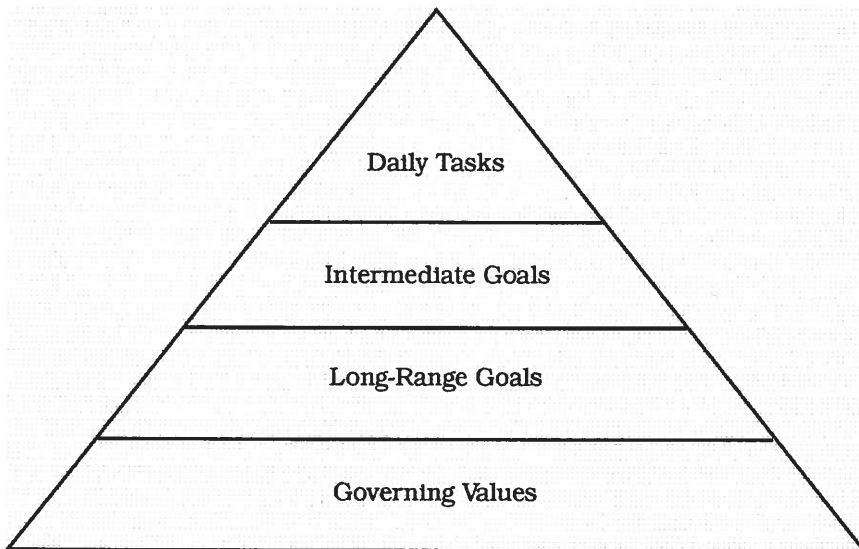


# 4



## *Goal Setting*

**T**he pyramid in Fig. 4.1 identifies the steps that lead from identifying values to accomplishing daily tasks (Smith, 1994). Everything starts with values, which are sometimes called principles or beliefs. Long-term goals are developed by translating principles and beliefs into long-term achievements. Long-term goals, in turn, are attained through a series of intermediate goals. Finally, the intermediate goals are attained through a series of specific, goal-oriented daily tasks.



**FIG. 4.1. The productivity pyramid (Smith, 1994).**

Suppose an individual values education and sets a goal to earn a college degree. To accomplish this long-term goal, the student needs to establish some intermediate goals. These intermediate goals often involve year-long goals (e.g., declaring a major and taking and passing a minimum number of classes), semester goals (e.g., exploring career possibilities and attending class regularly), monthly goals (e.g., meeting with an academic adviser and long-range planning for the completing of papers and other assignments), weekly goals (e.g., short-term planning for the completion of papers, assignments, and preparation for examinations, and using effective learning and study strategies).

Smith (1994) stated that: "Values explain *why* you want to accomplish certain things in life. Long-range goals describe *what* you want to accomplish. Intermediate goals and daily tasks show *how* to do it" (p. 83). For example, a person may value health and fitness (the *why*). For this reason, he or she establishes a long-range goal of losing 20 pounds (the *what*), and an intermediate goal of losing 5 pounds by the end of the semester by developing a specific exercise program for 1 hour each day (the *how*). Each component—values, long-range goals, intermediate goals, and daily tasks—needs to be linked to one another.

If an individual's goals are not aligned with his or her values, the individual may never be satisfied with his or her accomplishments because he or she will be neglecting the things that matter most. Also, if the individual completes daily tasks that do not reflect long-range and intermediate goals, he or she will be busy doing things, but will not be productive.

The keys to goal setting and time management are governing values. Smith (1994) believes that one of the reasons many people are frustrated or stressed in their lives is because they ignore the first three levels of the pyramid. They complete many tasks, but do not base them on anything but urgency. As a result, they fail to get around to doing the things that are really important to them.

Have you thought about your own governing values? What is important in your life? Following are some values that people have identified as of greatest importance in their lives (Smith, 1994):

- financial security
- personal health and fitness
- family
- religion
- integrity
- honesty
- service
- self-respect
- education and learning
- happiness
- pleasure
- friendship
- courage

Circle the values that are most important to you and be prepared to discuss your personal selection with other students in your class.

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

- Establish personal goals.
- Develop and implement effective plans for attaining goals.



#### EXERCISE 4.1: SELF-OBSERVATION: IDENTIFYING YOUR VALUES

Directions: The purpose of this exercise is to help identify the activities you enjoy and determine whether you are finding time to participate in them. This exercise is part of a program called *values clarification* (Simon, Howe, & Kirschenbaum, 1972), and is based on the premise that many people do not know clearly what their values are.

- Make a list of 7 to 10 things that give you great pleasure or joy.
- After the name of each activity, write the date you last experienced it.
- Place a dollar sign after each activity that costs more than \$10.
- Now go through the list again, and place a P after those activities that usually require considerable *planning*.
- Review your list, and place an S after activities that you *share* with others.
- Finally, place an A after those activities that you do *alone*.

What does this exercise tell you about yourself? What are the activities valued by the students in your class? Why is it that some people find time to do the things they enjoy, whereas others do not? How do values influence goals?

#### My Activities List

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#### WHY IS GOAL SETTING IMPORTANT?

Goals have been defined as "what the individual is consciously trying to do" (Locke, 1968, p. 159), and goal setting refers to the process of establishing a standard for performance. Most of us have goals in many domains: aca-

Dembo, M. H. (2000). *Motivation and learning strategies for college success: A self-management approach*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.



demic, social, occupational, and personal. Some goals are short term (e.g., earning an "A" on your sociology exam on Friday), others are long term (e.g., raising your GPA to 3.0 this semester); and still others are very long term (e.g., becoming an attorney).

As mentioned in the introduction, long-term goals are accompanied by related intermediate goals. For example, a freshman student might set his or her sights on becoming editor of the college newspaper during his or her senior year. The goal is 4 years away and represents a major achievement. So, the student decides what needs to be done to work toward this long-range goal. If the student is interested in journalism, he or she may decide to major in this field and begin taking some English and journalism courses. Another goal would be to join the paper as a staff writer. An intermediate goal would be to become a section editor by his or her junior year. By setting intermediate goals that relate to the long-term goal, the student identifies a plan of action or path to follow to attain his or her ultimate goal. This path provides rewards as the student moves closer toward the long-range goal.

A similar process is needed to obtain the goal of becoming an elected official or to run a marathon. It is not likely that an individual could be nominated for an office without any experience or past involvement in community activities. It also is doubtful someone could run 26 miles the first time he or she decides to run a marathon without first setting short-term training goals.

Goal setting is a planning process and is an important aspect of self-management. This process puts meaning in people's lives, helps them achieve their dreams and ambitions, and sets up positive expectations for achievements. Students who set goals and develop plans to achieve them take responsibility for their own lives. They do not wait for parents or teachers to instruct them as to what they should be doing with their lives.

Unfortunately, many students fail to take responsibility for personal goal-setting. For example, last semester one of my students complained he had difficulty attaining a goal set for him by his father for a 3.5 GPA. I asked him what his goal was. He stated that he did not have one. One of his peers commented that the student needed to achieve in college, not for his parents, but for himself. After all, parents are not going to be around all the time to set goals and direct their adult children.

Think about your own behavior. Are you in charge of your own behavior or do you prefer that other individuals set goals and make important decisions for you? It is difficult to be a highly motivated individual without setting personal goals!

While watching the last Olympics I could not help but notice how often the topic of goals was discussed during interviews with athletes. Many athletes even mentioned that their coaches suggested they carry with them a list of their goals.

In team sports, coaches often meet with individuals to set both individual and team goals. In the business world, corporations set goals for sales and product development. In fact, the stock market is very sensitive to a company's performance goals. When a company announces its quarterly profits or losses, the investment world compares the performance to expected goals. The result often is immediate price fluctuation in the stock market.

The following news item was reported in the September 18, 1996 edition of the *Los Angeles Times*:

### MONDESI LIVES UP TO STRETCH GOALS

The Dodgers had just lost three consecutive games, dropping 2 ½ games behind the San Diego Padres on Aug. 21, and it was time for action.

Right fielder Raul Mondesi sat down with coach Manny Mota and decided to set goals for the final 36 games: 50 hits, 40 runs, 12 homers and 40 RBIs.

The goals may have appeared unrealistic, but ever since that day, Mondesi has been on a torrid hitting streak and the Dodgers have played their best baseball. The Dodgers since have won 19 of 24 games to vault into first place, and Mondesi is batting .361 with 14 runs, five homers and 24 RBIs.

Although goals help motivate our behavior, they cannot accomplish the whole job because the quality of performance also is related to nonmotivational factors such as ability, training, and resources (Reeve, 1996). Life would be easy if the only thing we had to do was set goals and sit back and wait for them to be fulfilled. Setting goals, although important, is only the first step in a process to becoming a more successful individual. For goals to enhance performance, it is essential to make a commitment to attempt to attain them. In this chapter, I encourage you to set your own goals.

Goals help us become aware of our values and help us determine what we are willing to do. As a result, they influence our attitudes, motivation, and learning. Think about your goals. Do your goals motivate you in a positive way to be a successful learner or do your goals motivate you to get by doing as little work as possible? Are your experiences with goals similar or different from the student who reported the following?

#### *Student Reflections*

*I never really gave much thought to developing personal goals. My dad always told me to set my standards high, and if I put my mind to something, I can do anything. I never used to believe this statement, but I do now. Setting goals is something that I need to do so that I know where I want to go and develop a plan to get there. I have a friend who has a poster on his wall with five goals that he would like to accomplish this semester. I remember walking into his room and thinking to myself: "Wow, this guy has got it together." "He knows what he wants to accomplish." I know that I want to do well in college, but I do not have any specific goals! I want to set goals for the present and future so I have a way of showing myself that I have accomplished something. I feel better about myself when I accomplish something that I set out to achieve.*



### WHAT PROPERTIES OF GOALS ENHANCE MOTIVATION?

Schunk (1991) pointed out that the effects of goals on behavior depend on three properties: specificity, proximity, and difficulty. Goals that set specific performance standards are more likely to increase motivation than general goals such as, "Do your best." Specific goals help the learner determine the amount of effort required for success and lead to feelings of satisfaction when the goal is attained. As a result, learners come to believe they have greater ability to complete the task.

Goals also can be identified by the extent to which they extend into the future. Proximal goals are close at hand and result in greater motivation directed toward attainment than more distant goals. Pursuing proximal goals conveys reliable information about one's capabilities. When students perceive they are making progress toward a proximal goal, they are apt to feel more confident and maintain their motivation. Because it is harder to evaluate progress toward distant goals, learners have more difficulty judging their capabilities, even if they perform well.

Student perceptions of the difficulty of a task influence the amount of effort they believe is necessary to attain the task. If they believe they have the ability and knowledge, learners will work harder to attain difficult goals than when standards are lower. As they work and attain difficult goals, they develop beliefs in their competence. However, if they do not believe they have the ability to attain a goal, they are likely to have low expectations for success and not become involved in the task.

Think about how the specificity, proximity, and difficulty level in goal setting in each class might impact your motivation and perceptions of ability.

### WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES IN THE GOAL-SETTING PROCESS?

The first learning strategy you will learn in this text is goal setting. Five important procedures comprise this strategy (adapted in part from McCombs & Encinias, 1987). Begin this term by setting a few major goals in different areas of your life and developing an action plan to implement them.

#### 1. Identifying and Defining the Goal

Think about all the things you would like to accomplish in the different aspects of your life (e.g., academic, personal, social, and career). Do you want to make the Dean's List? Pass a difficult course? Date that girl or guy you have been talking to for weeks? Get a summer internship? Lose a few pounds? Learn to play the guitar? Ask yourself: "What areas of my life would I like to improve?" "What areas need to be worked on?"

Individuals set goals throughout their lives. As they attain one goal, they often identify another. In fact, one of the major ways individuals seek happiness is through goal attainment. When some students are asked what goal they

would like to attain, they often mention being happy. Keep in mind that happiness is not a goal, it is a feeling or state of mind that occurs as the result of goal attainment.

Recently, I met a man in his 50s who always wanted to be a singer. He played some tapes of his songs at a party. His voice was outstanding! His problem was that he had a dream or wish, not a goal. He spent his adult life wishing he could work as an entertainer, but failed to set goals.

As you set each of your goals, you want to make sure they are **SMART goals** (Smith, 1994): **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ction-oriented, **R**ealistic, and **T**imely.

- *Specific*—describes what you want to accomplish with as much detail as possible. If you establish vague goals, you lessen the possibility of attaining them. Describe the context (i.e., course, situation, or setting) as well as the specific outcome. Avoid general terms like "good," "well," "happy," "understand," and "know."

poor: "I want to do *well* in English."

better: "I want an 'A' on my next essay in English."

- *Measurable*—describes your goal in terms that can be clearly evaluated. If you fail to determine how a goal is measured, you will never know if you attained it. Be sure to include a statement of the minimal level of performance that will be accepted as evidence that you have achieved the goal.

poor: "I want to *study* my biology textbook."

better: "I want to *read Chapter 7* in my biology textbook and *answer all the discussion questions.*"

- *Action-Oriented*—identifies a goal that focuses on actions rather than personal qualities. Be sure to identify your goal so that it includes an action to be completed, otherwise you will not know how to accomplish it.

poor: "I want to *develop a better attitude about studying.*"

better: "I want to *complete all my assignments before class and answer questions.*"

- *Realistic*—identifies a goal you know you are actually capable of attaining. Goals can be challenging but unrealistic. Therefore, you must carefully analyze your goals to determine that you can reasonably expect to reach them.

poor: "I want to *read five chapters* in my history textbook this evening and *answer all the discussion questions.*"

better: "I want to *read two chapters* in my history textbook this evening and *answer all the discussion questions.*"

- *Timely*—identifies a goal that breaks a longer term goal into a shorter term goal(s) and clearly specifies a completion date.

poor: "I want to *graduate at the head of my class.*"  
 better: "I want to *make the honor roll this semester.*"

An important task in goal setting is to determine how much time each long-term goal will take, and to establish some smaller steps, or intermediate goals that will help you reach your final goal. One way to accomplish this step is to use a timeline. Write your final goal on the right-hand side and identify the smaller goals that will help you reach this major goal. Estimate how long it will take to attain each intermediate goal.

**Examples of SMART Goals.** Following are examples of academic, social, occupational, and personal goals. Notice that each one of these goals is specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and timely.

#### Academic

- "I want to take an advanced mathematics course next semester."
- "I want to attain a 3.0 GPA this semester."
- "I want to complete my research papers 1 week before handing them in so I have time to edit them."

#### Social

- "I want to join a square dancing class this semester."
- "I want to limit my partying to weekends."
- "I want to spend at least 1 hour during the week with my boyfriend/girlfriend."

#### Occupational

- "I want to work at least 10 hours per week this semester"
- "I want to obtain an internship this summer."
- "I want to complete all my general education requirements by my sophomore year."

#### Personal

- "I want to work out four times a week for 40 minutes."
- "I want to lose 5 pounds in 1 month."
- "I want to save \$500 this semester."

The following is a review of the procedures for writing SMART goals.

### Procedures for Writing SMART Goals

Procedures	Examples
1. Identify the area in which you wish to write a goal.	"I want to write a goal for my next composition paper."
2. Evaluate your past and present achievement, interest, or performance in the area to consider the extent to which your goal is action-oriented and realistic.	"I have been having some difficulty in the course and would like to demonstrate some improvement in the next paper."
3. State what you want to accomplish. Begin with the words, "I want to..." and include a specific behavior; describe the goal so that it can be measured and include a specific completion date (timely).	"I want to obtain a grade of 'A' on the composition paper that is due on October 15."
4. Evaluate your goal statement. Is it a SMART goal (i.e., specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and timely)?	"Because my grades have been low on other composition papers, it may not be realistic for me to move to an 'A' on the next paper. I will set my goal for a 'B' and then move to an 'A.'"
5. If necessary, make modifications in your goal statement.	"I want to obtain a grade of 'B' on the composition paper that is due on October 15."



#### EXERCISE 4.2: WRITING PERSONAL GOALS

Think about the things you would like to achieve, obtain, or experience in life. Using the criteria and procedure for writing SMART goals, write at least four goals (include at least two major academic goals).

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



### Generating and Evaluating Alternative Plans

Now that you know how to write a goal, let's move on to the second procedure in the process—determining *how* you are going to attain your goal. The answers to the following questions can be very helpful:

- How would other people achieve this goal?
- Who can help me achieve this goal?
- How have I achieved similar goals in the past?

Let's consider a student whose goal is to attain a "B" on an English paper. Suppose the student has already written a few papers and is aware of his or her strengths and weaknesses. As part of developing an effective plan for the next paper, the student might ask him or herself the following questions: "Did I give myself enough time to complete the last paper?" "Do I understand the criteria for grading?" "Do I understand why my last paper was graded lower than expected?" "Do I understand my strengths and weaknesses?" "Would I benefit from having someone read the paper before I turn it in?"

By asking these questions, the student begins to think about alternative ways to attain the goal and the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy. For example, the student might initially include in the plan time for two rewrites, but realizes he or she has an exam in another subject the same week. As a result, no matter how effective the plan might be for writing a better paper, the student probably will not do as well on the exam if he or she spends more time on the paper. Thus, the student needs to decide how best to spend his or her time. My point is that one constantly has to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of one strategy over another.

### Making Implementation Plans

In Procedure 1 you learned why it is necessary to be specific in writing a goal. It also is important for your plan to be specific so you know exactly what needs to be done to achieve your goal. One way to develop a plan is to identify each of the necessary tasks that must be completed and the date by which the tasks will be accomplished. Setting deadlines for each task is helpful in determining that you continue to make progress toward your goal.

Table 4.1 presents an example of a checklist for identifying intermediate goals and tasks for writing a research paper. Research (Schunk, 1989) indicates that as you attain each of the intermediate goals, you will become more confident in your abilities to complete the task. Thus, any time you can break a major goal into several intermediate goals, you will be more motivated to move toward your major goal. Remember this finding whenever you get discouraged while thinking about completing a major task.

### Implementing the Plan

The first three procedures in the goal-setting process are planning steps. Procedure 4 requires you to put the plan into operation by completing each of the planned activities. Check your progress as you implement each task. Do not hesitate to make changes in your plan if you find that you miscalculated the time needed to complete a task. In some cases, you might find that you omit-

TABLE 4.1  
Intermediate Goals for a Research Paper

<i>Intermediate Goal</i>	<i>Date Completed</i>
Phase 1: Prewriting	
Identify topic	
Find sources for topic	
Use correct bibliographic notation for sources	
Phase 2: Drafting	
Organize paper around two subtopics	
Write draft of subtopic 1	
Write draft of subtopic 2	
Write introduction to paper	
Write conclusion	
Phase 3: Revising and Editing	
Review drafts for grammar and writing style	
Check transitions among subtopics	
Edit complete paper	
Prepare title page, bibliography, and table of contents	

ted an important task that needs to be added to your plan such as researching a specific topic for a term paper. As you develop greater expertise in developing your plans, you will find they will require fewer modifications.

### 5. Evaluating Your Progress

In this procedure, you will evaluate your plans and progress. Ask yourself the following questions after you have attained your goal or when you begin to realize that your plan is not working effectively (McCombs & Encinias, 1987, p. 41):

Dembo, M. H. (2000). *Motivation and learning strategies for college success: A self-management approach*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- “How well did the plan work?”
- “How many tasks did I complete?”
- “With which task(s) did I have the most trouble? Why?”
- “What strategies worked well?”
- “What problems came up?”
- “What did I learn about myself?”
- “What didn’t I plan for?”

If you do not attain your goal, you can evaluate what went wrong. Evaluation can help you re-think your strategy and determine another way to reach your goal.

The following are the five procedures you should use when setting your goals. As you read this book, you will acquire more information about developing and implementing goals. As you practice the process, you will develop greater expertise and enhance the likelihood that you will attain your chosen goals.

### Procedures for Goal Setting

<i>Procedures</i>	<i>Strategies</i>
1 Identifying and defining the goal	Use SMART Goals
2. Generating and evaluating alternatives	Answer the following questions: “How would other people achieve this goal?” “Who can help me achieve this goal?” “How have I achieved similar goals in the past?”
3. Making an implementation plan	Use checklist to identify intermediate goals and related tasks
4. Implementing the plan	Identify the tasks that need to be completed
5. Evaluating your progress	Answer the following questions: “How well did the plan work?” “How many tasks did I complete?” “With which task(s) did I have the most trouble? Why?” “What strategies worked well” “What problems came up?” “What did I learn about myself?” “What didn’t I plan for?”

### ➤ KEY POINTS

1. One’s values, long-range and intermediate goals, and daily tasks should be aligned.
2. Goals influence motivation and learning.
3. Setting and attaining intermediate goals can motivate students to attain long-range goals.

Understanding how you learn best can also improve your concentration. When you are working in your preferred learning mode, you probably find that you are better able to concentrate on your study tasks. Approaching a task from your preferred style results in a better fit or match—studying feels right. When things are “going well” during a study session, you’ll probably complete your work effectively and efficiently. Working outside of their preferred style may be the reason some students put in a lot of time on their studies but don’t get the results they expect.

## GETTING MOTIVATED TO LEARN

Psychologists have been trying to explain why some people work hard at a task while others choose not to do so. Think of a task that you recently completed. Did you put all your energy into completing it? Did you understand what you were trying to accomplish? Did you continue working on the task even though it was difficult? How you answered each of these questions may give you a better understanding of how motivation affects college success. Motivation affects whether or not you do your work, which study strategies you decide to use, when you do your work, how long you work on a task, and how well you concentrate on it. *Motivation* can be described as something that energizes, directs, and sustains behavior toward a particular goal. Understanding more about the factors that influence motivation and the strategies that can be used to increase it can help you be more successful in college.

### FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE MOTIVATION

Although many factors influence motivation, your goals, your belief in your abilities, and your level of effort are perhaps the most important ones for college success.

Your goals influence your motivation to complete a task. Without challenging, realistic goals, you may not know where to direct your efforts. You may have noticed that your motivation (or lack of motivation) varies depending on the tasks that you need to complete. Many students find that they are more motivated to work on a task when they have a personal interest in completing it or find it challenging to do so. If you are personally interested in learning how to use a computer program, for example, you may be highly motivated to achieve your goal. Working on a task because you want to learn or do something (even when you don’t have to) can be described as *intrinsic motivation*.

On the other hand, you may also be motivated by the promise or expectation of earning rewards, grades, or other types of external gain. Being motivated by external factors can be described as *extrinsic motivation*. If you were told to



learn to use a computer program as part of a course assignment but have little personal interest in using it, you may find that you are less motivated. Many times, our efforts are motivated by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. You may begin to read a textbook chapter, for example, because you are concerned about your grade in the course (extrinsic motivation). However, as you are reading you may find that you become interested in the material itself and want to learn more about the topic (intrinsic motivation). Your increased interest in the material may actually increase your motivation to complete the task, perhaps with even more effort.

Your belief in your own ability to successfully complete a task can also affect your level of motivation. If you believe that you can successfully complete a task, you are more likely to be motivated to work on it. This belief in your ability to successfully complete a task is often described as *self-efficacy*. Each time that you are successful in accomplishing one of your goals (completing a task), it increases your self-efficacy (self-confidence) so that you can complete a similar or even more difficult task in the future. Students who have high self-efficacy are also more likely to persist on a task when it is difficult. For these reasons, many psychologists believe that past successes lead to future successes.

Your motivation is also affected by the strength of your belief that the amount of effort you put forth on a task can affect your performance. If you attribute your successes and your failures to your level of effort, you are more likely to be motivated to work on and complete a task. The amount of effort that you exert when working on a task is something that you can control. Unlike luck, which is out of our control, we can exert a lot of effort, very little effort, or no effort in completing a task. Many study skills experts believe that students need to work hard at the beginning of the semester so they can see that the amount of effort they put toward their academic tasks does have a positive effect on their performance. Early success (knowing you can learn the material and achieve your grade goals) is very motivating for new college students. This early success can therefore lead to even more success.

### STRATEGIES TO INCREASE MOTIVATION

There are hundreds of strategies that students can use to increase motivation. Just go to a bookstore and check out the reference or self-help shelf. Books on how to get motivated or increase your motivation at home, school, and work are plentiful. Many of the chapters in this text contain strategies that will help you increase your motivation. A number of basic strategies can help you get more motivated now.

- *Set challenging but realistic goals.* We are more motivated to complete tasks when we feel that they are challenging and yet attainable (within our reach).

- *Set learning goals.* Decide what facts, concepts, or ideas you want to learn before you begin working on a task.
- *See the value in the task.* Understanding why you are doing the task—seeing the importance of the task—can help motivate you to complete it.
- *Have a positive attitude.* As you begin a task, think about similar tasks that you completed in the past. Knowing that you've done it before can increase your motivation.
- *Use positive self-talk.* When working on a long or difficult task, you may find that telling yourself that you can do it, why it's important, or that you are almost done with the task can keep you going.
- *Work hard.* One of the most important steps in getting motivated is to work hard, exert effort, on a task. Not working on a task or exerting very little effort often results in failure to complete the task successfully.
- *Use active study strategies.* Knowing which strategy to use for a specific task and that it will work can help you be more motivated to work hard.
- *Break down tasks.* Some students have trouble getting motivated to start a task that appears to be long and difficult. By breaking the task into parts, you can increase your motivation.
- *Monitor your learning.* Knowing that you are learning or understanding the information will motivate you to keep working.
- *Learn from your mistakes.* Learning why you were unable to successfully complete a task can also help increase your motivation. Feeling motivated to work on a task is difficult when you know that your efforts were not successful the last time. Knowing what you need to do differently can help you be more motivated after a "failure."

### GETTING YOUR MONEY'S WORTH

A college education is your key to the future, but it is also one of the most expensive investments you or your parents will ever make. A college education can cost anywhere from \$20,000 to \$100,000. If you break down your tuition costs, you may find that you are paying several hundred to several thousand dollars for each course you take. Divide that number by the number of class sessions that you have in each course. You may be astounded by the actual cost of each of your classes. What's the point of all of this math? Well, it's to help you realize that every time you miss a class, you're wasting money. Some students are excited when a professor cancels a class or doesn't show up. But students who are paying the bill or attending college on loans—which they'll have to repay—often feel angry because they believe that they are not getting their money's worth. In the same way, each time you cut a class, sleep through one, or show up unprepared, you aren't getting your money's worth either. To get

your money's worth and maximize your success, go to class and stay up to date with your assignments.

Working hard will also help you get your money's worth. In high school, many students did just enough to get by. Did you “cruise” through high school? Did you spend only one hour a day doing homework assignments or studying for tests? If you answered yes to either of these questions, you'll have to change your study patterns in college. To get your money's worth, you need to put school first; you need to spend twenty to thirty-five hours each week reading, doing assignments, and preparing for exams. If you work hard, you'll get your money's worth and a good education, too.

## WHY ARE YOU IN COLLEGE?

As you are getting ready to learn, maintain a positive attitude toward your progress. Think about why you are in college and what you plan to accomplish during your college career. Take some time to visit the career services office on your campus and explore the job opportunities available in your major field of study. Talk to other students and to your professors about the options available to you. Having a clear set of goals can be very motivating and can help you overcome some of the hurdles that you will have to face. If you haven't chosen a major yet, that's okay, too. Use your first year or two of college to explore various courses and majors. Colleges offer courses of study that you never even heard of in high school—one of them may be the right one for you. You may even think about changing your major. Most college students do change their major at least once; many change their major several times. The important thing to remember is that career goals help motivate you to set and achieve your academic goals, which help motivate you to set and achieve your study goals. Why are you in college? Think about it.

## MAKING THE TRANSITION TO LEARN

Attending college requires a certain amount of adjustment for most students. If you started college immediately after high school graduation, you will experience many changes in your life. You may be on your own for the first time—you may have to take on many of the responsibilities that your parents or teachers previously handled. If you are a commuter or a nontraditional college student, you will have to make adjustments, too. Although juggling work, school, and home responsibilities is a challenging task, many students do it every day. College life offers many exciting new experiences, and many new freshmen want to join in on the activities.

When researchers look at the American work culture, the overwhelming result is that the following three circumstances are highly motivating to professional workers:

- **Autonomy:** the urge to direct their own lives.
- **Mastery:** the desire to get better and better at something that matters.
- **Purpose:** the yearning to do what they do in the service of something larger than themselves (Pink, 2009).

Employment in 21st-century America requires many professionals to be able to work autonomously, either alone or in groups. A dramatic example of the shift to autonomy is a new movement, the Results Only Work Environment (ROWE).

In a ROWE people don't have schedules. They show up when they want. They don't have to be in the office at a certain time, or any time. They just have to get their work done. How they do it, when they do it, where they do it, is totally up to them. (Pink, 2009)

College study is a good preparation for this approach to work because college requires autonomy and results are the only real criteria for success. In order to be successful in these environments, you will need strong academic motivation and self-regulation.

Academic motivation is a subset of the huge topic of motivation. Obviously, there are many factors that affect academic motivation, both internal (intrinsic) and external (extrinsic). Autonomy, mastery, and purpose are all good examples of intrinsic motivation. Awards, high grades, and academic honors are examples of extrinsic rewards.

Motivation researchers routinely investigate the motivation of college students to try and understand why some students succeed and others fail or drift out of college. Here are five important behavioral characteristics that researchers have identified (Woolfolk, 2004):

**Choices.** What do you choose to do? Do you attend class regularly, or miss class to catch up on sleep, errands, etc.?

**Initiation.** How rapidly do you begin studying? Do you study before you go out with friends, or delay studying until the next day?

**Intensity.** How hard do you try? Do you actively engage in the lecture/discussion in classes, or just go through the motions of taking notes?

**Persistence.** How long do you try? Are you determined to understand study material and seek help when necessary, or do you give up when learning is difficult?

**Thoughts/feelings.** What do you think and feel while you are studying? Do you feel confident that you can successfully complete an assignment, or do you worry that you will fail?

Research evidence and common sense tell us that these five factors are important in determining level of motivation. If you direct your attention to your own behaviors, thoughts, and feelings through the lens of these issues, you can determine your own motivation level. Take a few moments to reflect on your current level of academic motivation. Does it vary across courses? How much does procrastination impede your work? Are you a strong starter, a strong finisher, or consistent throughout the semester? Is your attitude about academics helpful to your efforts?

## Psychological Elements That Affect Motivation

If you can understand and control the factors of choice, initiation, intensity, persistence, and thoughts/feelings, then you have a much greater opportunity to increase academic