Forming Study Groups

Forming study groups may be your saving grace in college. They may be required for project work, preparing for course work or assignments, or studying for exams. Study groups can provide a support system to get you through some of those difficult classes. They allow you to cover more information by dividing up the work among the group members and they allow you to learn information you don’t know. Working in study groups allows you to explain concepts to other students to help you learn what your strengths and weaknesses are with specific information.

Here are some tips on how to form study groups in college.

- Scan your class for peers or friends with whom you would like to work with, but be careful with choosing close friends. Working with close friends makes it difficult to hold them accountable for their contribution to the study group. Form study groups with individuals you respect academically.

- Alternatively, create a sign-up sheet that asks for students’ names and email addresses. This sheet may be passed around during a lecture. This method works well for students who may be shy. Remember, if you are the one who initiates the sign-up sheet, you will be responsible to contact everyone on the list.

- Engage in conversations with peers before and after class so that you do not fall out of contact with them. This will also help you to decide who you would like to form study groups with. Remember, if you are never around, people will not think to ask you to be part of a study group.

- If some people are forming study groups already, ask if you may join them. Do not wait until groups have already been formed. If groups are formed already, there may not be any space for you.

- Do not make a study group too large. Five people at most is an effective size for a study group. Too many people will turn the study session into a social gathering.

- Promote your strengths to the group. Tell them what you will bring to the study group. Don’t just think about what the study group will do for you.
• When you have joined a group, try not to be shy. Suggest times and places to meet. Agree in the beginning how often you want to meet and clarify your goals. Are you meeting to prepare for tests, discuss reading, or to review assignments or homework?

• When meeting with the study group, always be prepared! Have all the necessary tools, resources and information required, and a plan for the session. Plan for meetings to be in a neutral location. One suggestion is booking a Group Study Room in the Library. They can be scheduled online (http://rdc.libcal.com/booking/rdclibrary).

• Do not bring too much food to the study group. This will potentially cause the group to eat and socialize instead of studying and learning. However, do allow for some socializing. This is one of the pleasures of forming study groups. But make sure it only takes up a small portion of your group study time.

Study groups can help you when you feel overwhelmed with so much information to learn. But, they can also be your downfall if you are caught in a group that is too large and socializing instead of studying. It is important to pick your group wisely. Good luck studying!

Resources
This handout has been adapted from the following resources:
