

How to Survive Your First Year at College  
 To: Non Traditional Students  
 From: A Non Traditional Student  
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Welcome to the Wonderful World of Wilkes Community College! Do not feel alone as you sit in your first class and wonder, "What in the world am I doing here?" We have all been there! Just know that you are where you are supposed to be. I have found that for every door that closes another one opens and if not for losing my job, I would have never been in the position I'm in now. I will hopefully be graduating next May with an associate's degree in Human Services. Yes, at first it was very difficult. Just getting back into school after such a long absence was very scary. Nevertheless, through it all I have survived and become a much better person for it. Here are some tips that I hope will help you along your way.

Expect to be overwhelmed your first few weeks at college. This is normal. After all, this is a new experience and a big change in your life. The main thing to remember is it will get better with each passing semester. Please don't quit without talking to someone first. We in SGA will be glad to help you find where or whom you may need to see. Feel free to come by our office anytime.

Don't overload yourself! If you are taking developmental courses that have a separate lab, remember that it is almost like taking two courses. Overloading of too many courses will end up in excelling in none. Be sure to discuss with your advisor what your responsibilities are and incorporate your needs with your course requirements.

Set aside time for homework! Time management and scheduling are very important. If you have children do homework at the same time. It not only allows time to be with each other but you can help your children as well as them help you.

If you are having trouble with a course, please first discuss the problem with your instructor. Then if the problem cannot be resolved go to the lead (head) of the department (each department has one.) If no resolution can be made, next make an appointment to meet with the Dean of Instruction, Dr. Walt Plexico. If necessary, the final step is to file a grievance with the Dean of Student Services, Larry Caudill. Just remember that each step must be followed. If you try to bypass a step you will be sent back to the step you skipped. Remember your opinion is appreciated and taken seriously. Above all, hang in there because it only gets better.

Please note, there is always someone available to talk with if you are having problems. Wonderful counselors are available in both the Student Services Office (located in the Student Center) and the Student Support Services Office (located in Thompson Hall).

When you go into Thompson Hall from the Student Center Building, go up the first flight of steps, turn left, and take the steps to the top floor. To your left is our Student Lab. During fall and spring semesters it is fully staffed with helpful assistants that assist in computer operations, English, and math. To your right is Student Support Services, which is also a great resource for non traditional students. See the staff and they will give you information needed to join this organization. John Hawkins, the secretary, will be glad to make you an appointment.

Try to set up a good support system. Your spouse (if married) can be of great help. After 30 years mine finally has learned to wash clothes, cook and help with the needs of our son. Yes ladies, our spouses can learn these things. Try to incorporate your spouse in activities at the college, such as WCC's dinner theater, plays, and the Walker Center events. This helps them to see just where you are most of your days. Please realize that your spouse is going through an adjustment period too. Some have a great fear of change, and are simply afraid that you will out grow them.

At WCC, we have great resources to help you along the way. SGA, Student Services, and Student Support Services holds special workshops. Be sure to use these resources because they are there for you.

Stress times are at mid-term and finals. For some reason, getting everything completed in college at the end of a semester is a time of stress for most people. I have found that we impose most of the stress on ourselves. It is usually not as bad as you think. Do not give up, **you can do it!**

Always stay up to date on your work. This is a big help with those little surprises you never count on happening. Be on time for all of your classes and turn in assignments as required. Give your instructors and fellow students the same respect you would like to receive from them. Be the best you can be because no one can ask for more.

When in doubt ask an upper classmate. You can depend on them because they've been there themselves.

I hope you enjoy your college experience as much as I have. Join a club! Yes, I know you don't have time. I felt the same way. However, since I took the Leadership Development class, I so enjoy my club associations. It helps me unwind and get to know my fellow classmates in a more relaxed setting. You learn about such leadership qualities as how to get along with others and being part of a team. Come join us at the Student Government Association. We post flyers before all meetings. Be sure to keep a check on all of the bulletin boards. We post flyers before all student events and workshops. Above all enjoy your college experience and look forward to the reward at the end!

