PART I QUESTION

The years a student spends pursuing a college degree can be some of the most rewarding of his or her lifetime. The challenge of being independent, the excitement of investigating fields of interest, and the satisfaction of working toward a goal enrich everyone’s life experience. But in many instances, there are roadblocks, problems that stand in the way of obtaining lifetime goals. In an essay of about two pages tell about the most difficult challenge or problem that you have had to face as a college student. Remember to be specific in explaining why this challenge or problem was difficult.
Students attending college face many challenges, problems, and pressures. Sometimes, the difficulties may be financial; sometimes the stress of maintaining a high GPA or the necessity to do well on a test may lead to physical or emotional problems. Many students drop out of college because they can’t cope with these pressures. In an essay of about two pages answer the following question:

Do the pressures and stress that college students face interfere with academic performance, or is a certain amount of stress motivating and helpful?

- Answer the question in an essay of about two pages
- The readings are here to help you answer the question. First, form your own opinion and decide how you will organize your essay. Then, whenever you think it useful, work in references to at least two of the readings both to support your opinion and to contrast their statements with your own ideas in the subject. The references may be direct quotations, paraphrases, or citations of data or statistics. Be sure that you do not string together references to the readings; your essay must be your own composition representing your own ideas and not merely a patchwork of others’ work and ideas.

- Use material from at least two of the readings in your essay.
- Cite your sources. That is, tell from which readings you are getting your information.
- Wherever you think it appropriate, use examples from your own life to help support your opinion.
- Use the rest of the space on this page or the back of it for any jottings or planning that you want to do, and then begin writing your essay on the following page.
- Be sure to give your essay a title.

In summary state and develop your opinion on the issue. Refer to the readings as they relate to what you are saying, and use the information you find in them to support or qualify your opinion.
PART II READINGS

Read the following selections. You will need them for the writing you will do next. They contain different ideas about challenges faced by college students. You will probably agree with some of the ideas and disagree with others. In order to prepare for your next writing think about how each of these selections compare with each other and whether you agree with them. Since the readings present more than a single side of the issue, not all of them will support your opinion, regardless of what side you take. Nevertheless, you must include specific references to at least two of these readings in your essay. Your essay will be evaluated in part on how effectively the readings are used. If you want, you may mark or write on the readings. Only the essay you write will be evaluated, but the readings must be turned in too.

1. Stress is any situation that evokes negative thoughts and feelings in a person. When students view their education as a challenge, stress can bring them a sense of competence and an increased capacity to learn. When education is seen as a threat, however, stress can elicit feelings of hopelessness and a foreboding sense of loss. A critical issue concerning stress among students is its effect on learning. Studies have shown that individuals under low and high stress learn the least and those under moderate stress learn the most. Laboratory test support the notion that excessive stress is harmful to students’ performance. The amount of stress can overwhelm a student’s ability to cope.

Students react to college in a variety of ways. For some students, college is stressful because it is an abrupt change from high school. For others, separation from home is a source of stress. Academic demands are greater than those in high school and students face questions about personal identity and career choice.

Environmental factors that may accelerate stress include the rise in college expenses, increased competition to get into graduate and professional schools, and an uncertain job market for college graduates. “Time, money, and grade point averages lurk like closet monsters for these youths, threatening to snatch away chances they know they need to become what they are capable of being.”


2. I see four kinds of pressure working on college students today: economic pressure, parental pressure, peer pressure, and self-induced pressure. The transcript has become a sacred document, the passport to security. How one appears on paper is more important than how one appears in person. Students know that entrance into better schools will be an entrance into better law firms and medical practices where they will make lots of money.

Tuition, room, and board at most private colleges come to more than $7,000, not counting books and fees. Today it is not unusual for a student, even if he works part time at college and full time during the summer, to accumulate $5,000 in loans.
I see many students taking courses without joy. The pressure on students is severe. One part of them feels obligated to fulfill their parents’ expectations: after all, their parents are older and presumably wiser. Another part tells them that the expectations that are right for their parents are not right for them.

When every student thinks that every other student is working harder and doing better, the only solution is to study harder still. I see students going off to the library every night after dinner and coming back when it closes at midnight. I hear the clacking of typewriters in the hours before dawn. I see the tension in their eyes when exams are approaching and papers are due: “Will I get everything done?”

Ultimately, it will be the students own business to break the circles in which they are trapped. They are too young to be prisoners of their parents’ dreams and their classmates’ fears.


3. The transition to university traditionally regarded as positive, involving new opportunities, nevertheless involves change for all students. There is the need to break with old routines and to adjust to the demands of a new environment, including the need to adapt to the new intellectual and social challenges which present themselves. This major life-event may have adverse effects on learning, at least in the short term.

An increase in depression results from a loss of control over daily routines; old plans and procedures are not appropriate to the new circumstances. Depression might also rise because of the break with home, old friends, or a familiar environment. The individual feels unsure of appropriate action to cope with the changed circumstances. It becomes very difficult for the student to concentrate on or carry out the academic assignments.


4. It is Monday morning, and when I walk into the central building, I can feel my stomach clench. For the next five days I will assume that I am somewhat less intelligent than anyone around me. I will be certain that no matter what I do, I will not do it well enough, and when I fail, I know that I will burn with shame. By Friday my nerves will be do brittle from sleeplessness and pressure and intellectual fatigue that I will not be certain that I can make it the through the day. I have begun to smoke cigarettes; lately, I seem to be drinking a little every night. I do not have time to read a novel or magazine, and I am so far removed from the news of world events that I often feel as if I’ve fallen off the dark side of a planet. I am distracted at most times and have difficulty keeping up a conversation. At random instances, I am likely to be stricken with acute feelings of panic and depression while the pep talks I practice on myself only seem to make it worse.