Goal Setting and Planning

Where It Begins

Your time at university will be a defining period in your life both personally and career wise. That being said, while at university, or at least during your first year. We think the ideas below help to provide perspective.

“If you don't know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else.”
~Lawrence J. Peter

This makes it important to establish a plan that will help remind you of your hopes and dreams and help guide you through exciting and challenging times. This guide should help you to develop a personal success plan.

A dream is just a dream. A goal is a dream with a plan and a deadline.
~ Harvey Mackay

I’ve discovered is one of the easiest and hardest things you can ever do in life. Setting goals, much like anything in life requires focus, discipline and a plan. Goals are the building blocks to your success and a source of inspiration that you can draw upon during those low moments in life when you need to be picked up. I’ll blog more about setting goals in future posts, but for now, here are my top 9 tips for setting goals to help you achieve university success!

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A dream is just a dream. A goal is a dream with a plan and a deadline.
~ Harvey Mackay

Beunaventura (2012) has written about this in their blog: “When I first started university, I really didn’t know what I was doing. In fact, looking back now, I can honestly say that I was pretty clueless for most of my first year at university. I applied to two schools, but only had intentions of going to one, which luckily I was accepted to. But, once there, I felt overwhelmed by all the options in front of me and the fact that I had to make all these decisions about my future that seemed as hazy as the fog that rolled around our campus on cool wintry days.

So, much like 99% of first year students I met, I decided to ignore all of these vague feelings of uncertainty and just go with it. After all, I couldn’t really think of what else I was going to do with my life other than go to university. Luckily, a friend of mine recommended that I read The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, which turned out to be a life changing book for me as it motivated me to become a more proactive & positive person. One of Covey’s best advice is to be goal-oriented, which
Tips for Goal Setting - Getting Started

1. Write your goals down & always keep them with you. Having your list of goals with you at all times is a great motivational tool and helps keep you focused.
2. Set concrete & specific goals. Write down goals with definite deadlines and objectives.
3. Set larger, longer-term goals. Make sure to note big, sometimes seemingly unattainable goals. You should always dream big!
4. Set smaller, short term goals. Make sure these are related to your longer term goals as they are the stepping stones to achieving them.
5. Don’t be afraid to tell people of your goals. In fact, you should tell as many people as you can what you’re hoping to accomplish. This will keep you motivated and accountable to yourself.
6. Surround yourself with people who will support your ambitions. Be with people who think and have the same goals as you and stay away from people who are clearly not going to help you achieve your goals.
7. Challenge yourself & work hard. You’ll never achieve your biggest goals if you never stretch beyond your comfort zone & push yourself.
8. Don’t let setbacks deter you. It’s a proven fact that you’re probably going to fail the first time you try something. But, those who are successful in life are usually the one who get up and try again.
9. Success starts with your attitude. Stay positive and don’t waste your energy on the things you can’t control & that have happened in the past.” (Beunaventura, 2012).

Online Resources

Now, you might be saying ‘I have no clue what I want, I just got to university and things are overwhelming’. That’s alright because here at York we have all of the support you need to be successful and want to work with you to ensure you are heading in the right direction. You need to know yourself in order to know what your hopes and dreams are. The following are outside tools that are widely used to help you discover yourself:

1) True Colours (http://www.true-colors.com/content.php?id=64)
2) StrengthQuest (http://www.strengthsquest.com/content/cms.aspx?space=SQ&ci=143780&title=Students)
3) Myers Briggs (http://www.myersbriggs.org/my-mbti-personality-type/).

There is a cost associated with those tools. Luckily, the York University Career Centre has some free self-assessment tools that will help you to learn about yourself and some of the potential careers that align with your values. http://www.yorku.ca/careers/students/learningaboutmyself/.

There are also a variety of workshops that you can attend that will help you to develop skills in all areas of your life. Some are run through CDS - Learning Skills which can be found at the following link: http://www.yorku.ca/cds/lass/skillbuilding/timemanagement.html.

Exercise

The following exercise will help to reinforce your personal values and can help guide you when you are establishing your goals. Rank the following categories in order of importance. (1 being the most important and 8 being the least important):

Once you feel comfortable with your values and have narrowed down your hopes and dreams it is important to start planning steps to get there.

Rank the following areas from 1 to 8:

___ Finances
___ Physical Lifestyle
___ Spiritual Lifestyle
___ Volunteering
___ Education
___ Family
___ Friends
___ Career

Utilizing the tips above as well as the following will set you up for success. There are many aspects of your life that you need to consider to ensure that you have balance with your goals. Please work through the following categories and keep in mind the questions when determining your goals for each categories. You don’t need to have a minimum or maximum for each category and you can add more than 5 if you choose.

“Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you’ll land among the stars.” ~Les Brown
Education
What program do you want to major in? What courses do you want to take? Does your program align with your future career plans? Do you want to pursue further education in your future? All of this things should be considered so you can plan your time and courses wisely, which will keep you motivated. You should also consider long term what additional training or education you might want. If you want to attend Graduate School or pursue a diploma afterwards then you will want to look at entry requirements to ensure you meet those when you graduate from York.

1) ______________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

2) ______________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

3) ______________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

4) ______________________________
   ______________________________________
   ______________________________________

5) ______________________________
   ______________________________________

Family and Friends
How often are you going to visit home? How much contact are you going to keep with your family? How often are you going to spend time socially with your friends? You may not want to set goals in this category but these are commitments that you will want to consider when you are mapping out your other goals. Sometimes it is great to include a family member or friend in your goals. For example, if you want to exercise 3 times a week, having a friend that has the same goal can help keep you motivated and allow you to spend time with that friend.

1) ______________________________

2) ______________________________

3) ______________________________

4) ______________________________

5) ______________________________

Volunteer
What types of volunteering are you interested in? Are there volunteer positions that can help give you experience for your future career or academic program? How much time do you have to dedicate to an organization or cause? Volunteer opportunities are great ways to give back to the community and gain experience if you have never worked or want to get specific skills that are hard to get from paid positions while in school.

1) ______________________________

2) ______________________________

3) ______________________________

4) ______________________________

5) ______________________________

“The world needs dreamers and the world needs doers. But above all, the world needs dreamers who do.”

~Sarah Ban Breathnach, Simple Abundance: A Daybook of Comfort and Joy, 1996

“Life’s problems wouldn’t be called ‘hurdles’ if there wasn’t a way to get over them.”

~Author Unknown
Work and Career
What types of summer job do you want? Are you looking to travel while you work? Do you want a summer job in your future career field? What positions are available and what are the requirements? You should consider these questions to ensure you are setting yourself up for long term success as well as your short-term goals.

1) __________________________________________________________________________
2) __________________________________________________________________________
3) __________________________________________________________________________
4) __________________________________________________________________________
5) __________________________________________________________________________

Financial
How are you paying for your education? Do you plan on working to support your education? How much are you going to save vs. spend? You should keep in mind your finances and your debt long-term to ensure you aren’t paying off your student debt longer than needed after you graduate.

1) __________________________________________________________________________
2) __________________________________________________________________________
3) __________________________________________________________________________
4) __________________________________________________________________________
5) __________________________________________________________________________

Physical Activities and Lifestyle
How are you going to stay active and exercise? How are you going to balance your nutrition and treats? What type of attitude do you want to live your life with? What Spiritual considerations are important to you? You need to make sure that you are healthy mind, body, and spirit to ensure success while at school. Living a balanced lifestyle with ensure that you can focus on other aspects of your life as well including your academics.

1) __________________________________________________________________________
2) __________________________________________________________________________
3) __________________________________________________________________________
4) __________________________________________________________________________
5) __________________________________________________________________________
Staying on Track

Now, you have created your goals and you are feeling pretty good about your self-reflection and where you are heading. It is important to remember your goals and review them on a weekly basis. This will help to keep them fresh in your mind and motivated to keep up with them. Remember that goals are not set in stone and as your values and wants change, so should your goals. Review and update your goals as often as you can.

York University

Residence Life, Division of Students

Main Office: N303 Bennett Centre for Student Services
Phone: 416-736-2100 ext. 40052
E-mail: reslife@yorku.ca

Remember that while you are at York, we have all the support and skill development you need to succeed in your goals. All the best and we wish you continued success!

Resources
York University Residence Life Information and Contacts: http://reslife.yorku.ca/

Beunaventura, a student’s reflection on university and goal setting.
http://firstyearuniversity.com/goal-setting-101-a-must-do-for-first-year-university-students

York University Learning Skills Services
http://www.yorku.ca/cds/lss/skillbuilding/timemanagement.html

York University Academic Calendar
http://calendars.students.yorku.ca/

York University Career Centre
http://www.yorku.ca/careers/students/learningaboutmyself/