



# SOFT SKILLS, STRONG SUCCESS

A Guide for Students and Parents Enrolled in CAP Courses

Date: November 25, 2017

## COLLEGE READINESS

College readiness goes far beyond high school courses taken and grades received. In order for students to be academically ready for college leveled courses, Sterling is working harder to understand what that means and to meet the demands required.

In an effort to increase student success, teachers are incorporating "softer skills" into their day-to-day lessons, however, it is imperative that students and parents recognize the skills needed in order to be successful in CAP. According to David Conley, founder and CEO of Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC), there are seven major "soft skills" needed for success - including self-management and team work.



## SELF-MANAGEMENT

Time management is perhaps one of the most important keys to success, not only in college, but when entering the work world. Self-management involves setting goals and managing your time effectively. Developing motivation and concentration will help students to overcome the lure of procrastination and avoid stress.

Students must learn to prioritize and plan by breaking difficult tasks into more manageable pieces; commit to deadlines; formulate routines and focus on effort, not results.

## COMMUNICATION

Students will need to sharpen their ability to listen and express themselves. Because CAP courses are offered on-line, students need to learn how to communicate with their instructors, other students and other faculty members when there are concerns or questions regarding the content. The courses offered demand a high level of accomplishment, learning experience and self-responsibility. Students are encouraged to reach out with questions when, and if, they arise to clear up any confusions.



## ABILITY TO WORK INDEPENDENTLY

A key in self-management is self-regulation. Students should consistently monitor their tasks and when they are due. They should assess their work load on a weekly basis and choose strategies to accomplish those tasks to the best of their ability.

Students must also begin to tolerate ambiguity. Not everything taught, or learned, in CAP courses is black and white, or crystal clear. Students who are better able to understand the "gray" area of assignments, will be less uncomfortable and will be able to also understand subtleties better.

## STUDY SKILLS

Understanding general, yet proven, strategies for studying and test taking is the first step to becoming an effective learner, however, each course requires different learning approaches. For instance, learning how to study photography is very different than studying project management. While both subjects require great study habits, effective listening skills and reading comprehension, they both require a different approach to learning.

Studying business effectively, as another example, is not about studying longer, per say, it's about studying smarter. Many of the courses offered are cumulative; what you learn today builds on what you've learned in previous courses. This is particularly true of business courses in accounting or corporate finance. If you fall behind, it takes a lot of additional work and time to get caught up. Don't procrastinate, make a schedule and pace yourself.

In addition, students should review notes on a weekly basis, along with highlighting important content the instructors have provided. If notes are not provided, students should jot down relevant ideas and key concepts at the end of each chapter. Know the test format and take advantage of extra credit to maximize learning.



## TEAM WORK, INNOVATION & CREATIVE THINKING



Working effectively with others is increasingly important in today's world. Students will be expected to complete many projects as part of a group or team. In fact, most instructors require group work at least once within a course. On top of that, assignments themselves can be worth up to 50% of their overall grade. Learning to work with others, and to emerge as a leader in groups will be extremely important. If students are struggling with a team member, they should take reasonable steps to resolve it. If that fails, students are encouraged to involve their instructor.

"Thinking outside of the box", or being willing to, will help students to apply new approaches to the content within the course. Most professors often demand that students go beyond facts and simple understandings, and to use the ideas they have learned in their readings in new and creative ways. Students should brainstorm, change perspectives often and question what has already been done to be more successful in the CAP courses.

## ABILITY TO FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

In addition to being a team player and innovator, students need to follow both simple and complex directions given by their instructors and/or teammates. While some assignments are ambiguous, many assignments are very specific. Deadlines matter a great deal to

professors, therefore, students will need to "play by the rules" to ensure they are achieving higher grade point averages.

Students who actively participate in their own learning by following directions will have a much more satisfying experience overall.