Your Type of Friends Are More Important for Your Future Than a Famous College

Many people believe a common idea: To get a great job and make the most money, you must go to a famous, top college. People think these schools are best because they have the best teachers. But studies show that something else is more important than great teachers. It is the type of friends and classmates that we have.

In one study, researchers looked at students with high grades. They found that these students had roommates and friends who studied a lot. In fact, when new students got new roommates, they changed each other's habits very quickly. Students with roommates who liked to party and drink alcohol started to party more, too. But students with serious roommates became more serious students themselves.

Another famous study asked a different question: Does a famous college really help students more in life? Scientists followed more than 33,000 students for over 20 years. They wanted to know if going to a hard-to-get-into university helps students earn more money later in life. They looked at two groups of students:

Group 1: Students who got into a top university but chose to go to a less-famous school.
Group 2: Students who went to a top university.

They found that both groups earned about the same amount of money during their lives. This was true when the students were young adults, and it was still true when they were in their 40s and 50s. Then they repeated the study with a new group of students in 1989 and found the same results.

At top schools, most students naturally study hard. Because of this, it is easy to find a special friend to study and spend time with and learn from. At less-famous schools, there are also many good students, but you have to look for them.

For example, Malia was an excellent high school student. She applied to two hard-to-get-into colleges, but she chose a less-famous university near her home. On her first day, she made an effort to meet other serious students. She knew that the best students usually sat near the front of the classroom, so she arrived early to get a front seat.

She did a few simple things to start conversations. Before class, she asked friendly questions like, “Did you have a class before this one?” or gave simple compliments like, “I like your backpack.” If the person was friendly, she asked more questions. She also used compliments at the end of class. She said things like, “Your comment in our small group today was very helpful to me,” or, “I liked your question to the teacher. I was wondering the same thing.”

Malia also joined study groups, went to campus clubs, (like the international club), and worked as a tutor in the writing center. She did not just wait for people to talk to her.

She became friends with students who were doing research for professors. Others were planning to study more after graduating. Some were even planning to start businesses after graduating.

In the end, the researchers found that success does not come from the name of our college. Instead, we become successful when we spend our free time with students who are hard-working, smart, and interesting.

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Comprehension Exercise

Directions: Write T (true) or F (false) next to each sentence.

___ 1. According to the article, having great teachers is not important.

___ 2. If we have a roommate who plays a lot of video games, we will probably play them, too.

___ 3. If you cannot go to a famous college, you can still find a good job after you graduate.

___ 4. We should not try to start conversations with people we don't know.

___ 5. "Where did you buy your backpack?" This is an example of a compliment.

___ 6. We should try to find friends who want to learn.

Paraphrasing Exercise

Directions: Imagine that you have this conversation with a friend.

You: I just read this interesting article.
Friend: Oh yeah. What did it say?

Write what you would tell your friend. Include as many details as you can.
After you finish writing a first draft, you can re-read the article and revise your draft. However, don't look at the article while you are writing. You can use some of these **key words** in your paraphrase.

Key Words

• famous, top college • best teachers • type of friends and classmates • new roommates • each other's habits • party and drink alcohol • serious roommate • Does a famous college really help students more in life? • earn more money later in life • 40s and 50s • top university / a less-famous school.	• Malia • front-seat • campus clubs • tutor • not just wait • doing research • after graduating • start a business • hard-working, smart, and interesting

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Reflection Exercise

Directions: Write a reflection about the article. Try to write a paragraph with several sentences. In your reflection, your first sentence can be one of these:

- *I found some interesting/important information in this article.*
- *After reading this, I now would like to (learn more about /read more research about /…)*
- *There is some information in this article that I could apply to my life.*
- *I agree / disagree with the author about something.*
- *This article reminded me of (me/ my family/my friend).*
- *I was surprised by something in this article.*

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