

SETTING GOALS AND STAYING ON TRACK

INTRODUCTION & LEARNING GOALS

Research shows that entering college with clearly defined degree and career goals, plus a commitment to achieving those goals, is a strong predictor of college success.

This lesson will help students:

- *Define degree, career and life goals*
- *Explore requirements for degree programs/majors*
- *Identify specific steps they can take to achieve success*

AGENDA

Timing: approximately 50–65 minutes (will vary by class size)

1. Warm-up: Preparing for your college transition
2. Setting life and career goals
3. Setting college degree goals
4. Creating a degree map
5. Wrap-up/Reflection: Why backwards planning is important

ITEMS NEEDED

1. A copy of the College Success Guide for each student in the class. If students don't have copies on hand, you may download a printable PDF at LearnMoreIndiana.org/classroom-materials. For this lesson, refer to pages 9–10.
2. Computers with Internet access.
3. Worksheets included in this lesson (make a copy for each student in the class):
 - Warm-up: Preparing for your college transition
 - Long-term goals: Career path (also on page 9 of the College Success Guide)
 - Short-term goals: College plan (also on page 10 of the College Success Guide)
 - Sample degree map



Activities

1

WARM-UP: PREPARING FOR YOUR COLLEGE TRANSITION *(5–10 minutes)*

Distribute the worksheet: “Warm-up: Preparing for your college transition.”

Give students several minutes to respond to the two warm-up questions, and then invite students to share their responses. Explain that students will be doing “backwards planning”: planning that begins by defining life and career goals so students can then identify the steps they’ll need to take in college to achieve those goals. Then, ask, “When it comes to college, why is backwards planning important? Can you think of other areas of your life where you use backwards planning?” Invite students to share their ideas with the whole group.

2

SETTING LIFE AND CAREER GOALS *(10 minutes)*

Distribute the worksheet: “Long-term goals: Career path.”

This worksheet is also included on page 9 of the College Success Guide. Give students about 10 minutes to complete the worksheet. Students will explore how their interests and skills may line up with different careers. They’ll also begin to consider what type of education they’ll need to achieve their career and lifestyle goals.

3

SETTING COLLEGE DEGREE GOALS *(10–15 minutes)*

Distribute the worksheet: “Short-term goals: College plan.”

This worksheet is also included on page 10 of the College Success Guide. Students will use the long-term goals established in the previous lesson to help set a degree goal for college.

Give students about 10–15 minutes to complete the questions on the worksheet. Provide access to computers with Internet so they can refer to their college’s website.



Activities

4

CREATING A DEGREE MAP *(20–25 minutes)*

Distribute the worksheet: “Sample degree map.”

Point out that students have already completed the first two steps in backwards planning: defining the end goal and the degree goal that will help them get there. Give students a moment to fill in the “Degree goal” section.

Discuss the importance of developing a detailed degree map and revisiting it every semester during college. Explain that students will meet with an academic advisor before classes begin to plan their course schedule.

To begin research for their sample degree maps, students should go to their college’s website and explore the undergraduate degree programs and majors offered. Give them 20–25 minutes to complete their degree maps.

5

WRAP-UP/REFLECTION: WHY BACKWARDS PLANNING IS IMPORTANT *(5 minutes)*

Bring the group together and spend a few minutes reflecting on the importance of backwards planning. Reinforce that students should first decide what kind of lifestyle and career they want, and then determine what college degree will help them achieve those goals. From there, they can make a decision about where to attend college.



Worksheet | PREPARING FOR YOUR COLLEGE TRANSITION

In what ways are you feeling prepared to make the transition to college?

What are some steps you know you still need to take to be better prepared?



Worksheet | LONG-TERM GOALS: CAREER PATH

Thinking about your long-term goals — the type of career and lifestyle you eventually want for yourself — will help you decide what to study in college and what college to attend.

What are your interests?

What are your strengths?

What are your career interests?

What kind of life and career would you like to have?

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

What type of education do you think you will need to achieve your life and career goals?

(Examples: one-year workforce certificate, two-year associate degree, four-year bachelor's degree, etc.)



Worksheet | SHORT-TERM GOALS: COLLEGE PLAN

It's important to start college with clear goals and a plan to graduate on time. Use the questions below to determine your college goals and the steps you'll need to take to achieve the long-term career path you established in the previous lesson.

**Based on your career path,
what are your goals for college?**

(Example: Graduate in four years with a bachelor's degree in computer science and a professional internship on my résumé.)

**What steps do you need to take to
complete college and prepare for
your future career?**

(Example: Visit my college's website to find out how many credit hours I must complete and any other requirements I must meet to earn the degree I'm planning to pursue.)



Worksheet | SAMPLE DEGREE MAP

Before your college classes begin, you should meet with your academic advisor to develop a degree map, outlining courses you will need to take each term to complete your degree and graduate on time. For now, create a practice degree map using the chart below. Visit your college’s website to explore the undergraduate degree programs and majors that are offered. Choose one that interests you, then list some of the courses you will have to take to complete a degree in this program or major. If you completed the “Short-term goals: College plan” worksheet, you can use those answers to fill in the “Degree goal” section below.

Degree goal

Institution:

**Degree program
and major:**

**Degree
completion date:**

Courses I must take to reach my goal:

Term 1

Term 2

Term 3/Summer

1st Year

2nd Year

3rd Year

4th Year