

Tips of the Trade

By Karlie A. Elliott (Class of 2009)

“To decide, to be at the level of choice, is to take responsibility for your life and to be in control of your life.”

-Abbie M. Dale

Attending the prestigious University of Illinois is analogous to embarking on a great journey. As I discovered through the experiences that life brings, sometimes a map of this journey is provided for your convenience, while in other instances the route is obscure. In order to diminish a little of the obscurity, you can take responsibility for your journey by planning ahead, asking questions, and taking advantage of University services. From experience, I have learned that being prepared, asking questions, utilizing resources, taking responsibility, and getting to know others are essential components for success here at the University.

Utilizing resources such as course and department websites, academic advisors, faculty, UI-Integrate, the Library, and extracurricular activities is simple and often takes only a short amount of time. Awareness of crucial information not only assists the journey toward receiving a diploma, but it also institutes many privileges, experiences, and new knowledge. Plus, these resources allow you to gather knowledge about courses, GPA, research information, due dates, interests in other realms, networking, and new relationships! Responsibility is useful throughout all of life and is highly respected, but it is not always the easiest competency to acquire.

Fortunately for students, a multitude of resources is available to answer questions and accommodate needs. Thankfully, technology allows many resources to be accessible in almost any location and at any time with just a click of a mouse. Many campus resources also offer appointments and walk-in sessions, along with pleasant staff members who are trained to specifically serve students' needs.

While students are responsible for their own success at the University, as no one will be available to guide every decision, conflict, or question, there is never shame in asking for assistance. It is essential that students be self-supporting and take responsibility for knowing important deadlines, scholastic requirements, advisors, library information, etc. However, there are some questions that cannot be answered with online information, over the phone, or without asking. Luckily, University service centers and faculty members are wonderful resources to utilize in such instances. Faculty members are available and willing to assist students, offer great advice, or provide different perspectives. More often than not, faculty members have encountered similar experiences or questions in the past and understand that help is a necessary part of life. To answer difficult questions, obtain advice, or gather reassurance, I highly encourage calling or visiting the University's Counseling Center, faculty members, academic advisors, or ACES deans.

The Counseling Center offers professionals who can provide help with academic struggles, personal troubles, relationship difficulties, or health-related problems. Be sure to take advantage of special resources specifically for ACES students, such as the ACES deans. The College of ACES is known for its intimate atmosphere, and ACES students are fortunate to have wonderful deans who are always willing to answer any questions or offer solutions to students' problems. Faculty members and deans realize that life is not always easy; that questions can be

difficult to answer, and that sometimes life does not work out as planned. ACES deans are down-to-earth, sincere individuals who are dedicated to the students that they serve and take great pride in the fact that students regularly turn to them for help. Asking for help is never shameful; actually, asking for advice is admirable because everyone encounters struggles throughout the journey of life. Life happens, and fortunately there are many resources available to make every experience a learning opportunity, no matter how terrible a situation may seem at the time. Never forget that we are all in this life together, that there is always someone available to help, and that asking for help is never shameful.

College is a great time for growth, discovery, recognizing personal limits, obtaining help, and learning responsibilities – all of which will greatly contribute to the journey toward success! Therefore, I strongly encourage students to take responsibility for their lives and take advantage of the resources available to them, which will greatly enrich their experiences here at the University and allow for a multitude of opportunities. Plus, always remember that there is no shame in asking for help and that someone is always willing to assist.

Welcome to the University of Illinois, make the most of your time here, and be proud to be a member of the Illini family! ☺

Useful Websites

- University of Illinois – <http://www.uiuc.edu/>
- College of ACES – <http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/>
- *ACES Student Handbook* – <http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/Students/Handbook/>
- UI-Integrate – <https://apps.uillinois.edu/selfservice/>
- Course Suite – <http://courses.uiuc.edu/cis/index.html>
- DARS Audits – <http://www.oar.uiuc.edu/current/dars/index.html>
- University Library – <http://www.library.uiuc.edu/>
- Counseling Center – <http://www.couns.uiuc.edu/>