

SECOND EDITION

Make
the *Most*
of Your
**College
Years**

**A Primer
for Success**

Yaunee Okuneye

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR COLLEGE YEARS
A Primer for Success

ISBN: 978-1-7352984-0-5

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to all of you who are anticipating and preparing for a new chapter in your lives called college. May your college experience be everything you hope for and more.

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to give glory and honor to God for being the author and finisher of my faith.

I want to thank my parents, who established a solid foundation for me to thrive from childhood to adulthood. And to my husband, Ken, who uplifted me during hard times and encouraged me not to settle for mediocrity.

To my children: Mommy loves you so much. As I began rewriting this book, I thought of you. When you are older and preparing for college life, I hope you will find wisdom in this book to guide you as you journey through college.

Shout out to my college friends and two best friends, Jennifer and Christina, who have made my college and post-college life experiences incredible. The many moments I have shared with you are indispensable.

Last, I appreciate all the love, support, and prayers from my family, church, and other loved ones. I would not be the person I am today without you.

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Introduction



When I first set foot on my university campus, I was scared and curious, yet excited—all at the same time. I was scared because I would be on my own for the first time in my life. From that point on, there would be no one there to lead and guide me in the right path or stamp a seal of approval on every decision I would make. My curiosity allowed me to think, *What will I make of these four years of my college experience? How will I manage? Will I succeed on my own?* The only reasonable answer to my questions was to think: *Only time will tell.*

Although all of these rhetorical questions were racing through my head, I was anxious to accept every opportunity and to overcome every obstacle set before me. Due to my spiritual foundation and my close

relationship with my parents growing up, I knew I had all the tools I needed to excel at this new level in my life. As I waved goodbye to my parents, I gave a deep sigh of relief and willingly embraced college life.



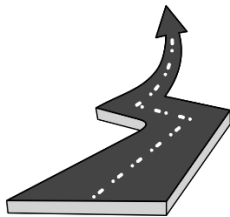
Whether you have been accepted into your college of choice or trying to figure out what college is all about, I want you to understand these precious years are special. The collegiate life entails independence from parents, opportunities to network in the business realm, new friendships, and the chance to be engulfed in various campus activities and organizations.

During this period, think of college life as a direct path to where you want to go and who you want to be in life. Your performance in the classroom and the decisions you make for the next four or five years will reflect on how serious you are about your future. When you enroll at your college or university, keep in mind that these next few years will either be your best or worst experience, so what you put into it may be what you get from it. Whether you are going off to a four-year university or starting at your local community college, this book will help you to expand your horizons and maximize your college experience. Therefore, read, take heed, and enjoy!

On Your Mark

“...Let us run with endurance and active persistence the race that is set before us...”

— Hebrews 12:1




“Run the race of life at your own pace.”

— Lailah Gifty Akita



Chapter 1

What Do You Want to Be When You Grow Up?



As a child, I would get excited to hear the question, “So, what do you want to be when you grow up?” Like many kids, I wanted to be many different things when I reached adulthood. I dreamed of walking across the stage as Ms. America. I wanted to study law. As a teenager, I had a passion for basketball and dreamed of playing for the WNBA.

When I graduated from high school, I loved the idea of becoming a lawyer, but I soon realized studying law was not my passion. I also realized that some of my desires were not quite my passion but were the desires my parents had for me. I enjoyed seeing how proud my

parents were when they told their friends about my goals and dreams. And while my feelings were admirable, I needed to find myself and what I truly wanted out of life. Thankfully, they agreed.

Growing up, my best friend, Christina, and I would tell each other stories about how we were going to be filthy rich. We agreed we would live next door to each other and have pizza parties at each other's house every day. I told her I would have a skating rink, a bowling alley, and basketball and tennis courts inside my mansion. I loved dreaming about adulthood and how amazing my life would be . . . until adulthood came.

Throughout my time in college, I didn't really know exactly what I wanted to do after college. And I never really felt any shame about that, as most of my friends in college were in the same boat. We all knew eventually we would figure it out over time. Although I didn't know what I wanted to do, I was wise enough to join various organizations and speak with guidance counselors, faculty members, and colleagues to narrow down my career focus. By senior year, I knew what I wanted to do concerning my career. I wanted to work in sports marketing. As an avid sports lover with savvy business inclination, I was driven and passionate about my choice. As my senior year came to a close, I was excited about my future. I was accepted into my

school's Sport Management program. As a first-year graduate student, I was determined that nothing would hold me back from my goal of working in sports marketing.

However, after graduating from graduate school with a Master's Degree in Sport Management, reality began to set in. My reality was that I had a tough time finding a job— particularly a job in my field of study. To make matters worse, I had to move back home with my parents until I found work. As time passed, I became disappointed and heartbroken. I felt like I failed both myself and my family, especially after taking out student loans to cover my education. Since I had a hard time finding a job in sports marketing, I was willing to accept any job with a decent salary to cover my expenses. Eventually, I did find a decent paying job, and I moved out of my parents' home and moved to a larger city. I was happy, but not satisfied. I knew there was more.

As years passed and I settled in as a working adult, I experienced success as well as disappointments. I received significant pay raises and bonuses, but I was also looked over for several positions for which I felt I was qualified. I also never got the chance of a career in sports marketing (at least not yet). Although I had some setbacks and disappointments along the way, I would not change any of it. I have come to realize that

everything in life, whether good or bad, is a stepping-stone. As the saying goes, “The situations we encounter in life are either a lesson or a blessing.” Despite the lessons, my past roles and experiences both in my career and life have propelled me to great opportunities as both an author and an entrepreneur. And even now, I know there’s much more on the horizon.



So, I ask you, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” Like myself, you have probably been asked that question more times than you can count. Although you may smile with delight when asked this question as a small child or roll your eyes as a feisty teenager, this question is relevant. The answer to this question paves the way for your future, whether you like it or not. So, whether you know the answer to this vital question or not, eventually, as you move forward in your journey, you will find the answer.

Your career will always tie into your purpose, but it should not be your sole purpose. I believe purpose is multifaceted and is much more than your career. Let’s take the icon, Michelle Obama, for example. Michelle prides herself as a mom, a wife, an author, a former first lady, a lawyer, and the list goes on. All of these

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titles tie into her purpose but also include phases of her career. So, don't get wrapped up in one area of your purpose in life. I am sure you are blessed with many gifts to be shared with others. Go beyond your career and utilize every gift and talent God has placed inside you. You can share your gifts with the world through volunteer work, books, art, music, and more. Who knows, maybe all of your gifts will pay off in the long run.

As an adult, I've come to realize that one's purpose entails two crucial things: your pain and your passion. For some, both can be intertwined. I have friends who chose the teaching profession because of a teacher making a significant impact on their life. As a result, they wanted to give back by becoming teachers. I love organization and structure. I am also very process-oriented and task-driven. Because of this passion, I decided to pursue a career in project management, and I love it! Let's use today's professional athletes as an example. Athletes have a natural ability and passion for their sport of choice. And as a result of making millions of dollars from their athletic ability, they used their millions to fund other gifts and aspirations. Many of them opened schools or created charitable foundations that focus on their areas of passion. Others supported restaurants, hotels, and car dealerships—maybe as a result of something they


aspired to be when they were children. And you can do the same. It's okay to find a job you enjoy while saving up to fund the dream career that you are passionate about. The idea is that you must start somewhere and, like me, see each phase in life as a stepping-stone into greatness.

As you progress in life, you will fail, you will lose, you will feel disappointment, and sometimes cry. However, you will experience more joys in life than sorrow, mainly if you set your mind above your current situation and keep moving forward. Life is nothing but milestones. When you hit a milestone, there's always more to achieve. As you transcend into college life and ultimately adulthood, you will quickly realize your purpose will evolve, goals will change, and with hard work and determination, you will achieve success. So, trust the process and enjoy the journey, knowing there's always more to a purpose than what you plan or see at this present moment. I am a living witness.



Chapter 2

Getting to Know Your Surroundings



It was the Sunday afternoon before my first day of classes as a first-year college student barely settled in at college. I was cooped up in my room, bored on a hot summer day, and thought to myself, “I need to get out and explore.” So, I did! I called up a friend from home and asked if he would like to roam the campus with me. He agreed. We spent two hours walking around our massive university campus just getting a feel for where things were located. Within a few hours, we learned a great deal about our school. We got a brief history of its establishment, its founders, and notable alumni. After exploring the campus, I felt a new

sense of pride that, in just four short years, I would be an alumna of this great university and proud of it.

Due to my campus explorations, locating my classes on the first day of school was a breeze. I was also able to find local eateries with ease and, more importantly, my knowledge of the campus and local area helped me avoid that dazed and confused look that so many first-year students have as they try to find their way around campus.



Once you arrive on campus as an official student, keep in mind that your college campus will be your home for at least the next four years. You may think you will remember everything from orientation, but trust me, when you add a campus full of students to the mix on the first day of classes, you will realize that you have forgotten a lot of what you heard during Orientation Week. Once your parents are gone and you're all alone, ask a friend, neighbor, or roommate to come with you to explore the campus.

Map out the places you would like to visit, and don't forget to stop by the buildings where your classes will meet. If you have questions about directions, campus buildings, or other general queries about campus life, do not be afraid to ask someone. Most

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people will be happy to help.

Here are a few places I recommend you visit while exploring your college campus:

- ✓ Campus police/security station
- ✓ Campus eateries
- ✓ Financial Aid and Registrar's Office
- ✓ Class buildings
- ✓ Fraternity/Sorority houses you may be interested in rushing (joining)
- ✓ Library
- ✓ Computer labs
- ✓ Gym
- ✓ Student Union
- ✓ Academic Advisor's Office
- ✓ Student Housing Office