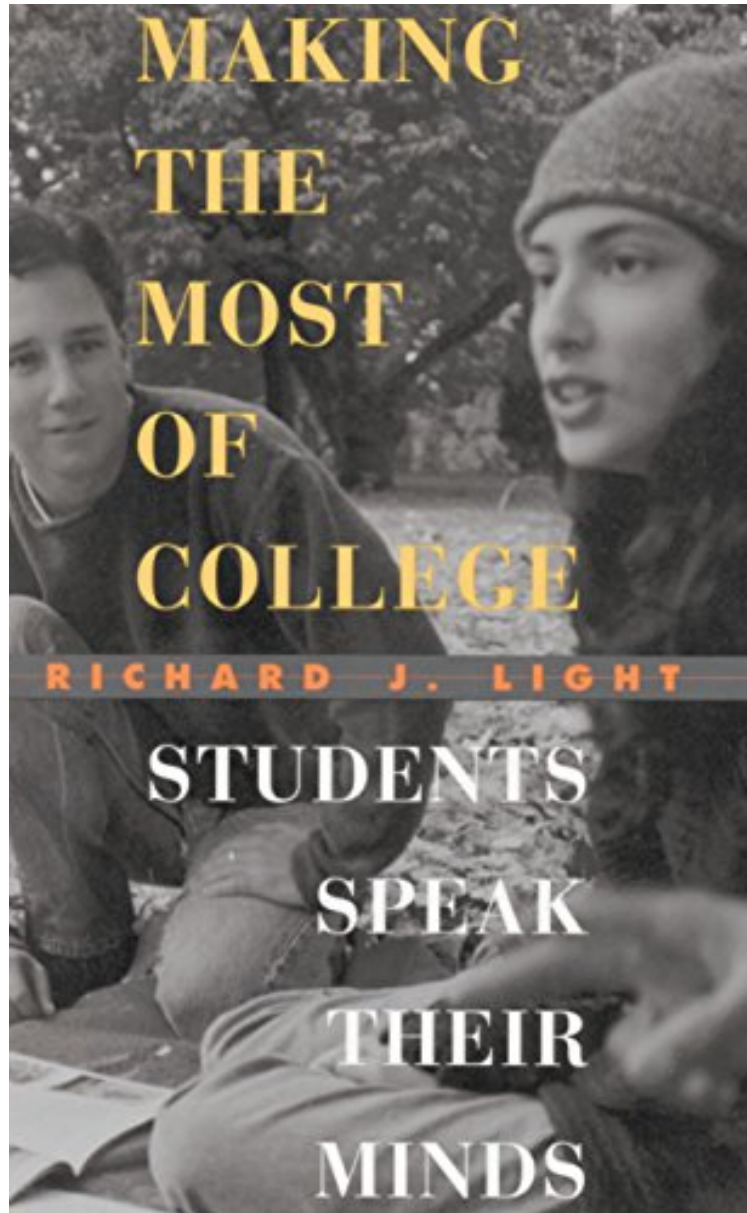


[Download free ebook] Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds

Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds

Von *Richard J. Light*

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Von Richard J. Light : Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Making the Most of College: Students Speak Their Minds:

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Courses, Professors, Advisors, Life, and Students! Von Donald Mitchell

Having heard one university president state that his school's approach to optimizing college was to "find good students and neglect them," Professor Light was stung into researching what makes college memorable, helpful, and stimulating. His method was to conduct hundreds of one-to-three-hour in-depth interviews with graduating seniors and alumni of Harvard College over ten years. He personally conducted over 400 of the interviews, and his trained students did the rest. As a statistician, he was then able to take the richness of the responses and turn it into quantitative observations. These observations revolve around the questions of: (1) ". . . what choices can students themselves make to get the most out of college?" (2) ". . . what are the effective ways for faculty members and campus leaders to translate good intentions into practice." The weakness of the study is that Professor Light argues that the results apply to other colleges, as well, because others have told him that these conclusions make sense to them and he hears similar responses at other schools he visits. That point is clearly debatable. Also, the right answer for one student may be quite different from a good answer for another student. Such analysis should not be carried too far beyond its sample base!

The best part of the book is that there are lengthy quotations from students about epiphanies that they experienced. I see the main application of this book to be raising choices for students, professors, advisors, and administrators. Whether anyone takes these choices or not, they at least will have avoided making self-limiting decisions by default. The book is full of stimulating ideas. Let me share a few with you.

- (1) Students who "make connections between what goes on inside and outside the classroom report a more satisfying college experience." "Good advising can have a profound impact." My favorite story was a young woman who was a ballerina. She was experiencing many injuries as were other young women. With advice, she ended up doing research projects on how animal bones and bone development are affected by physical stress. To her surprise, she developed a career interest in becoming an orthopedic surgeon who worked on this kind of issue.
- (2) When starting college, many students need to develop much better time management and study skills. Of especial importance is spending long enough on each task in one sitting. Grades do not seem to be negatively affected by up to 20 hours a week of outside work or extracurricular activities, except for intercollegiate athletics.
- (3) Get connected to other students in as many ways as possible, including studying with others after preparing your own work, taking smaller (less than 16 student) classes, and having roommates with different backgrounds from your own.
- (4) Get mentoring from professors and advisors to help with seeing how you allocate your time, asking better questions, improving your writing, communicating more precisely, learning the tools of your discipline, adding the insights of other disciplines, and working on the professor's professional research and writing.
- (5) Be exposed to cultural, religious, and belief diversities to help you evaluate your own background, and to develop a more open attitude towards others.
- (6) Take as much science and as many foreign languages as humanly possible.
- (7) Administrators should intervene in organizing student lives in order to actively create these types of experiences.

Having been a Harvard undergraduate many years ago, I certainly agree that these observations reflect my own experiences there with one major exception. My extracurricular activities never had any connection to my class work, and I can see now that that was a major missed opportunity. On the other hand, I did get experience in solving business problems as an undergraduate in my extracurricular activities that have served me well in my professional career. But there was no opportunity then to take that hands-on learning into the classroom. To his credit, my senior tutor did ask me to help him look at starting a business after I graduated. So Harvard College must have improved in this way since then. I'm glad. I hope that all college and universities will undertake their own versions of this research (apparently at least 20 schools have done so already). In that way, parents and students can increase the likelihood that their major investments in time, effort, and money will create the most positive influence possible. Well done, Professor Light!

After you read this book, I suggest that you share it with a high school junior. These insights will mean even more if they can become part of the process for selecting a college or university to attend. Follow the trails of curiosity and excellence wherever they take you!

Kurzbeschreibung

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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Harvard Professor Richard Light reveals secrets from his 10-year study of successful students. "Making the Most of College" offers practical advice to school administrators, parents and, most importantly, to the students themselves. -- Alisha Davis "Newsweek" (06/11/2001)

"Making the Most of College" is receiving excellent reviews both inside and outside academe. Already, at least seven colleges have ordered copies by the hundreds and, in one case, thousands. The title was recently No. 12 in .com's educational books category... Mr. Light's recommendations sound straightforward enough: Encourage collegial work. Urge students to get involved in extracurricular activities. Foster and promote diversity. Get students to form study groups. The list goes on. Scholars and administrators who have read the book say it is the research behind such recommendations, not just the personal touch, that makes Mr. Light's work valuable. -- Alex P. Kellogg "Chronicle of Higher Education"

(08/17/2001)Some useful themes emerge from Light's 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.

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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...[and] offers specific suggestions from students on how to deal with typical situations...Parents and students either in college or headed there will find this book a valuable resource.--Vanessa Bush"Booklist" (02/01/2001)Valuable and practical...An outstanding publication dealing with education and society. Filled with advice and illuminated by real stories of students' self-doubts, failures, discoveries, and hopes, [this] book is a blueprint for academic success...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.--Samuel T. Huang"Library Journal" (03/01/2001)The book recounts...in 100-some excerpts from interviews with Harvard College students...revealing vignettes about how undergraduates make the most of their precious hours inside the classroom and beyond. Because the stories convey in students' words how they study, learn, and react to their peers within a residential college, it is memorably unlike anything else parents, students, soon-to-be undergraduates, and educators have read.--John S. Rosenberg"Harvard Magazine" (01/01/2001)Based on 10 years of interviews with Harvard students, the book distills their wisdom and quotes them liberally on such matters as choosing classes, studying, diversity on campus, and the importance of writing...What they have to say would apply on most campuses. These are people who talk thoughtfully but approachably about managing their time and making connections with others. Many make it clear that they've confronted their share of self-doubt and missteps...A good read for students, teachers, and parents.--Amelia Newcomb"Christian Science Monitor" (04/17/2001)Light's conversational, easy-to-read book is a primer for students and families investing in college and hoping to get their money's worth. Some schools, such as the University of Washington, have distributed it to all incoming freshmen.--Robert A. Frahm"Hartford Courant" (06/18/2001)[*"Making the Most of College"*] is receiving excellent reviews both inside and outside academe. Already, at least seven colleges have ordered copies by the hundreds and, in one case, thousands. The title was recently No. 12 in .com's educational books category...Mr. Light's recommendations sound straightforward enough: Encourage collegial work. Urge students to get involved in extracurricular activities. Foster and promote diversity. Get students to form study groups. The list goes on. Scholars and administrators who have read the book say it is the research behind such recommendations, not just the personal touch, that makes Mr. Light's work valuable.--Alex P. Kellogg"Chronicle of Higher Education" (08/17/2001)"*Making the Most of College*" is an excellent book which will be of practical help to students and teachers alike. It shows close attention to the ways students learn; what they tell the interviewers, the author's own experience and that of other teachers together provide a rich account of the college experience. I will buy the book and use it, and be grateful to Richard Light for his sensitivity and creativity as a teacher and teacher of teachers.--Martin Trow, University of California, Berkeley

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