What is the First Year Success Series?

By Lily Ong, first-year student

So what exactly is the First Year Success Series? To most people, you would never know what it is until you attend one, to others it’s more than just a label. As a freshman who attended the First Year Success Series, I realized that there are a variety of workshops offered every week from life skills to study skills. Some workshops sound interesting, and some don’t, but no matter what the name is, every workshop can influence a student in the slightest possible way.

I remember attending a study skills workshop, titled “study skills: concentration and motivation.” I honestly thought I did not know how to study and in the back of my mind, I knew I had a microeconomics midterm the following Monday. I browsed through the workshops, and luckily enough I found a study skills workshop. At first I thought to myself why did I register for the workshop, because let’s be honest...it was an hour of my time and what kind of student doesn’t want to have an extra hour to do whatever they want? After attending the motivation and concentration workshop, I realized the outcome was better than I expected it to be. I learned how there are little and big factors that can contribute into the whole concentration process.

Some of the information was common sense, but at the same time I was having one of those moments when someone needed to remind me in order to remember. Students who attended the workshop were given handouts that listed the topics to be presented. Overall, I liked the workshop and I would recommend it to my friends and fellow UCR students.

First Year and transfer students should check out the First Year Success Series because the whole purpose is to allow students to acknowledge what is available to them on campus. It could also enhance a student’s UCR experience since every individual is not born with basic fundamentals to life. Attend a workshop and you could either learn how to write a paper effectively, improve your study skills or even develop leadership skills. Who knows what the first year success series has in store for you, plus you might even meet new people. Just remember, it never hurts to try, well...especially not the first year success series anyways.
The Academic Advantage

Your number one priority while in college is your academic life. As you begin juggling pressures related to roommates, friends, classes, athletic commitments, family and more, you need to make sure you stay on track. Otherwise, you will quickly find yourself in a place where you can no longer offer attention to anything other than you books. And that just doesn’t sound like much fun! Getting—and keeping—you yourself organized from the beginning of the year will help you avoid academic crunches later on.

•Designate a Study Space: Determining a study space will help you develop positive study habits from the beginning. Select a comfortable space with proper lighting. The space, whether in your room or elsewhere, should be a place free from distractions. Creating a “study sack” or something similar, where you keep all of your study supplies in one place, might also help you stay organized. Check out our tips for what to put in your study sack below!

•Set Boundaries: From the very beginning of the quarter, set boundaries between yourself and your peers and family. Maintaining your personal space will ensure that you have enough uninterrupted time in your week to accomplish your studies.

You really can stay academically organized with these simple tips. Your number one priority while in college is your academic life. As you begin juggling pressures related to roommates, friends, classes, athletic commitments, family and more, you need to make sure you stay on track. Otherwise, you will quickly find yourself in a place where you can no longer offer attention to anything other than you books. And that just doesn’t sound like much fun! Getting—and keeping—you yourself organized from the beginning of the year will help you avoid academic crunches later on.

•Make a Schedule: It may sound very basic, but completing a schedule grid and posting it where you’ll look at it regularly will help you map out weekly events and manage your time. Plus, it will help you keep track of academic obligations, while balancing them around other demands. Purchasing and maintaining a planner is a definite bonus.

Take Five: 5 Ways to Get Thankful

1. Write your friend or your RA a thank you note for all they have done for you.
2. Plan a Thanksgiving get-together for your friends or for your residence hall. Have everyone bring a little something and make it one big feast of fun!
3. Show your thanks by giving back to the community. Follow the link below and click on the community service link at the top right of the webpage.

http://deanofstudents.ucr.edu

4. Make a list of 5 people, things, events, etc. that you’re thankful for. This Gratitude List can make you feel really rich!
5. Connect. Hug a friend, call a family member or share dinner with someone you’d like to know better. Connecting with others can make us feel thankful for their presence in our lives.

Create Your Own “Study Sack”

Are you studying somewhere other than the desk in your room? If so, create a “study sack” of sorts, where you keep everything you might need in one place – ready to go whenever you need it.

Of course, the contents of your particular study sack will vary based on the classes you’re in, and the snacks you like to munch on.

Even the libraries at UCR are letting students bring in snacks...so you know it’s important to pack them along with the fun stuff. Oh, and don’t forget your notebooks, textbooks, etc.

(continued on page 3)
Smoking is bad for you. We all know this. But do you know the real truth about smoking?

Here are 10 smoking facts to chew on…

• Approximately 30% of all cancer deaths are attributable to cigarette smoking.
• About 87% of lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking. Lung cancer is one of the most difficult cancers to treat; it’s the leading cause of cancer death in both men and women today.
• Smoking is a major cause of heart disease, aneurysms, bronchitis, emphysema and stroke.
• Smoking contributes to the severity of pneumonia and asthma symptoms.
• Tobacco is associated with reduced fertility and a higher risk of miscarriage among women, as well as premature births, stillbirths, infant death and low birth weight in infants.
• Smoking has been linked to a variety of other health problems including gum disease, bone fractures, ulcers and cataracts.
• The Centers for Disease Control estimate that adult male smokers lose an average of 13.2 years of life.
• Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body.
• Smoking low-tar cigarettes is not any better for you than smoking regular cigarettes.
• Smoking early in life will affect you later in life.

Beating the Cold and Germ Blues

There’s much talk about germs these days. Researchers continue to uncover new information. In fact, they recently discovered that cold viruses are more tenacious than previously thought – some of these nasty viruses can live on hard surfaces for at least 18 hours. Yuck. Although washing your hands frequently remains the best line of defense against colds, here are some other tips for keeping colds at bay this year:

• Flick switches with the side of your hand or wrist. This will make you less likely to pick up or pass along germs on your hands.
• Don’t borrow others’ cell phones. Instead, make all calls on your own. You’ll avoid coming in contact with a host of germs this way.
• Try not to touch your eyes or nose. These are the places where cold germs enter your body.
• Bring your own pen. Always keep a pen handy, so you don’t have to borrow one. Sharing pens is a prime way to pass germs.
• Wipe surfaces often. Use a soapy sponge to wipe up surfaces you touch frequently. This includes your desk, which is a hot spot for germs!
• Sneeze into your elbow. When tissues aren’t available, sneezing (or coughing) into your elbow keeps germs off your hands.
• Toss all of your used tissues promptly—yourself. Don’t ask others to do so for you, as it puts them at risk.
• Exercise, eat well and get enough sleep. All of these things help boost your immune system—and your ability to successfully fight off viruses.

Source: Adapted from Prevention, February 2007.

“Study Sack” (continued)

Some things to keep in a study sack include:
• dictionary and thesaurus
• highlighters/pens/pencils
• lined paper/notebooks
• calculator
• CDs/flash drive
• Post-it notes / 3” X 5” index cards
• language translation dictionaries and tools
• blanket (for those all-nighters)
• iPod
• late night snacks (choose a variety of snack foods & drinks, or visit the nearest vending machine)

Other tips
• If you bring a friend, make sure you still get work done. Sometimes, “study buddies” can be distracting.
• Your cellphone will be a distraction to yourself and neighbors. Put it on vibrate and resist the urge to text/call everyone you know.
• If you’re on campus late, contact the Campus Safety Escort Service (http://www.escortservice.ucr.edu/)
They’ll walk with you anywhere you need to go on campus.
• Take a 15 minute break every two hours, or you’ll burn out
• Don’t leave your bags unattended, or they’ll be gone by the time you get back.
Learning to Say No

It’s a word we all learned to exclaim at a young age. Why, then, do so many of us have such a hard time uttering it as adults? “No.” This two-letter word shouldn’t be that tough to say. Unfortunately, for many college students, it is. It’s flattering to be asked to help organize an upcoming campus event or to put together a study session for a mid-term exam. But when does helping become too much? It’s really easy to get overloaded in college. There’s a real danger in taking on more responsibility than you can handle.

Over-commitment can lead to stress and burnout, not to mention the fact that you won’t be able to do quality work when you’re just plain doing too much. So, learning to say “no” is a necessary survival skill to cultivate! And more often than not, those who can say no from time to time are greatly admired by their peers.

It’s Not Always Easy
How we respond to requests is often a learned behavior influenced by family, cultural background, friends, acquaintances and role models, not to mention societal expectations. If you find it hard to say no, perhaps it’s because you’re sensitive to other peoples’ reaction or you are aware of how much it hurts when others turn you down. Whatever the case, with practice and self-assurance, the word “no” will cease to be an emotional event, and become a natural and appropriate life skill.

Explain It, Don’t Excuse It
There are times when an explanation is necessary and should be offered. Explanations are different from excuses. With an explanation, you can matter-of-factly tell others why you need to decline their request. An excuse often beats around the bush and makes you seem wishy-washy.

So, don’t go too heavy on the excuses or become overly apologetic when you’ve decided to say no since you will undermine your credibility and risk offending the person making the request. Any hesitancy you show may lead to bolder pleas, requests and cajoling. When you have reached a decision to turn down a request, be sure to say it with conviction and firmness. Let your final answer be final.

Just Say No to Guilty Feelings…and Ego Trips
Many of us have allowed ourselves to be forced into unwanted positions or tasks due to an unhealthy sense of guilt. Learning to say no involves learning not to feel badly when you need to turn down a request. If you have honestly weighed the pros and cons and made a decision based on the merits, you can put any second thoughts out of your mind.

In addition, while you may enjoy the idea that you are the very best person to do something in particular, do not be persuaded to accept the added responsibility based on these grounds alone. You are unique, but others can also rise to the occasion. Watch out for subtle ego trips, which can make us unable to delegate responsibility or turn down a request.

Saying no isn’t easy. Yet, if you’re saying yes all the time for the wrong reasons – because you want to be liked, because your ego enjoys the stroking or because you’re afraid to let people down – you’re doing more harm than good. Saying yes may feel easier in the short term but trying to accomplish all those things you said yes to can definitely take its toll in the end. You can say no without destroying relationships and your reputation. Really. Give it a whirl and you’ll see how much healthier, happier and balanced your life can be.

Practice This…

• “No, I won’t be able to fit that into my schedule.”

• “No, I can’t do it yet I have some ideas about other great candidates!”

• “No, I need to keep things balanced right now and I can’t take on another responsibility without my others ones suffering.”

How will you say no when needed?
It’s not always about Turkey...

Sometimes, students decide against meat or other animal products for a variety of reasons, ranging from health concerns to compassion for living creatures to religious reasons. What does it all mean? Here’s a sample of some of the veg-options...

**Being a Vegetarian**

Going meat-free isn’t a recent fad. A variety of people advocate or advocated for vegetarianism, from Albert Einstein to Mr. Rogers to Clara Barton, according to The Vegetarian Resource Group.

*What Does It Mean?* Vegetarians abstain from eating meat, fish or poultry. *Why?* Reasons vary for being a vegetarian, including compassion for animals, a belief in non-violence, and economic, health, religious and ecological concerns.

A vegetarian diet can meet people’s known nutrient needs, according to the American Dietetic Association. The key is eating a wide variety of food from different food groups and limiting the amount of fatty, sweet substances. Check out the meal planning tips and the Vegetarian Food Pyramid at [www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/nutrition_5105_ENU.HTML.htm](http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/nutrition_5105_ENU.HTML.htm) for more info.

**Being a Vegan**

Vegans go one step further by steering clear of animal products. This, too, is not a recent fad; it’s just becoming more mainstream and recognized. *What Does It Mean?* Vegans avoid using or consuming animal products. This includes items such as milk, cheese, eggs, leather, fur, wool, silk, down and products tested on animals (i.e. chemicals or cosmetics).

*Why?* Veganism is the touchstone of a cruelty-free lifestyle, plus it provides benefits to the lives of animals, to the environment and to individuals’ health. Luckily, most college dining halls offer a variety of options that provide adequate nutrition for vegetarians and vegans. You can also talk with folks in dining services about this lifestyle choice for assistance in planning nutritionally sound meals.

There are also some other dietary styles you might not have heard of:

- **Pescatarians:** avoid all meats except fish
- **Pollotarians:** avoid meats other than poultry
- **Fruitarians:** only fruits, nuts, seeds, etc.

Whatever you choose, remember that it’s up to others to choose what’s best for them, too. Whether or not you eat meat or use animal products, it’s most important that you:

1) keep yourself healthy along the way; and
2) Be aware that not everyone eats the same way you do.


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**Celebrating Native-American Heritage**

November is National American Indian Heritage Month. This is a great time to begin a year-round appreciation for America’s first citizens.

We have a great campus resource, the Native American Student Programs Office. The Native American Student Programs (NASP) office of UC Riverside is a resource center that provides educational, cultural, and social support for all students, especially American Indian students. This office coordinates a variety of activities designed to expand educational awareness for American Indian students, as well as the campus community.

[http://nasp.ucr.edu/](http://nasp.ucr.edu/)

Check out the Spirit of the Tribes 5K Run/Walk: Nov. 17, 2007, 7:30-11 am

[http://nasp.ucr.edu/Events/ST5K.htm](http://nasp.ucr.edu/Events/ST5K.htm)

Here are a few other websites to broaden your knowledge base:

- **National Museum of Natural History** at [nmnh.si.edu/anthro/outreach/Native_Americans.html](http://nmnh.si.edu/anthro/outreach/Native_Americans.html)
- **American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC)** at [www.aihec.org](http://www.aihec.org)
- **National Register of Historic Places** at [www.nps.gov/nr/feature/indian/](http://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/indian/)
- **American Indian Heritage Foundation** at [http://www.indians.org/](http://www.indians.org/)
- **United States Department of Veteran Affairs** at [www.va.gov/dmeeo/calendar/naih.htm](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/calendar/naih.htm)
UCR Botanic Gardens

Come and see the true beauty that spreads across 40 acres along the eastern boundary of the UC Riverside Campus! Located in the foothills of the Box Springs Mountains, the Botanic Gardens is a living plant museum which holds more than 3,500 plant species from around the world and includes over four miles of scenic trails to explore! Bring family and friends to share in the amazing wildlife that exists within this living museum, including 200 types of birds and a number of mammals ranging from bobcats to lizards and insects.

Adult Tours and Self-Guided Tours are available for any group size!

Expand your horizons and see what the hidden jewel of UC Riverside is all about!

For more information check out: www.gardens.ucr.edu

-Ana Ruhl
Senior at UCR

Visit the UC Riverside Botanic Gardens!
Open daily from 8 am to 5 pm

Holiday Celebration Know-How

As Thanksgiving creeps ever closer and the December holidays follow soon behind, you might want to get into the holiday spirit. This is usually pretty easy to do on a college campus! Here are a few tips for making sure you stay safe during this festive time:

• Keep your door decorating to a minimum. Covering your door in its entirety (i.e. from top to bottom with wrapping paper) can actually be a fire safety issue.
• Be smart in your use of lights. Be careful not to wrap them around pipes or place them near heating units. Also be environmentally conscious by turning them off during the day and before you go to sleep at night.
• Don’t burn candles. If you celebrate Hanukkah or Solstice, or need to light a candle for any reason, talk with your resident director or another administrator first. Chances are, there is an event on campus for a group to celebrate that holiday or occasion together. You’ll be amazed at the celebrations organized on campus to meet students’ needs—and the plans already in place to ensure students can demonstrate their faith appropriately.
• Be open-minded. Numerous holidays are celebrated at this time of year. You may have a winter holiday that’s near and dear to your heart. Just remember, so do other people. There are others who do not celebrate holidays at this time of the year. Keep this in mind when you choose the ways you will celebrate these next few weeks. You can use this time to find out more about your traditions and others.

Happy holidays to you and yours!
Agh—the pressure! How can you be expected to remember everyone’s names after meeting them only once? Well, for starters, you aren’t. But it sure is nice when you can. Using people’s names makes them feel like they matter and contributes to creating a great sense of community on campus.

Here are a few surefire memory tricks to help you remember names after meeting people for the first time:

• Pay attention during introductions. Although this sounds simple, it isn’t. The hectic nature of a college campus can make it tough to really focus on the person to whom you are being introduced. Listen clearly to the name. If you don’t hear it the first time, ask the person to repeat it.

• Associate the person’s name with something. Maybe the person’s name is Emma and that is the name of your niece. Or maybe it’s Bruce and you’re a big fan of Bruce Lee. The association doesn’t really matter, but the mental note sure will!

• Repeat the person’s name. Throughout the course of the conversation, use the person’s name several times. An easy way to do this is to say, “Bye Marcela. See you again soon!” instead of just “Bye. Nice Meeting you.” This will help it stick in your memory.

• Keep a list. At the end of each day, jot down the names of the people you met and where.

• Make mental images in your mind. When you get introduced to someone, immediately associate the name with an image. If the person’s name is Jack, you might think of the character Jack Sparrow. Wally? Think of a walnut. You get the picture. This can be a great trick, especially if you meet more than one person with the same name.

Being able to remember names is a valuable skill, not only for college but for later in your professional life as well. Try some of these tricks over the next few months as you meet new classmates, professors and administrators around campus.

Of course, there are plenty of other tricks to try.

Any of the student organizations you join, campus activities you participate in, your RA (if you live on campus) and even some of your classes, will provide opportunities for you to participate in icebreakers. These activities give you a great opportunity to get to know the name, major and favorite cartoon character, tv show or hobby of a number of people.

You could look up the same info on Facebook...but you can’t live your whole life online, right? (speaking of which, check out the December issue for tips on being safe online, and exploring cool things about Facebook and other online social networks).

So for now, you should be ready to share a little bit about yourself and meet a ton of new people. One of the best things about college is meeting people from diverse backgrounds with varied experiences.

UCR is one of the most diverse universities in the country! So take advantage of it!

Plus, hey, you want to try out the name-game techniques we mentioned above, right?
Why Policies Exist

We’re not out to make your life miserable—or to replace your parents. College policies exist to keep you safe and to protect the overall community. Simple. Without them, campus life would be chaos! Here are a few things to keep in mind about campus policies:

• We tell you about policies so you can take responsibility for your actions. You know what’s acceptable – and what’s not. Now, what are you going to do with that information?
• Professional and student staff have to uphold policies—it’s part of their job. So, don’t put them in a compromising position. Please.
• Most policies stem from the very basic desire to keep you and your fellow students safe. The reason you can’t throw a ball in the hall? Because students have been hit in the eye, causing permanent physical damage.

The story behind underage drinking? You read enough sad stories of students dying from alcohol-related causes—we don’t want you to join those tragic ranks. There is a method to our madness.

So, get to know the ins and outs of your campus policies. Armed with this solid information, you can make good choices—or face the consequences when you choose not to. It’s all up to you.

Important resources: http://conduct.ucr.edu/Policies/

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MRSA – What’s All the Hype About?

Something called “MRSA” has been making headlines these last few weeks. What is it exactly? MRSA—or methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus—is a skin infection that may appear as pustules or boils that are often red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. These skin infections commonly occur at sites of visible skin trauma, such as cuts and abrasions, and on areas of the body covered by hair (e.g., back of neck, groin, buttock, armpit, or beard area of men).

Sounds pleasant, doesn’t it?

Unfortunately, several K-12 schools and college campuses have recently experienced outbreaks of MRSA. Many schools have actually chosen to close or shut down buildings or certain sections within a building in order to disinfect desks, sports equipment and other shared materials.

Before you get too nervous, just know that we’re sharing this info so that you’re aware of this issue. If you have any questions about this or any medical issue, please check with your health care provider and/or the UCR Campus Health Center (http://campushealth.ucr.edu)

How MRSA Is Transmitted

MRSA is typically transmitted by DIRECT skin-to-skin contact OR by contact with shared items or surfaces (e.g. used towels, bandages, shared sports equipment, etc.).

How to Prevent MRSA

Wash your hands before mealtime and after engaging in sporting events or sharing items. Of course, maintaining good hygiene never hurt anyone either. Also, make sure you clean and cover open wounds well.

If you think you might have contracted MRSA, be sure to seek medical assistance at the health center right away. College campuses can be a breeding ground for germs.

Signs or Symptoms of Infection

The signs or symptoms of infection include:

• Boils, rashes or ingrown hairs—often occurring in armpit, groin, neck and/or buttocks areas where Staphylococcus bacteria colonize and thrive.
• Unexplained fever, muscular pain and/or fatigue, especially in the several months following a skin infection.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), almost all MRSA skin infections can be effectively treated by drainage of pus with or without antibiotics. More serious infections, such as pneumonia, bloodstream infections or bone infections, are very rare in healthy people who get MRSA skin infections.