



Theta Delta Chi International Fraternity

Academic Improvement

Thinking about Academic Improvement

One size does not fit all. As our Founders said, one of the most important duties we have as human beings is the improvement of our intellectual being. Additionally, they made a point of telling us that while we need to pardon the faults of each, we also need to improve and reform. While growth might be optional for some, it is a requirement for being a Theta Delt. We need to think systemically in our Charges and understand what success might look like and how to get there.

Study hours work! Requiring them of each of our brothers is an important way to demonstrate to those outside of the Brotherhood how important we take the improvement of our intellectual being. If study hours are not a part of your Brotherhood Standards Document, they need to be. Use GreekTrack to monitor those hours and hold each other accountable.

You might also see if the counseling office will do programs for the entire Brotherhood on the services they offer and how to access them. They will also offer seminars on study skills, note-taking skills and strategies for learning. Several Charges have already done this and have seen the benefits.

Please remember:

MORE STUDY HOURS DOES NOT NECESSARILY EQUAL IMPROVEMENT

STUDY HOURS ARE EFFECTIVE, IF THEY ARE USED STRATEGICALLY

Questions to consider when planning Academic Improvement:

1. Are you having trouble overall in all your classes?
2. Are you have trouble in just one class (Organic Chemistry)?
3. Do you have trouble when it comes to testing?
4. Are you having trouble in a single type of class such as a math class?
5. Are you having trouble writing papers even though you know the content?
6. Are you in the right career track?
7. Do you need help in writing your resume?

Each question has some specific answers that may or may not include more study hours. Rather, each question has a focused answer particular to the problem.

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1. Are you having trouble overall in all your classes?

Understanding the problem:

If this appears to be the problem AND you are observing study hours, perhaps there are several issues at play. You could have a problem processing information. You could also be having trouble knowing how to study or do the course work or even how to effectively take notes.

Possible courses of action:

Many colleges and universities have testing and counseling centers that can look at how you process information. These centers can better help you understand how you learn and how to maximize your learning style. They can recommend other services on campus to assist you in particular learning needs. In some cases, testing may reveal an underlying learning issue you were not aware of. If this is the case, the university can provide accommodation strategies and services. Among those accommodations might be FREE tutoring services, accommodations for test taking, accommodations for note taking and even assistance in writing papers.

If you were under an IEPC or even a Section 504 plan in high school, you STILL qualify for services. Make sure your college counselor is aware of these plans because you qualify for many free services on your campus.

2. Are you have trouble in just one class (Organic Chemistry)?

Understanding the problem:

Working with specific content material can be problematic for everyone. If you are having trouble in a single class it might possibly be the content of the course OR even how the instructor is teaching the material.

Possible courses of action:

The most obvious course of action would be to see your instructor during their office hours. This is free and will allow the instructor to better understand issues that you are having with the content. In many cases, you are not the only person in this situation.

Sitting in the front of the classroom can also assist. This helps many people to maintain focus on the course, take better notes and there are fewer distractions.

Form a study group in the class and meet with them regularly to review the course materials and work with each other on finding clarity with the material.

Tutoring services are available on most campuses for specific courses and subjects. While there is usually a fee to access tutoring, the cost of failing a course can be even higher when you need to retake the class because it is required.

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Check in and see if another brother has taken the course and can assist you in reviewing the material and clarify any understandings you might have. This is a very cost-efficient (free) way to get some help and build a bond with another brother.

3. Do you have trouble when it comes to testing?

Understanding the problem:

Test anxiety is a huge problem for many people. It is not uncommon for people find studying and prepping for tests to be a frustrating experience and then, understanding how to effectively approach the test itself can be intimidating.

Possible courses of action:

Many colleges and universities have services, through the counseling center, that assist students in learning test taking strategies and even provide advice on how to study and prep for tests. Becoming a better test taker is a skill that can be acquired. Understanding how tests are structured and approaches to answering multiple choice and essay questions can be learned. Some universities even have a class you can take to learn to become a better student which includes notetaking skills, test taking skills and strategies, along with writing skills. These services usually have a fee associated with them so just be aware.

4. Are you having trouble in a single type of class such as a math class?

Understanding the problem:

Many types of classes have major organizing principles and constructs that hold the discipline together. Some introductory science classes tend to be very vocabulary intensive while some social studies classes have major conceptual frameworks or organizational principals that they are organized around. If you are unaware how to memorize and learn vocabulary or understand the major organizing principles of some classes, the entire discipline can be difficult to learn.

Possible courses of action:

Nothing will substitute for a meeting with the instructor to get a handle on what is happening in the class or discipline. Take advantage of office hours or even working with a graduate assistant.

In the case of mathematics, many colleges and universities maintain math centers to assist students with the specific discipline. Of course, tutoring is always an option. Check with the guidance and counseling office to locate specific services. You might also want to check on bulletin boards in the buildings where the departments are housed or even in the libraries. Forming a study group might also be an option, you are probably not the only person having a problem.

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5. Are you having trouble writing papers even though you know the content?

Understanding the problem:

What you learned in high school about writing might not always serve you well in college or beyond. If you learned to write using a 5-paragraph model rather than a true writing process, you might be experiencing difficulty. College level writing obeys different rules.

There are three general pieces of information to understand about college or academic writing

- The purpose of college writing (generally) is to teach critical thinking skills.
- College writing is expository writing.
- Expository writing focuses on information and the manipulation of that information.

From, *Online Guide to Writing and Research: What is College Writing?* University of Maryland University College, <https://coursedev.umuc.edu/WRTG999A/chapter1/ch1-01.html>

Possible courses of action:

The most obvious and readily available resource on most college campuses is a Writing Center. Most universities offer FREE assistance to students in reviewing revising and even editing papers. They often provide mini-courses, often free, to students on the campus. Check online to locate these services or with your library.

Another source of help might be within your own Charge. Locate those brothers who have learned to write well and ask for help. They might even offer free tutoring for your work. Almost every proficient or published writer, relies on the help of someone with the revision and editing of their work.

Writing a paper for class and writing an essay exam, while similar, often have some variations in how they are written. While the process is the same, the approach is different, as is the style. This is an interesting topic to discuss at the writing center.

6. Are you in the right career track?

Understanding the problem:

Just because you find an area of interest, such as archeology, you might not be that interested in the language classes or the science classes involved with getting a degree in that field. Perhaps holding onto the area of archeology as a hobby might be more appropriate. Your grades might be an indication of what should be left as a hobby. Nothing wrong with that!

Not everyone who enters college knows exactly what they want to do after graduation, that's OK!

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Possible courses of action:

Visit your career or counseling center on campus. That's what they are there for, plus you have already paid for it! They not only can help you locate an area of interest, but also a career track within that area. Theta Delta Chi has an excellent tool in MyTDX.org to help you think through your career decisions.

7. Do you need help writing your resume?

Understanding the problem:

Writing a resume and your cover letter are two of the most important things you need to create to get your foot in the door. There is a skill to writing both and everyone needs to have professional help in writing these documents. A good cover letter and a well-crafted resume can get you past the paper screen, while a poorly written cover letter can get you put in the "pile." And no one wants to be in the "pile!"

Possible courses of action:

Again, work with both your writing center AND your career counseling office. Remember, you have already paid for their services, use them.

Another source to help you out is your own alumni base. Join the TDX LinkedIn group and seek out help. Building a personal network is a fast and effective way to find that first, second or even fifth job. This is one perk of a being a member of a Fraternity. You can also reach out to alumni who are currently working in your field by using the Job Board tool in MyTDX.org. After logging into MyTDX.org, place your cursor on the, **MORE** tab and scroll down to, **JOB BOARD**.