

GRAB AND GO PRACTICES

Strategic Self-Direction for College Success

By Ashley Luce

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A common challenge for new college students is learning how to manage their free time and making choices on how to spend it. For students enrolled in inclusive higher education programs, person-centered planning (PCP) is the first instance where students are taking the lead in shaping their college vision. At the start of the semester, program coordinators typically provide students with an initial schedule that includes core components like peer mentoring, internships, and classes. Over time, with guidance, students will learn to make their own decisions about how to fill their free time.

To support this process, program coordinators may consider hosting PCP meetings after the first two weeks of the semester. This timing allows students to settle into their schedules and make more informed decisions.

Here are two examples of students' goal setting and how those goals directed their choices. These activities not only helped students achieve their goals but also strengthened their practice of fundamental skills.

Example Student 1: Practicing Independence as a Returning Student

	Program Components	Goals from PCP	Free Time
Academic	Intro to Acting class	Practice lines with a peer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attend professor office hours• Keep track and work on assignments
Social	Meeting with peer mentor	Regularly use cell phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Text peer mentor meeting location• Decide what to do during time together
Employment	Internship at local museum leading tours	Give a tour independently using a script	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regularly check student email• Set alarm reminders to arrive 15 min early
Community	Third semester in college	Make choices on how to spend time on campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Find a quiet location to read• Explore the Harborwalk
Travel	School district provides transportation	Navigate independently and confidently on campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practice taking the campus shuttle and following the map

Example Student 1: Schedule

	MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY
8:00am	Travel to Campus	Travel to Campus	Travel to Campus
8:30am			
9:00am	THRART 136-01 Intro to Acting (50 min class)	THRART 136-01 Intro to Acting (50 min class)	THRART 136-01 Intro to Acting (50 min class)
9:30am			
10:00am	Break/ check email	Grab coffee/ spend time in Campus Center	Practice lines after class
10:30am	Museum Internship (1 hour)		
11:00am		Peer Mentoring/ Lunch	Lunch
11:30am	Lunch		
12:00pm	Read or listen to textbook		
12:30pm		Harborwalk/ Campus event	Professor Office Hour
1:00pm	Take shuttle to dorms		
1:30pm			
2:00pm	Travel Home	Travel Home	Travel Home

Example Student 2: Confident First-Year Student

	Program Components	Goals from PCP	Free Time
Academic	Environmental Science	Record class lectures and complete group project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to the class recording and review notes with support • Check email/email classmates • Plan ahead for the group project
Social	Meeting with peer mentor	Boundary setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend time in the game room • Connect with a friend outside of campus
Employment	Internship at the Office of Student Leadership	Finish task list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review task list/prepare any questions for supervisor
Community	First semester of college	Go to a campus event and get to know campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend time in the science building, campus center, and campus event and game room
Travel	Travel training to campus by train	Communicate with education coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text education coach train stops and campus locations

Example Student 2: Schedule

	TUESDAY	THURSDAY
8:00am	Travel to Campus	Travel to Campus
8:30am		Review internship task list
9:00am	Peer Mentoring	Student Leadership Office Internship (1 hour)
9:30am		
10:00am	Check email/science building	Check email/Campus Center
10:30am		
11:00am	ENVSCI120 Intro to Environmental Science (1 hour 15 min)	ENVSCI120 Intro to Environmental Science (1 hour 15 min)
11:30am		
12:00pm		
12:30pm	Review class recording/notes	Game Room
1:00pm		
1:30pm		
2:00pm	Travel Home	Travel Home

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

To learn more about these student stories, watch the “[Empowering Students to Make Choices & Get Involved on Campus](#)” Think College Webinar.

Consider using the [Foundational Skills for College and Career Learning Plan](#), a tool for teachers, students, and families to support students in practicing skills in inclusive settings. Program coordinators can refer to these skills when guiding students on how they can spend their free time.

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The Massachusetts Center for Inclusive Higher Education and Transition (MACIHET) is dedicated to advancing higher education and transition initiatives across Massachusetts. Our mission is to promote positive post-school outcomes for individuals with disabilities. We achieve this by offering professional development, training, and support to families, practitioners, advocates, and community partners.

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