professor, and allows the information to stick in your mind. It is win-win all around!

Resources Here at CSU

There are many resources here at CSU to help out with studying. Most places are paid for by student fees or come at a small cost to students. As well as the fact that many of these places cover a wide variety of subjects, almost every class can offer some sort of study help. If you are having difficulty reaching out or accessing these resources, it is a good idea to contact your professors to see what can be done to ensure you can succeed in class!

CSU'S Tutoring Resources

TILT: helps students, faculty, and staff use research-based learning and teaching methods to support academic achievement for all CSU students

Website: <https://tilt.colostate.edu/learning/tutoring/>

Writing Center: Useful for any writing projects students may have. From term papers, to short essays, to even creative writing, the Writing Center can help with organization, formation of ideas, and more.

Email: writing@colostate.edu.

Location: Eddy Hall, Room 23

Statistics Success Center (SSC): A great resource for CSU students enrolled in introductory level STAT courses (STAT 201, 204, 301, 307, and 315)

Location: Weber Building, Room 223A.

Calculus Center: A great place to improve learning and academic performance for all students in our calculus courses.

Location: TILT Great hall – Math 141, 155, 156, 160, 161, 261, 340

The Mechanical Engineering Student Ambassadors (MESA): Provides free individual and small group tutoring for courses in the MECH curriculum. They also assist with other questions related to being a successful MECH student!

Email: engr-me_mesa@mail.colostate.edu

Location: ASME Student Lounge Engineering Basement Room 5



Chapter 3: Mental Health

How to make sure you stay sane during an insane time

What do We Mean by Mental Health?

Mental Health can be a very vague term that many people like to throw around, so defining it can be tricky for some people. A good definition provided by the World Health Organization essential states mental health to be a state in which a person can handle stressors, maintain healthy relationships and function in their daily lives. There are many aspects of this definition that lead to why mental health is such a struggle for many college students. As many students, in working on assignments and studying, tend to neglect daily tasks that lend to functioning such as eating or sleeping, and put of social events to get more time to study. Thus, this sets the groundwork for why mental health is such a struggle.

What students are saying?

Regarding Mental Health:

“The academic rigor often leads to anxiety and burnouts, which can exacerbate mental health issues”

Bad mental health is caused by “lot of major life changes”

What students are saying?

Why are mental health issues common in college?


“Because college is needlessly hard and the payoff seems so far off. We’re told to power through but then the powering through doesn't end”

How to Work on Mental Health

There are many ways to improve your own mental health from simple steps to more complex ones. Thus, some of the advice mentioned in this section may seem easy or complex depending on your own experiences with managing your mental health. The important thing is to take this advice slowly, and don't expect instant changes. Mental health needs to be worked on every day, and some days are easier than others. The important thing is not to get discouraged!

Eat and Sleep Schedules


As stated previously, many students tend to neglect eating and sleeping in favor of studying, completing assignments, or even hanging out with friends. While these are all good things to do on their own, it's good to keep in mind not to neglect eating, sleeping and taking care of your physical health.



Consistency is key!

Try to eat around the same time each day, prepare for bed around the same time.

Limit time in bed to just times of sleeping and relaxation.



When you do home work or try to study in bed, your brain starts seeing your bed as a place to focus- not relax. So while it can be comfortable, try to not do your work in bed.

Talk with Friends

Socialization is key for mental health. You may have heard of the idea that 'humans are social creatures.' Thus refers to the fact that, at some level, everyone wants to live near and interact with people to some degree.



Being around others allows you to gain acceptance and find people who share similar goals and values, adding to your comfort level. It also allows you to talk through difficult emotions and have people to rely on in times of trouble.

Talk with Professors

Sometimes it's a good idea to talk with people who have gone through college and know first hand the toll it can have on students both mentally and physically.

It's good to talk with professors you are close to and have connections with, or if you are not close with them, this can provide a way to engage with them outside of class.

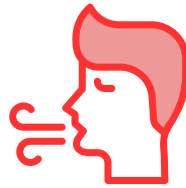
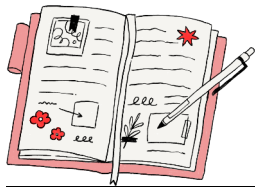
The best advice here is to go off your impression of the professor, if you think they will listen and help you there's no harm in asking for help. If you do not feel comfortable talking with a professor, don't force yourself to do it- there are plenty of other resources available



Mental Health Classes

Many universities offer mental health courses to students. These are meant to encourage students to try out different coping skills and work on improving students mental health.

These can be classes like mediation, yoga, or more specialized classes that cover coping skills like journaling or breathing exercises.



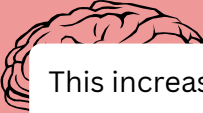
The benefit is that the classes are not graded, which allows you more flexibility to work on these skills on your own terms. As well as not requiring you to open up and discuss what you are going through or our experiences.

The down side is that these classes are ones not usually university funded, thus you might be paying for them out of pocket.



One on One Counseling

A great addition to many universities over the years has been inclusion of mental health treatments in student fees. Allowing students to receive one on one care at the university. This gives many students easier access to mental health treatment!




This increases awareness of mental health issues and normalizes getting treatment

The downside is that these types of facilities are often overwhelmed with the large number of students needing treatment.

There is a real possibility of getting put on months long waitlists to get treatment, but don't get discouraged

If these facilities cannot treat you in the time frame you need, they can help get you to therapists within the community who will be able to see you.



There are many ways to reach out, but sometimes even a quick google search, or a phone call to the mental health treatment center on campus can help point you in the right direction.


There are links at the end on how to access counseling services here at CSU for your convivence. If you feel that you are struggling with your mental health or might do so in the future, it is recommended to reach out quickly. That way you can get the help you want before it becomes an emergency.

Group Therapy

The large reason why group therapy is often times the quicker form of therapy students can receive is that it allows mental health practitioners to see larger amounts of clients in one session.

This allows you to get some form of help quicker and more efficiently, which can help if you need that more immediate treatment

The downside is that you are having to open up about your experiences to more people, which many do not feel comfortable with.



However, this form allows you to build a strong support network, something that you might need in the future, as you all work towards improving your own mental health.

It can provide a great experience to many people and helps normalize receiving treatment for mental health concerns

Peer Interaction

While we have already touched upon the benefits of talking with friends and those close to you, it's also good to touch on benefits of peer to peer programs.

These types of programs are similar to group therapy in that it allows for groups of peers to come together to better each other's mental health. However, instead of a therapist, the entire group is self lead and seeks to encourage each other to reach a mutual goal.



For example if someone is struggling to get out of bed in the morning, the group works to encourage that member and help motivate them to get better.

This is one of the main benefits of frats and sororities: that the membership allows you to gain these types of closer social circles that are able to help each other.

Substance Use and Mental Health

The last key point to make is the issue with substance abuse and mental health on college campuses. Alcohol use in particular has become synonymous with college due to frequent portrayals in media and the presence of bars on and around college campuses. However, it is important to note the major negative effects of substances on mental health.

This is meant not to scare you away from substances but rather approach them as informed as possible so that you know what might happen when consistently ingesting substances over long periods of time. Scare approaches are shown to not work, so it is the hope that by giving you the facts, you can come to your own conclusion on whether or not you want to take the risk.

The Effects

Dependency

Many types of substances such as alcohol, weed, and other drugs can make your brain dependent on them for you to feel happy

The more you use the more you have to ingest in order to feel the same thrill as the first time.

Worsening Current Mental Health Issues

Many substances can increase negative thoughts and feelings, which can worsen your mental state and have serious negative effects should you already be struggling with mental health

Increasing Risk for Mental Health Issues

Similar to the previous effect, the increases negative thoughts and feelings, as well as a physical dependency can put you at risk for diagnosed mental disorders:

Depression

Anxiety

Substance Abuse Disorder

Physical Health Risks

Frequent use of substances can impact many organs in the body, causing them to break down over time.

As well as some substances can cause you to overdose

Resources Here at CSU

The Health Network: A place that offers a variety of services related to a student's physical and mental health

Location: 151 W Lake St, Fort Collins, CO 80524

Phone Number: (970) 491-7121

This is great place to stop by if you are having trouble finding places in the area to get more individualized care. The offices can provide referrals to other providers in the area based on your health care coverage.

Summit Stone: provides more than 50 services dedicated to treating mental health and addiction disorders for people of all ages

Location: Offers multiple locations

The main office is at 4102 S. Timberline Rd Fort Collins, CO 80525

Phone Number: (970) 494- 4200

This is a good option if you or someone you know is having a mental health emergency. Their office offers 72 hour treatments, can pick you up from most areas in Fort Collins,

and have excellent staff.

Rams Against Hunger: This organization works to help students, staff, and faculty who may be experiencing food insecurity. Offers a variety of services, including a food pantry, a meal-swipe program, pocket pantries, and in-person assistance with navigating federal aid eligibility.

Website: <https://lsc.colostate.edu/slice/community-engagement/rams-against-hunger/>

Check the website for information regarding pocket pantries

Locations: CSU General Services Building (1251 Mason Street)

Remember that it is good for your mental health to get nutritious meals multiple times a day. It's also a good resource in case you are facing food insecurity or know someone who is.



College 101

Disclaimers and Important Notes

Disclaimer for Other Universities

This document is meant to act as another resource available to students to better help aid their adjustment to living on their own, and their studies. This document is tailored to Colorado State University (CSU). While much of the research and firsthand accounts from students can be applied to many larger American Universities, many of the resources mentioned for students are CSU specific. If one chooses to utilize this document for another university, it is highly recommended to attach notes for that university's specific student resources.

For example, Chapter 3 makes note of the different mental health resources available to students on CSU's Fort Collins Campus. Should another university utilize this document it would be prudent to include that university's mental health resources. If none are available, it is suggested to look at the larger community.

Notes

This work was done as a requirement of CSU's honors program. It involved combining lived experiences, both of the author's and of other CSU students, and research findings from numerous studies. The project spanned a full year, from planning out the project's different elements, to getting IRB approval, to data collection, researching the different factors, and finally combining that information to a easily digestible format for first year students.