As you read this you are probably both nervous and excited about the story of your college years. It will be a thrilling time. People often refer to college as being like a roller coaster. It moves very fast. It has many thrilling highs, and more than a few terrifying lows. Turns come fast and unpredictably, and the whole experience is over before you know it. In many ways, a roller coaster is a fitting metaphor for life in college. However, in one very important area, the metaphor does not hold up. You will be in control of this wild ride we call college.

Perhaps a better comparison would be that of a racecar. Most people reading this are well acquainted with driving a normal car. Most of the parts of a racecar are the same. There is a steering wheel, an engine and a transmission. However, many of the parts don't work exactly the same way as they do on a normal car. You may have to learn to shift gears, and it may take a few frantic pulls where the door should be before you realize you have to slide in through the window. Your experience has prepared you pretty well, but there is much to learn. High school and college are a lot like this metaphor. College shares many similarities with high school. Both have their share of teachers, classroom experiences, classes, and other aspects of teaching and learning that students know well. But how you use them will be very different.

I can remember when I first learned to drive. Topping out at speeds close to 30 miles an hour, everything felt like it was coming at me so fast. It seems silly now that I regularly drive 75 miles per hour. I didn't get better at it overnight, but as I look back, something that seemed quite hard at the beginning can be done with much less thought or effort now.

College will be a bit like that. The national averages show that more students leave college in the first year than at any other time.2 Perhaps this is because some who come to college assume that their inability to immediately master their roles as college students is due to a lack of ability on their parts, rather than just being part of the natural process of adapting to college.

Also, many students don’t realize that while the work in college becomes more challenging, the overall experience of college often becomes easier as students learn how everything works and as they settle into their major. By the junior and senior year in college, most (if not all) of the classes that students take will be in their major field of study. Since students choose their major, they often enjoy these classes much more and in that way, the work may actually feel easier. We’ll talk more about the classes in your first two years in just a bit.

Like the person learning to drive a racecar, you will be in control of your educational experience. We often use the phrase, “Making the transition from high school to college.” While most students understand that there will be a transition, few understand in detail what that means. One of the biggest transitions for many students is the amount of responsibility expected of students. In high school, many times students play a more passive role in their education. It is primarily the teacher’s job to teach and the student’s job to learn. College can be quite a bit different. Most faculty expect that it is the student’s responsibility to teach themselves and the professor’s job to guide and direct that learning. This is done because success in life after college will depend on one’s ability to teach oneself. Knowledge won't stand still, and teaching oneself is an essential skill for those who want to keep up.

Additionally, students will be responsible for a whole host of things that they may have never had to do before. They will need to wake themselves up in the morning and get themselves out of bed (even when they don’t want to wake up and go to class). For students who live on campus, there will be no one saying how important it is to get up and go to class. You will need to do this for yourself. Even students who continue to live at home may find that they have more freedom than ever before. This freedom will need to be used wisely.
Doing your own laundry, paying bills, and balancing work and school with involvement outside of the classroom may be things that you haven’t had to do before. So many new expectations can be overwhelming. Just remember, you can do this; and the confusion you are experiencing is temporary. Simply put, confusion is the first step in learning something new – not a sign that you’re unable to learn something new.

All of these new responsibilities may be scary, and they may make you feel like you are out of control in your life. For those who are successful in college, learning to take control will be a common achievement. In her book, “Authoring Your Life: Developing an Internal Voice to Navigate Life's Challenges” researcher Marcia Baxter Magolda refers to this skill as “self-authorship.” In much the same way that an author decides what all of the characters in a book will say and do, Baxter Magolda encourages college-aged students to determine the direction of their own lives and what they choose to do with them.

Taking control of your life does not happen all at once. It occurs gradually over time. Magolda uses the metaphor of a bicycle. Early in your life, you were merely a passenger on a bicycle. Maybe your family had a bike with a baby seat attached to the back. You had no control over which direction the bike went or at what speed. Later, perhaps you found yourself in the back seat of a tandem bike with parents or other adults peddling along with you. They did the steering, and the peddling was made much easier with their help. Hopefully the day comes (or has come) when you are ready to switch to the front seat on the bike. You decide which directions to go and then provide the energy necessary to take you there, but you don’t have to do it alone. You have the help of others when needed.

Stephen Covey used the terms “dependence,” “independence” and “interdependence” to describe the three examples discussed above. In his book, “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” he wrote, “Dependent people need others to get what they want. Independent people can get what they want through their own effort. Interdependent people combine their own efforts with the efforts of others to achieve their greatest success.” Focusing on interdependence will change your relationship with any number of important contributors to your education. It may reframe your relationship with your family, your friends, the faculty and the university.

One way you’ll notice the shift in college is through the classes you’ll be required to take. They provide a kind of ramp-up to increasing interdependence. In your first two years you’ll be taking what are often called “general education requirements.” While these classes won’t always relate directly to your major, they are very important. First, they provide you exposure to a number of different fields and disciplines. Students often come to college with a limited view of possible majors and professions. Many discover areas they did not even know existed. That general education class may very well prompt a student toward a profession they didn’t know anything about that will give them a lifetime of happiness. Additionally, these classes provide students skills that an educated person needs regardless of their profession. Writing and mathematical skills are necessary for life—and reasoning, comprehension, critical thinking, leadership and cultural competency (to name just a few) are often cited as the most desirable skills that employers are looking for in college graduates. These are acquired through classes in art, philosophy, social sciences, and others.

What you will find is that general education requirements will usually focus on acquiring new knowledge and skills. While you’ll also be expected to take more responsibility for learning than you may have had to do previously, they will often carry a lower expectation than we will have for you in your major courses. As you progress in your degree program, you may be asked to do more challenging things such as participate in research or creative projects, sometimes even in partnership with faculty members. You won’t just be asked to remember facts but to pursue questions that have less concrete answers. This is the process by which we’ll teach you to develop what we call “higher order thinking skills.” These include the ability to critique your own work and the work of others, ability to understand how parts of a system work together, and to take apart that system and use what you know to create new solutions and ideas. It may take some time to adapt to this kind of learning, but the benefits are worth it.

Career Counseling can help students match career possibilities to their interests, values, personality and major. Counseling sessions are typically a three-session process, made up of an initial consultation, followed by the assessment interpretation and finally a wrap-up session; however, sessions can continue as long as the student needs. To schedule an appointment for Career Counseling or to utilize the many services offered, contact Counseling Services at (936) 468-2401. Scan the QR code below with your tablet or smart phone to visit the Office of Career Services website
Steps in Self-Authorship

How can we learn to be the authors of the story of our life? Baxter-Magolda discusses four phases of self-authorship. The first phase is “following formulas.” At this stage, an individual relies heavily on the opinions and experiences of others in defining who they are, what they believe and how they will establish relationships with others. We make decisions based on what others expect of us, and are often unaware how much others are defining us, and how much control over us we have given them.

The next stage is called, “Crossroads.” At this phase, we may start to notice that the path we are following does not always fit us the way it once did. Calling this stage “crossroads” implies that we can make a choice, as if we are choosing between two different roads. We can choose to continue to let others define us or we can decide to pursue a new version of ourselves that we choose. We must decide between the path that conforms with the expectations of others or the path that we decide for ourselves. This is the stage when we begin to hear our own “internal voice”. Those who elect to take the path that they choose for themselves are ready to enter the third phase, “Self-Authorship.”

At the self-authorship stage, individuals begin to decide what they believe and who they are. They cultivate their inner voice and listen to it. They acknowledge that, while much of what happens to them is not in their control, they can choose how they respond to it. They set goals for their personal development and actively pursue those goals. When their beliefs are challenged, they don’t back down easily. This doesn’t mean they don’t listen to others who have more experience or special expertise; it just means that they trust their own experience, too.

The final stage in developing self-authorship according to Baxter-Magolda is developing an “internal foundation.” This means that they are “grounded in their self-determined belief system” and in their sense of who they are.” They are able to develop their own voice and to use that voice and the beliefs that they have to make choices in their lives. While these choices are certainly influenced by others, they are distinctively an individual’s own.

An important first step in authoring your own life is deciding that it is what you want to do. Of course, it’s not the last step. You also have to begin constructing an inner voice that is worth listening to. College is a great time to do that. At no other point in your life will you have so much time to think about and pursue your own personal development. Your courses will provide you with new insights that lead to new discoveries. You are also free to pursue new passions beyond the classroom. If you want to improve your wellness, the university has a state-of-the-art Campus Recreation Center with tons of resources to help you meet your goals. If you want to improve your grades, you can receive free tutoring and supplemental instruction through our award-winning Academic Assistance Resource Center. If you want to develop any number of skills that will be useful to you in your life, consider getting involved in one or more of our 200 student organizations or other opportunities outside the classroom. A specially trained Involvement Consultant can help you find opportunities that assist you in meeting your goals. They can be found in the Involvement Center in the lobby of Steen Hall or in the Baker Pattilo Student Center. Put simply, college can be a tremendous opportunity to work towards developing yourself into the person you want to be.

Moral Compass

One very important area in which you will want to develop your inner voice is in determining what is right and what is wrong. This is often referred to as a “moral compass.” Like a normal compass that tells you where to go, this moral compass will direct you when you are uncertain. Assisting you in this endeavor is our honor code, “The SFA Way.” You will see this document posted in various locations all over our campus and it is included on the last page of this reading. Built upon the “five root principles,” The SFA Way expresses what we value as an institution. These principles are: Respect, Responsibility, Caring, Unity and Integrity.

The SFA Way provides guidance for being a person of character in pursuit of becoming a True Lumberjack. Among the wisdom contained with it are reminders such as, “Lumberjacks do what is right, even when it is hard or unpopular.” It also reminds us that, “...we respond to each situation with steadfast values not subject to change based on the actions of others.” These lines allude to the importance of authoring our own life. If we base what we do on what others do, we run the risk of setting them up for us to do something we know is wrong.

Knowing the right thing to do isn’t always hard. We know that it’s wrong to cheat on exams or turn in someone else’s work as our own. Be advised that SFA takes these things very seriously. Students caught cheating can fail the assignment, fail the course or even be dismissed from the university. Students who cheat, often believe that they will not be caught and will therefore escape any consequences. However, one consequence is absolutely certain. The purpose of our work in classes is to learn the material. Receiving credit for something that a student has not done robs that student of the learning experience. If you eventually receive a degree from SFA without really doing the work, you may find that potential employers can see that. The old adage is true, you really are only cheating yourself.

If you’d like to learn more about academic dishonesty, read policy 4.1 on academic dishonesty available on the SFA website.
Perseverance

There’s no getting around it, college is challenging. There will be times when it may seem too hard. You may wonder if you can be successful. In those times, you have to draw upon the author within you to write the ending of which you know you are capable. Then, you have to put in the work to ensure that it will happen.

Something I often tell students is that success in college (and anything for that matter) is dependent on two factors: ability and effort. If you have a lot of ability, you may be able to get by without much effort. Certainly we’ve all known people who made success look easy. These people are very rare though, especially in college. Many have had a rude awakening in college when they discover that the amount of effort they put in during high school isn’t sufficient for success here. Effort matters a lot in college. It’s best to accept that now, rather than after you get off to a bad start in college.

Conversely, if you are willing to put forth a lot of effort you may be successful even if you have a lot less ability than others. As Thomas Edison wrote, “Success is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.” He also wrote, “The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.” Many are surprised to hear that Albert Einstein did not consider himself to be a great mind. He famously said, “It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.” How much can you accomplish if you never give up and a stay the course? How much can you accomplish if you never give up and a stay the course? How much can you accomplish if you never give up and a stay the course? How much can you accomplish if you never give up and a stay the course?

For those who have high levels of ability and are willing to put in the effort – they will be uncommonly successful. Not surprisingly, those who start with less ability and don’t put in sufficient effort will have little hope of success. When you consider success in college this way, YOU are the one who determines if you will be successful based on how hard you try. There are more than sufficient resources for you to be successful here at SFA – you’ll just have to determine how badly you want it. If you don’t want it all that badly, it might be better to determine if college is right for you now and save yourself the time and expense. If you pursue the goal of higher education with all of your heart, you will find that a little determination can go a long way. When you are tempted to throw in the towel, you would be wise to remember the advice of Winston Churchill who, delivering a speech to students at the preparatory school he attended as a young man advised them, “This is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never!”

An important way to stay motivated is to think about your goals. What are you going to college to do? If you don’t know the answer to that question, finding the answer should be a priority. SFA has resources to help you in this decision. The Office of Career Services is located on the 3rd floor of the Rusk Building. Contact information is also included on page five of this publication. Through resources such as career inventories and career counseling, you can receive guidance in picking a career that is compatible with your personality and interests. Once you know that, it’s easier to find a major that supports your goals. One thing is certain, college feels a lot harder if you don’t know why you are here.

“This is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never!”

Conclusion

Your college journey is officially underway. Your story has begun. You will write a bit of your story every day, and it won’t be long before your college story becomes just a thrilling prologue in the story of your life. Don’t take this experience for granted. When you graduate from SFA, you will take your place among the 7% of people in the world who have this level of education. With that comes a lot of responsibility. But you can handle it. After all, you are a Lumberjack and this is YOUR story.

In his book, “Oh, the places you’ll go!” Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known to the world as the beloved Dr. Seuss, penned one of the best explanations for success in life you may ever hear. Though it is simple enough for a child to understand, it can be hard to put into practice. One line stands out as a good way to put this whole idea into words. He writes, “You’re on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the (one) who’ll decide where to go.” This is your story, and it’s time to get started. The journey may be long, but Oh! The places you’ll go!

Welcome Week: Mark your calendar for these events!

Have a Question? Ask Jack!
College can be a confusing time. If you have questions and you don’t know who to ask, Ask Jack! Scan the QR code below or email dosa@sfasu.edu and someone will find the answer to your question right away. If you would prefer to meet personally with Dr. Adam Peck, the Dean of Student Affairs, visit his office on the third floor of the Baker Pattillo Student Center during the Dean’s open office hour, every Friday at 4 p.m. If that time doesn’t work for you, call (936) 468-7249 to schedule an appointment.

Jacks Back Kickoff: This official SFA welcome party gets the semester started with a casino night! Saturday, August 24, 6-7 p.m., Baker Pattillo Student Center Grand Ballroom

Purplepleaooza: Don’t miss this chance to get a FREE SFA Axe Handle! Sunday, August 25, 5-8 p.m., William R. Johnson Coliseum

For a complete listing of Welcome Week events, visit sfasu.edu/welcomeweek or scan the QR code with your tablet or smart phone.

Essay Contest

Each year, the Office of Student Affairs Programs and the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs sponsor an essay contest involving the year’s theme. Students should write a two-page, double-spaced essay answering the following questions:

- Where do you see yourself 10 years from now?
- How will you use your time at SFA to write the story that will lead you in the direction of your dreams?

Email your completed contest essay to dosa@sfasu.edu by Friday, October 3, 2014 at 11:59 pm.

The grand prize winner will receive a $250 book scholarship to Barnes and Noble. Two honorable mentions will each receive $50 book scholarships. Winning submissions will be published in the 2014 ODK Leadership Conference packet. Each winner will also receive special recognition and reserved front-row seating for the conference on October 25, 2014.

2014 ODK Leadership Conference

SFA students are invited to submit an essay to the 2014 ODK Leadership Conference for the essay contest. Each essay submission will be evaluated by a panel of judges to determine which essays will be published in the conference program. Each essay winner selected will also receive special recognition and reserved front-row seating for the conference.

Summer 2014 Essay Contest

Have a Question? Ask Jack!
College can be a confusing time. If you have questions and you don’t know who to ask, Ask Jack! Scan the QR code below or email dosa@sfasu.edu and someone will find the answer to your question right away. If you would prefer to meet personally with Dr. Adam Peck, the Dean of Student Affairs, visit his office on the third floor of the Baker Pattillo Student Center during the Dean’s open office hour, every Friday at 4 p.m. If that time doesn’t work for you, call (936) 468-7249 to schedule an appointment.

For a complete listing of Welcome Week events, visit sfasu.edu/welcomeweek or scan the QR code with your tablet or smart phone.

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Welcome Week: Mark your calendar for these events!

Jack Camp Reunion: Reconnect with your tribe and family group. Saturday, August 24, 2:30-3:30 p.m., Ag Pond

Jacks Back Kickoff: This official SFA welcome party gets the semester started with a casino night! Saturday, August 24, 6-7 p.m., Baker Pattillo Student Center Grand Ballroom

Purplepleaooza: Don’t miss this chance to get a FREE SFA Axe Handle! Sunday, August 25, 5-8 p.m., William R. Johnson Coliseum

For a complete listing of Welcome Week events, visit sfasu.edu/welcomeweek or scan the QR code with your tablet or smart phone.
Questions for Reflection
1. What individuals have contributed most to your story up to this point of your life?
2. What obstacles did you overcome to get to SFA?
3. Who have you met so far at SFA who can help you write your story going forward?
4. Have you decided on a major field of study? How will this major help you meet your life goals?
5. Do you feel like you’ve developed an inner voice that can help you make major life decisions? Do you trust that voice?
6. Where do you see yourself ten years from now?
7. How will you use your time at SFA to write the story that will lead you in the direction of your dreams?

Talk Back! Answer these questions online at SFA-Story.Blogspot.com.

Omicron Delta Kappa Leadership Conference Presents: Keynote Speaker- Derreck Kayongo

Derreck Kayongo and his family fled a civil war in Uganda and settled in the U.S. when Kayongo was just 10 years old. Now a successful entrepreneur, Kayongo is the founder of the Global Soap Project, a program which takes donated, melted, purified and reprocessed hotel soap and redistributes it to vulnerable populations around the world. Today the Global Soap Project’s distribution operation is active in 32 countries and has given away more than two million bars of soap to refugees, including people affected by humanitarian disasters like the 2010 Haitian Earthquake that left over 100,000 people dead.

The Global Soap Project earned an endorsement from the American Hotel and Lodging Association in 2013. Kayongo was among CNN’s Top Ten Heroes of the Year in 2011.

The Conference is on October 25th, 2014 from 9 a.m.-noon in the Baker Pattillo Student Center. It is FREE to all SFA students. To register, visit www.sfaodk.org

Works Cited
RESPECT
Lumberjacks command respect and treat others with respect • They are considerate of others and tolerant of differences • They demonstrate respect for those around them by avoiding the use of offensive or profane language • They do not threaten or harm anyone and deal peacefully and civilly with conflict.

CARING
Lumberjacks think of the needs of others and seek to improve the quality of life of those around them • They are compassionate, empathic and kind • They respond with humility to those they have helped and freely express gratitude to those who help them • Lumberjacks prepare themselves to become leaders in their communities and workplaces • They dedicate themselves to excellence in their chosen field of study and to using what they learn in the service of others.

RESPONSIBILITY
Lumberjacks do what is right • They persevere in times of adversity • Through self-control and self-discipline, they strive to do their best • Lumberjacks challenge each other to exceed expectations • They are active learners both inside and outside of the classroom • They are reliable; they do what they say they will do • Lumberjacks hold themselves accountable for their decisions.

UNITY
Lumberjacks are loyal to their friends, family, university, state and country • Lumberjacks stand together against any adversary • They recognize that though we are very different from one another, we are united by the Lumberjack Spirit • Lumberjacks seek to understand the people and world around them • When one Lumberjack fails, all fail • When one Lumberjack succeeds, all succeed.

INTEGRITY
Lumberjacks have the courage to do what is right, even when it is hard or unpopular • They respond to each situation with steadfast values that are not subject to change based on the actions of others • They seek opportunities to practice effective and ethical leadership • Lumberjacks are honest, they do not deceive, cheat or steal • Lumberjacks stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves • As lifelong learners, Lumberjacks are committed to continuously improving themselves.