

Making the Most of College


By Richard J. Light


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What choices can students in America make and what can teachers and university leaders do to improve more students' experiences and help them make the most of their time and monetary investment? Two Harvard University presidents invited Richard Light and his colleagues to explore these and other questions, resulting in ten years of interviews with 1,600 Harvard students. Filled with practical advice, *Making the Most of College* presents strategies for academic success.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Despite the author's having interviewed 400 Harvard students and visited more than 90 campuses over 10 years, his report on the findings of the Harvard Assessment Seminars would be more accurately titled "Getting the Most Out of Harvard." Rather than reflecting the experiences of average college students, his findings are more consistent with the experiences of students who arrive at prestigious universities already primed for intellectual inquiry. Yet some useful, if obvious, themes emerge from his decade spent interviewing more than 1,600 undergraduates: in-class and out-of-class experiences are significantly connected; strategies successful in high school don't always work well at college; good advising is crucial; students must ask for help when they need it; "students are enthusiastic when classes are structured to maximize personal engagement" and they enjoy interdisciplinary courses. There are some surprises, too: students Light spoke with demand high writing standards and favor unpredictability in their professors' political opinions. A major portion of the book argues that the benefits of diversity on college campuses have been underestimated and that awkward culture clashes can ultimately provide a positive, if at the time uncomfortable, learning experience. Still, the author's efforts to extrapolate from the experiences of these privileged students to the majority of college students are often unconvincing.

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From Library Journal

Light (Graduate Sch. of Education and the John F. Kennedy Sch. of Government, Harvard) interviewed 1600 Harvard students over a ten-year period to discover how to make the most of the college experience. The result is this valuable and practical book, recipient of the 2001 Virginia and Warren Stone Prize from Harvard University Press for an outstanding publication dealing with education and society. Filled with advice and illuminated by real stories of students' self-doubts, failures, discoveries, and hopes, the book is a blueprint for academic success. Some of the issues examined include collaborative selection of classes, talking productively with advisers, improving writing and study skills, maximizing the value of research assignments, and connecting learning inside the classroom with the rest of life. The students' actual responses are woven throughout, creating a revealing text unlike anything else parents, children, matriculating freshmen, and educators have read. This rich account of college life is recommended for all types of libraries. Samuel T. Huang, Univ. of Arizona Lib., Tuscon

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From [Booklist](#)

Light, a Harvard professor with 30 years of experience teaching at the college level, explores those elements of college life that make it an enriching experience for students. Light addresses two major areas: the choices students make to get the most out of college and effective ways for faculty members to help students get the best experience. The book is based on research by more than 60 faculty members from 20 colleges and universities and interviews with undergraduates. Each chapter focuses on such student choices as courses and housing, and how those choices can adversely affect the quality of the college experience unless coordinated. Light offers specific suggestions from students on how to deal with typical situations. He explores factors that make classes memorable--for example, relationships with faculty members--and the importance of effective time management. Among the positive trends that Light identifies are greater ethnic and racial diversity and "mentored" internships not taken for credit. Parents and students either in college or headed there will find this book a valuable resource. *Vanessa Bush*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Teresa Bradshaw:

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