ALS 116: Academic Success

ALS 116 is a two-credit course offered through the Academic Success Center. This class gives students the opportunity to enhance their study skills by learning about strategies for studying, managing time, taking notes, preparing for tests, learning material, reading critically, and more.

ALS 116 is offered each term and is open to all OSU students. Around 100 students enroll in ALS 116 each term in small sections of 20 students. Each class has students of all levels and class standings as students usually choose to enroll in the class following a term or more of academic difficulty. Many students who take the class are referred to it by an academic advisor, academic counselor, or a friend. ALS 116 fills a unique niche at OSU as students in the class openly discuss and explore the expectations and skills involved in being academically successful at the university level. Although the university sets an expectation for students to be successful in their classes, some students are unaware of how to do this, and may never have developed these habits or discussed these topics in other courses.

Course Learning Outcomes
At the end of the course, students should be able to:

• Articulate concrete academic study skills that will lead to college success
• Demonstrate organizational and time management skills.
• Apply personal learning style and preferences to associated study strategies.
• Evaluate varied note-taking and reading strategies and decide on the most effective strategies for their use
• Apply knowledge of meta-cognition, memory process, and comprehension monitoring to test-preparation strategies and planning
• Identify campus resources designed to help them succeed and recognize their impact on success.
• Develop a plan for college success that includes effective goal setting, study skills, and personal health and wellness.

Course Instruction
Sections of ALS 116 are taught by the coordinator and four faculty volunteers or intern graduate teaching assistants from various departments at OSU. Instructors are trained in delivery of lesson plans that emphasize active learning, collaborative discussion, and reflection and participation from the students. Interns/volunteers receive weekly support from the coordinator in group meetings, and individual support in one-on-one meetings on an as-needed basis. Students from the CSSA program (College of Education) and other degree programs at OSU seem to greatly benefit from this opportunity to grow and develop their teaching practices. Professional faculty who have taught sections in the past have found it gave them tools to help advisees who are struggling academically, introduced them to new teaching/facilitation tools, and exposed them more directly to the experience of today’s undergraduate students.

ALS 116 Class Design

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<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Typical Assignments</th>
<th>Common Class Activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>Response papers exploring personal habits and learning preferences, and analyzing readings and concepts from the ALS class</td>
<td>Free write about topics to explore personal thoughts and experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avoiding Procrastination</td>
<td>A portfolio of work demonstrating application of strategies &amp; tools to other classes</td>
<td>Think, Pair, Share—group work and discussions that produce material and ideas for analysis in discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responsibility &amp; Mindset</td>
<td>A final “Success Plan” synthesizing course material and demonstrating a personalized plan to implement success strategies into their academic work</td>
<td>Large group discussion focusing on the “how” and “why” of academic strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concentration &amp; Memory</td>
<td></td>
<td>Case study analysis and discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading &amp; Note-taking</td>
<td></td>
<td>Practical application. Trying out strategies for note-taking, reading, etc. in class and reflecting on ex-</td>
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What students have to say about ALS 116...

- “Before I thought I lacked the ability to be successful academically. Now, I realized I lacked the tools and confidence. I have never had this much confidence in my studies and I have never been so excited to continue doing well [. . .] I know that if I had never taken [this class] I would still think I was always going to be that C student. Now I see myself as a person who knows what she wants and has the tools to get there”
- “I feel like I know what it takes to be successful. What this class has helped me realize is how it all ties together [. . .] How we take notes, or study, or spend our free time all play important roles in how we do in school”.
- “With all that I have learned from this class, I feel that I can turn my college career around. I feel that I have come a long way from the start of this term. I understand my way of learning much more in depth and I feel that by knowing this I can set myself up for success”
- “This class has taught me a lot about college, myself, and strategies for success. [I learned] skills that I will take with me throughout this whole college experience and they are even things that I will use in my life after college. By learning how I learn, it will enable me to be a better student and better absorb information into my long term memory. All in all this class is something that I think everyone should take because it really has shaped me into a more successful college student”

Quantitative Measures

Assessing the impact of ALS 116 as an intervention, we are able to measure students’ GPA the term before the intervention, the term of the intervention, and the term after the intervention to see what, if any impact, the course had on GPA*, and whether that impact was sustained into the subsequent term. Since the goal of the intervention was to help students achieve a 2.0, another measure of the intervention examines the percentage of students earning above a 2.0.

Of the students who take the class each term, approximately 75% of them earn a “P” grade. Our sample population was limited to these students, although many of the students who withdrew or earned a “N” were in the class long enough to receive some benefit from it as well. Over four terms of data collection, we found the following:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>GPA Analysis — ALS 116  2010–2012</th>
<th>Prior Term</th>
<th>Term of ALS 116</th>
<th>Subsequent Term</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Term GPA of ALS 116 Students (n.272)</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of ALS 116 Students with GPA &gt; 2.0</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>78%</td>
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*An increase in GPA from one term to the next may be indicative of a number of factors, and likely not solely attributable to strategies and tools learned in ALS 116. A larger scale assessment project would be needed to determine the degree to which ALS 116 impacted the change we observe.

Making Referrals

Referrals from academic advisors, academic counselors, faculty, staff and students help fill the spots in the ALS 116 class each term. We're grateful to our campus partners for recommending the class and wanted to pass on a few tidbits of information that might in the referral process.

For Advisors/Those Making Referrals:

We often talk to students about why they want to take ALS 116. Students tend not to get as much out of the class if they are taking the course for an “easy 2 credits” (which they discover this is not) or if they're not truly interested in learning academic success tools and strategies. Students who have encountered academic difficulties or are looking for more efficient ways to study get the most of out the class. Students interested in one-on-one work regarding their academic success might think about the academic coaching program through the Academic Success Center.

Messages We Want Students to Know About ALS 116:

- It isn’t a fluff class—there is homework/writing involved, and many students say it’s a challenging class.
- It is graded “Pass/No Pass” and therefore won’t impact a students’ GPA negatively or positively.
- Students need to earn an 80% in the course or better to earn a “Pass” grade. (Our standards are high in class about Academic Success). Regular attendance is required as part of this class.