



Elevating Leaders Summit First Year College Advice from Group Facilitators

The Virtual College Experience

- How do you suggest making friends when classes are all virtual?
- What challenges will we face in college that has gone virtual as an Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders?
- My classes are going to be online, which is going to be hard to get help from professors with no office hours. How do you suggest making up for this?
- How will I be able to access mental health resources when college will be online this fall?

Balancing your Time

- When feeling overwhelmed by everything you're involved with, what is the best way to decide what to cut out and what to keep?
- What are some ways to choose what you love and avoid FOMO (fear of missing out) when you are joining clubs?
- What are some tools we can use to balance our social life, schoolwork, and mental health?
- How do I use apps to balance social life, school work, and mental health?
- How do you deal with balancing family issues at home and school at the same time?
- What clubs/communities on campus helped make your transition to college successful?

Financing and Organizing Your College Journey

- Can you provide a link to the template you use to keep track of your spending?
- Can you provide a link to your schedule template?
- How do you deal with inevitable problems like debt when pursuing further education and prevent that from impacting mental health?

Navigating College Systems

- Have you ever experienced racism as you navigate the college system?
- What do you do if you're afraid of losing your passion?
- How do we stay safe while engaging in a social circle?
- How do you deal with imposter syndrome on campus?



The Virtual College Experience

How do you suggest making friends when classes are all virtual?

- Take solace in that others probably feel the same way and would love to find ways to accomplish this goal. Seek out or even create spaces for virtual interaction. Student organizations are always hosting virtual events. Create study groups on Zoom. Take the initiative to find those social spaces online, and you definitely have community here at APIA Scholars!

What challenges will we face in colleges that have gone virtual as an Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders?

- Accessing personal and mental wellness might be difficult, as could seeking out academic help in general and finding a sense of community and belonging. The model minority myth may also be a hurdle. Speaking up and making space for yourself might be difficult, so be aware of that. Specifically for Asian American students, the common stereotypes might be more frequent (studious, tech-proficient etc.), due to the belief of anonymity. Also, it might be a bit harder to "remake yourself" as it is an option for college freshmen during an ordinary year. I recommend blocking time away from your academics and family, just like you would in in-person college. Plan out time for self-care, seek academic and professional help, if necessary, set parameters to not be disturbed, try to still strive to be connected with fellow new students.

My classes are going to be online, which is going to be hard to get help from professors with no office hours.

How do you suggest making up for this?

- I would see if the Teaching Assistants (TAs) have office hours. They should be just as helpful with providing guidance. Otherwise, I would email the professor your questions in order to maximize getting help. You can also look into tutoring resources that may be provided by your institution. You could also potentially reach out to fellow classmates to create a study group. Khan Academy is another great resource as well.

How will I be able to access mental health resources when college will be online this fall?

- Most mental health resources have been moved online through Zoom or through phone calls. I think it is best for you to start looking into the college you're attending later this year's resources because this can vary by institution. There are also student organizations or student led programs on various mental health initiatives that could be helpful. For these, some of them provide peer support and some of them provide workshops or circles just to talk about mental health in general.

Balancing your Time

When feeling overwhelmed by everything you're involved with, what is the best way to decide what to cut out and what to keep?

- It's good to be passionate about many things and be involved on campus and in your community, but it's equally important to carve out time to recharge and reflect in order to be more effective in the work that you do and be reminded of who you are (we are beyond the sum of the work we do, money we earn, grades we get, and the roles we take on!) Here are some questions to ask yourself when you are deciding which role/responsibility to drop, or when you are deciding which project/role/responsibility to take on:
 - Why do you want to be involved (purpose)?
 - How does the purpose relate to your identity development, whether it be academic, professional, and/or personal?
 - How does this benefit your community (or people or causes that matter to you)? is the project/role helping you to attain skills and gain experiences for your long(er)-term goals?

What are some ways to choose what you love and avoid FOMO (fear of missing out) when you are joining clubs?

- This is something that I really struggled with in college. I was a part of my university's honors program and was required to volunteer 20 hours every semester. I was working part time, taking five classes each semester, and involved in some on campus organizations. I have learned to overcome FOMO by recognizing that social media exaggerates 'fun'. For the most part, it makes people's lives seem a lot better, and frankly more fun, than they really are. Therefore, you'll need to stop comparing your life to someone else's based on what they post or share.

What are some strategies we can use to balance work, academics, and mental health?

- **Clarify your priorities:** Since you're ultimately paying for school, make sure to prioritize courses before work. But also be mindful of personal wellbeing, clubs, friendships etc.
- **Understand how much time and energy you have outside course work & find opportunities that fit your criteria:** If you're taking a challenging course load or hoping to spend a lot of time in clubs, then you might want to find positions that are more chill/where you can spend most of the time doing HW while at work.
- **Create a calendar:** Layout all the courses you'll be taking this semester. Highlight any key dates (e.g. midterms, finals, projects, papers etc.). Then, fill in the calendar with your other activities that you already know the time commitments to (e.g. club meetings, office hours etc.).
- **Communicate your availability:** If your boss asks for your availability, be realistic and reasonable about when you are able/free to work. Learn to protect your time given your priorities. Take care of yourself and school. If you get a shift one week that coincides with a midterm or big paper, communicate that to your manager or team ideally a week or at a minimum a couple days beforehand to switch shifts. The earlier you communicate this, the more likely you can make adjustments.

What are some apps that help balance social life, school work, and mental health?

- Here are some apps/sites that I have found helpful:
 - <https://trello.com/> (for making to do lists) With trello/to do lists, I set goals for myself for each day. Today I'll finish my lab report, study for english for 1 hour, and finish my biology homework. As long as I get those things done, I'm good to go.
 - calendar.google.com (for managing calendars, can color code!)
 - <https://evernote.com/> (for note taking)
 - College is a time of A LOT of balancing and managing stuff on your own. There's not really a set schedule outside of classes and with all this time on your hands, you have to decide between studying, doing homework, hanging out with friends, etc. **It's always easier to do things we like and harder to get ourselves to do things we don't like. But with all of this said -- make sure you find a balance that works for you!** Also! Things don't have to be mutually exclusive Hangout with friends + Studying = study date with friends Eat lunch + hangout with friends = schedule to eat lunch with friends (everyone has to eat!) taking breaks + friends = schedule to take a study break together with a friend after studying for 30/45/60 minutes. Self-care with friends!

How do you deal with balancing family issues at home and school at the same time?

- As someone who moved from Portland, Oregon all the way across the country to Washington, DC for school, I found myself having to deal not only with the new academic challenges, but also adjusting to a new city, a new rhythm and flow. On top of all of this I wanted to stay involved with my family back home, and help them whenever they needed. What worked for me is that I had to sit down and reflect on what my priorities were (both in the grand scheme of things as well as week by week). Family is very important to me, so I knew that I wasn't going to shut them out, but at the same time I moved across the country to study, to learn, to engage with new people and a new city. School gave me deadlines, and whenever I had an assignment worth a lot of points or one that required lots of time and effort, I would let my family know that I had a busy week(s) ahead of me. I would still call my family during this time here and there because it was a good way for me to stay sane. All in all, being communicative with my family about my priorities, troubles, and plans of the next week/month helped me. Additionally you don't have to try to compartmentalize your familial life with your academic/college life. You can talk to your friends, counselors, other support systems you have on campus about your challenges for the week, and they may be able to lend you some advice. It's also important to recognize that some things are out of your hands, especially if you moved away from home for college. You shouldn't feel guilty for not being as involved as you were at home, but recognize that you are doing the best you can under the circumstances

What clubs/communities on campus helped make your transition to college successful?

- I joined all the clubs that were involved with the Multicultural Center on my campus. This is where I was networking with APIA, International, Latinx and Native American students. Even though the weekly or bi-weekly meetings were tiring, I really built a community with these groups of people. We supported each other when dealing with culture shock, homesickness, stress, etc. Naturally, you're going to gravitate towards people who understand you, where you come from, your culture, your struggles; and those people will definitely become your support system that will keep you going. This doesn't only involve students, it can involve staff as well. Talk with your friends, look at the activities you want to join, invest time on planning your schedule, and you'll start finding time to do things you like and also not feel like you are missing out.

Financing and Organizing Your College Journey

Can you provide a link to the template you use to keep track of your spending?

- There are templates on Google Sheets and Excel that you can use to manually input your income and expenses. I also use my bank statement to see what type of expenses they are, whether for food, entertainment, gas, etc.
- Here are some more templates: <https://www.thebalance.com/basic-monthly-budget-worksheet-1289585> and <https://thefinancetwins.com/tools/monthly-budget-template/>

Can you provide a link to your schedule template?

- I use Google Calendar and put in what events or tasks I need to do for the day, even time for lunch and dinner and break. It's completely up to you how much you want to put in your schedule but I highly recommend putting the main events like classes, work, workshops, meetings, etc.

How do you deal with inevitable problems like debt when pursuing further education and prevent that from impacting mental health?

- Debt is a very tough thing and especially for first-generation low income students. My approach is to think about your educational debt as an investment. We're going to college, grad school, etc. and we have debts from our education while we're learning and attending the school. And it's important to recognize that we (probably) cannot pay it off in one payment. We will slowly pay it off after we graduate and find a job to earn income. And even then, there are income based repayment plans where the payment we owe is adjusted based on our income. It's easy to feel anxious about the amount of money we owe (it's a lot of money and that's scary as heck!) but we don't have to think about it constantly 24/7. Is your thinking about your debt helping you come up with a better plan for repayment and the future? Or is your thinking about the debt just freaking you out and overwhelming you even more?

Navigating College Systems

Have you ever experienced racism as you navigate the college system?

- Nowhere in our society is void of racism. In spaces that gather people from many different backgrounds, especially those who are reluctant to acknowledge their prejudices and privileges (i.e. colleges), racism is bound to surface. I went to a liberal arts college known for its progressivism, but the institution, as is true for many other higher education institutions in the U.S., was entrenched in racism and many students/faculty/staff experienced and perpetuated it (systemic, subtle, internalized, overt, etc). Racial discrimination can be interpreted as intentional oppression, ignorance or misunderstanding. It's also often highly contextualized. So, there is no one definitive way to respond to racism. Keep in mind that YOU have the agency, whether you decide to confront and educate, report, or ignore the perpetrator(s). Be sure to have a safe space and trusting community where you can debrief the instances and feel belonged and loved for who you are. Guard your heart and do not let these hurtful and violent instances get to you. Once you open your eyes to racism interwoven in facets of our society, it's difficult to turn your head away. You can decide to push them away, or transform your anger and frustration into motivation to become an agent of social change. When you are ready to ~systemically and constructively~ confront racism, look around to find your allies and community, frequently check your privileges and prejudices, constantly educate yourself, listen to other voices and their experiences (especially those you don't agree with), stay humble and continue to (un)learn, never be dismissive of others who are not as vocal as you about addressing racism, and always love and forgive radically. Remember that you are never alone.

What do you do if you're afraid of losing your passion?

- I say don't be afraid of your gut feeling. If your passion is no longer bringing you happiness, I think you should take some time off and give some space to the thing you love. By doing so, you are allowing one of two things to happen: One: You are giving yourself time to recharge and recover. Sometimes, this is all you need. You may have simply needed a little time off to get inspired again, and you may return back to that passion at a later time with inspiration, and clarity. This might also give you time to realize what's important. If you don't return back to your first passion, you might be creating room for a new joy or a new passion that you want in your life. Human beings change and evolve over time and as we experience things in life.

How do we stay safe while engaging in a social circle?

- Buddy system, if you are going anywhere that could be unsafe or after hours, definitely go with a friend.
- Be direct, when asking a friend to go with you or to check in with you, say "I want you to stay with me at this party or student organization off campus event" often times that direct request is helpful.
- If you feel uncomfortable, LEAVE!
- Know the campus safety phone numbers, preferably saved to your phone, this includes emergency and non-emergency lines.
- There is no shame to getting rides from campus safety, or walking escorts, if you don't have people you feel comfortable going to and from campus, especially at night. its free.
- If you see something, say something if it is safe to do so, or at the very least, remove yourself from the potential danger.
- Be alert and aware of your surroundings.

How do you deal with imposter syndrome on campus?

- **Change your mindset** - As an accomplished scholar, you might feel a great amount of pressure to do well and be perfect. To me, that's setting yourself up for failure and more imposter syndrome because no one is perfect! You will make mistakes but this doesn't mean you don't belong on campus or that you're a fraud. *Be kind and compassionate to yourself, like you would be to your best friend.*
- **A brag list** - I encourage you to create a list of all your accomplishments and things you are proud of and things you love yourself for. Write all down, set it in a place you can always see and refer to! *HYPE YOURSELF UP!*
- **Community** - Join a cultural club, special interest club, or make your own! One part of imposter syndrome is not feeling like you belong. *Find "your people".*
- **5-second rule:** Mel Robbins is one of my fave motivational speakers! As Robbins explains, her "5-second rule" is very simple: It's about the moment you're in a situation where you know what you should do "but you start to hesitate, or excuses start to fill your mind." Take action. If you give it more than 5 seconds, your mind will find a way to talk you out of it because it resists change