Starting on Track

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Computer Science FSC
Topics

- Enjoying your major
- Time management
- Self-responsibility
- Planning
- Life skills
- Caring for yourself
- Interactions
- Tips & Tricks
- Resources
What to Expect

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Intentionally splitting your time up to complete tasks

Have to determine your priorities/choose things to give up (shouldn’t carry too much on your plate)

Start from Day 1 (assignments, projects, etc.)

Lots and lots of networking (basically just getting to know people)
What You Learn From College

- Life lessons
- Discipline
- Problem solving
- Applying knowledge in various ways
- And again, time management.
“What’s a fun major?”

CS can be harder than you expected, so you might wonder, “Why do people still do it anyway?” or “Is it really as fun as it seemed?”

- Ask your professors and classmates what made them choose it
- Try out a CS-related event with friends, like a hackathon
- Find an aspect of it that you enjoy, and build on it
- After this semester, look back and see how much you’ve learned
- Create something with it that you can be proud of, and share it with others!
Managing Your Time

There are 24 hours a day, 168 hours in a week. How do you spend it?

Necessities:
- Eating (2-3 meals), sleeping (7-9 hours), self-care
- Recommended 2-3 hours of personal studying for each hour spent in class (that’s 30-45 hours a week if you take 15 credits)
- Some personal time to de-stress

Where do you spend the rest?

Start by setting daily, weekly, and monthly goals, and make them positive, specific, and realistic in regards to your workload and how much time you have.
Starting Classes

- Start off strong, doing the best you can in earlier assignments. It’ll make the second half of the semester much less stressful.

- Start right away on any assignments and projects! You won’t know how hard it is or how long it’ll take until you try it first.

- Professors are also happier to help early birds.
Be Responsible for Your Own Success

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If you ask to have something done and are not getting contacted back in a timely manner, follow up!

Whether it’s for your professors or anyone else, be responsible first, and for yourself. (Because it can be easy for others to forget things).

People won’t be telling you what to do as much as before. It’s up to you if you want to do well, and it’ll only benefit you if you take the initiative!
Planning Near and Far

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To give a close goal: The most important thing in your Freshman year is your GPA, and passing all your classes. Keep it up!

By the numbers: (For a 4-year BS in CS)
- Need 30 credits a year to graduate in 4 years
- You only have 3 summers and 4 winters (how will you spend it?)
- Maybe 5 free electives (give or take)
- 6 General Education courses

You get back as much as you put in, so it's all up to you. Work to shape yourself into your ideal image. The sooner you start, the easier it will be, but take just one step at a time so it doesn't pressure you.
Planning Near and Far

To make a far goal: Where do you see yourself in one year? Two? Five?

It’s okay not to know yet, but think about how you see yourself after a semester or a year. Where do you want to be, or what do you want to have achieved?

Try to gain a sense of urgency, because you may not have as much time as you think!
Resumes

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Start now! You won’t know how much you’re lacking or how much you’ve achieved until you start it. It’ll be useful for almost anything you apply to from now on! Here’s some things you may be able to work towards right now:

**CSM Dean’s List:**
At least 12 credits with a GPA of 3.5 or above and no grades below a C. Courses with a grade of "P" do not count towards the 12 graded credits.
https://www.umb.edu/registrar/academic_policies/deans_list

**Alpha Lambda Delta Honors Society:**
Maintain 3.5 or higher GPA (on 4.0 scale) during your first year.
https://www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/alpha_lambda
Life Skills

Time to switch gears~ I’m going to cover a lot of things, so forgive me if the topic suddenly changes.

- Be responsible! Don’t do things that are detrimental to yourself and those around you. There are many ways to have fun outside of smoking, drinking, and going crazy partying.

- Don’t accept peer pressure; your opinion matters!
Life Skills

- If stressed, in mentally or emotionally hard times, talk to someone and don't be alone. Just hear each other out (you don't always have to offer a solution) and be each other's support. It's okay to be vulnerable, because everyone has those times!

- Reflect on your performance (tests, presentations, classes, work, etc). Did I do well or did I do poorly? What did I do that led me to this result? What should I keep and what should I change?
Life Skills

- If you see a problem or mistake, don’t just state the problem, but propose a solution as well. Anyone can say something is bad, but not anyone can give a better answer than what’s given.

- Express your appreciation if you’re thankful for something instead of just keeping it inside! Can be a short compliment or comment, whether to friends, professors, or anyone else. It’ll make their day!
Life Skills

- Learn to have an interest in other people. There is a ton to learn from others, it broadens your own horizons, and also helps you to reflect on yourself.

Put yourself in their shoes. It helps you see what you don’t know, and gives you things to ask.

It’s networking minus the working! ...and the net-? Just call it making friends.

On a side note: It’s okay to ask for names again if you forget! And don’t feel too bad about it, because they probably forgot yours too.
Caring for Yourself & First Impressions

First impressions are important, in work or in relationships with others.

Take care of yourself, at least to a bare minimum (ie. brushing your teeth and tongue in the morning so your breath doesn’t smell too much).

Good manners:
- Raising your hand (if required) to ask questions
- Please and Thank You’s!
- Paying attention when someone is speaking (or at least look like it)
Interacting, Making, and Maintaining Friends

- Embrace the awkwardness, and don’t let it get in your way! Many first interactions can be awkward at first, until you get to know each other better.

- It’s okay to ask for names again if you forget! Yes, I’m saying it twice. (...as in, sorry if I forgot your name... haha...)

- Make memories, take pictures to commemorate events or new friends, and create your own events (like the FSC event you have each semester this year!) and make an effort to attend them!

- Stay connected! Calls, emails, texts, messengers, chat rooms, you name it!
Tips & Tricks

- If you have a lot to do, don’t just think about it and build stress. Just start!

- Make a list of the websites/sources you need to check for all your classes, and check them daily. (Especially your UMB Email!)

- Get to class 10 minutes early.

- Try to make a friend in every class. It’s a great opportunity to expand your network, and it is helpful if you were absent or need a study partner.

- If you’re waitlisted for a class, go anyway! Try to talk to the professor about your status and wish to get in, and they may be able to help you.
Tips & Tricks

- Get textbooks weeks in advance if you know what’s required, but try to look online for a free version first. (But be careful of suspicious links!) It’ll help to take stress off at the beginning of the semester.

- Go to club day and join any clubs you’re interested in! There’s almost never attendance requirements, so just go when you can and explore. Some clubs also have access to resources and offer study sessions (depending on the club). Even during the school year, you can still join.
Tips & Tricks

- Plagiarism is very obvious. Don’t do it. (Especially in CS, same mistakes, extra unnecessary lines in code, etc.). At worst, make it your own. Learn every step that’s happening and understand it, then rewrite it in your own way (doesn’t mean just changing variable names!).

The point of the assignments is to teach you creation, which is the hardest part, not how to copy, which makes you think and learn less. Professors sometimes give you the benefit of the doubt, but don’t take it for granted.
Tips & Tricks

- Check out your Degree Audit on WISER at least once a semester to see what you’ve completed and what you still need. You don’t want to reach senior year just to find out that you didn’t finish a ton of requirements for your degree!

- Make use of spare moments, such as the time between classes, waiting for the train, etc. to study or review. Reading index cards with key terms, formulas, definitions, or facts are a great way to use spare moments.

- Plan to study at times when you feel most alert and study for challenging courses first while you’re fresh and concentration is at its peak.
Tips & Tricks

- Before making any major decisions, talk to an advisor! You never know what kinds of insights they could give you, since they've have experience helping hundreds of students. We are surprisingly bad at making the right decisions for ourselves, so get some advice to help you think!

- Join the UMass Boston Alert System! Your UMass Boston email is automatically send these alerts anyway, but you can also register your phone number and other modes of contact to alert you when an emergency occurs, or when there are things like snow days!

https://www.umb.edu/preparedness/alert
Tips & Tricks

- If you need it, consider looking for a job on campus to minimize commuting time and to develop a stronger support network in the community.

- Recognize when you need help. Academic life can be quite challenging and stressful, and personal problems can sometimes create havoc in your life. There are many places that would love to help you, so please seek after it! Also, don’t be ashamed to ask for help. Those that recognize their needs and seek to have them resolved are the ones that will succeed.
Need Help?

Do you think you’ll need help in classes? Seek it out!

There are always resources available to you including:
- Professor’s office hours
- Supplemental instruction sessions
- Group or individual tutoring for most 100- and 200- level classes
- FSC peer mentor and professor
- FSC classmates and friends!

https://www.umb.edu/editor_uploads/images/academic_support_services/uac/Start_on_Track_Stay_on_Track_flyer.pdf
https://www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/academic_support/tutoring
Need Help?

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Do you think you need help in personal matters?

- Friends!
- FSC Peer Mentor
- FSC Professor
- Student Success Center (Science Building, 2nd floor)
- UHS Counseling Center (Quinn Building, 2nd floor, 02-07)
- Office of the Dean of Students (Campus Center, 4th floor)
- Interfaith Campus Ministry (McCormack, 3rd floor, Ryan Lounge)

https://www.umb.edu/healthservices/counseling_center
https://www.umb.edu/healthservices_counseling_center_what_we_do
https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/dean_of_students/students
https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/multiculturalaffairs/campus_ministry
Academic Resources for CS

CS Department Homepage:  www.cs.umb.edu

academics > courses > undergraduate (course list & descriptions)
academics > course schedule (what’s being offered; can choose semester)
academics > undergraduate programs (some recommended course routes)
people > faculty > (prof website)

CSM Four-Year Plans:
https://www.umb.edu/academics/csm/student_success_center/degree_planning/plans
Online Resources for CS

Codecademy:
https://www.codecademy.com/

Khan Academy:
https://www.khanacademy.org/computing
https://www.khanacademy.org/computing/computer-programming

edX:
https://www.edx.org/course/subject/computer-science

Youtube, etc!
Other Resources

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Campus Resources:
https://www.umb.edu/healthservices/counseling_center/https_www.umb.edu_healthservices_counseling_center_on_campus_resources
https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/student_affairs/departments

Emergencies or otherwise:
https://www.umb.edu/police

Health Services:
https://www.umb.edu/healthservices

Student Employment:
https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/student_employment

UMBIInvolved (clubs, organizations, and events):
https://umb.campuslabs.com/engage/
https://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/events
Questions?