



# Your first year at UT

There's no magic bullet to guarantee success in your first year. But there are many ideas and actions that can get you closer to achieving that goal, and the following pointers should help you both academically and personally.

## Skills and Preparation

Be resourceful. Communicate with your school counselor about the many options available to you. Learn everything you can about the college application process: prepping for entrance exams, gathering recommendations, selecting a school that's right for you, etc.

Make use of university services and resources. Familiarize yourself with and use the centers on campus. Good examples are the Sanger Learning Center, the Undergraduate Writing Center, the Center for Strategic Advising and Career Counseling, and the Counseling and Mental Health Center.

UT is a big place. Familiarize yourself with the campus. Locate the nearest appropriate library. Walk your route to and from classes before the semester begins. Explore unlikely places where you can relax, study, or spend time with friends.

Learn to use the library. Attend a library orientation at the beginning of the semester. Walk through the library at least once to get your bearings, when you're not feeling pressured to get an assignment done. Rely on reference librarians for help finding materials. There are 22 libraries on campus—pick your favorite one!

Manage the bureaucracy. Keep written records of administrative dealings, including names and phone numbers of people you talk to, in case you have to follow-up later. Get to know the administrative assistants in your College; they can be enormously helpful. Keep hard or electronic copies of everything you submit for class assignments, in case they get lost.

## Academics

Recognize that you will be expected to meet high academic standards. UT is a large university recently ranked 25th in the world, with international recognition and prestige. Write down the deadlines for adding and dropping classes. You can consult the online calendar or the course catalog for these essential dates. If you feel like you may need to drop a class, first evaluate your performance with your professor, and discuss your options with your advisor well in advance of the deadline.

Prepare yourself for comprehensive exams from the beginning of the semester. Keep current with all your reading, review your notes frequently, and make sure you understand each concept as you move through the semester. Never miss a review or SI session. They are excellent resources you shouldn't ignore.

Talk with at least 3 other people in each of your classes. Be outgoing, especially in the first weeks of class. Coming to class is always more enjoyable if you look forward to seeing someone!

Use peer tutors and mentors to boost your academic performance. These services, many of which are available through the Sanger Learning Center, are great for getting that extra academic edge. You can get

help with a wide variety of topics ranging from working calculus problem sets to improving time management skills, finishing your government essay to studying for your economics exam.

Check bulletin boards in your department. Find out about lectures, seminars, special classes, and programs, as well as jobs and internships

### **Professors and Teaching Assistants**

Make sure you understand the grading system for each class you take. Just because one professor grades on a scale of 100 doesn't mean they all do. How do tests break down? For example, how much of the test will be based on in-class information?

Go to office hours. Most professors really enjoy interacting with their students on a personal level. So there's a good chance they'll be glad you visited! Plus, spending time with your professor (or your TA) is one of the best ways to establish a meaningful personal connection with the course and the material in the course. Finally, being a known quantity never hurts come grade time.

Communicate with your professor or TA effectively. Remember that you don't have to limit your conversations to academic topics. Ask about your professor's educational history, a news article you saw pertaining to the course, or anything else you can think of. Never hesitate to ask TAs to review tests one-on-one with you, or to look over a rough draft of a paper.

Good relationships with professors are valuable outside the classroom. Professors who know you personally will be far better equipped to write recommendations for scholarships, jobs, or internships.

Don't wait until after your first exam in class to see how you're doing. Sometimes it's too late to make an A after a bad grade on your first exam, so seeing your professor before an exam is sometimes more valuable than seeing him or her afterwards.

### **Frame of Mind**

Use your academic advisors in your college's Dean's office to assist you in navigating course selections and settling on a degree plan. Make sure each class you register for meets degree plan requirements. If you encounter difficulties, arrange to meet with another advisor.

Get to know juniors and seniors who know the ropes; they've already taken the classes you're in and know the professors. Graduate students can also be great sources of information.

### **Social Life**

Join a student organization you're interested in. There are hundreds on campus with an almost infinite range of possibilities, so seek out something that you care about. Be selective of your extracurricular activities. Figure out if these activities make sense for you. Do they accurately represent your beliefs, your personality, and your preferences? Are they a good use of your time?

Cultivate support from your family and friends, especially if you're feeling isolated or anonymous on campus.

Learn effective ways to deal with stress. UT's Counseling and Mental Health Center has a team of professionals who can help you overcome anxiety or personal problems.