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July 30, 2012

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Chris Gardner and it's my pleasure to welcome you to Salt Lake Community College. If you're like me, you may feel like it took you a long time to get here. Now that you are, you may be experiencing a lot of emotions ranging from fear to excitement. Although many challenges lie ahead, you will persevere because you have gotten this far and made the choice to be here now. You are obviously committed to your future. From the short amount of time that I have been here, I have been overwhelmed with what I have encountered, and I have experienced nothing less than what I anticipated: a great deal of hard work resulting in incredible personal satisfaction and achievement, whether I have done well or not. I'm just so happy to be here and to have this opportunity, and I know you will feel the same way.

Before you begin I want to take this opportunity to share some ideas with you that may help put you at ease. First of all, keep in mind that the college has a wealth of resources at your disposal, from the campus library to financial and academic advisors to math and computer tutors. These are all in place to help *you* succeed. Take advantage of them! I was hesitant at first, and did not intend to explore these options until I had to, but they are so helpful in assisting you with decision making and planning regarding your education. I would also suggest becoming familiar with the campus and its surroundings before you begin your first term, not only so you don't get lost, but also to keep yourself

safe. Knowing where you are, where your class is, where you parked, and where other people are can keep you from getting hurt. Don't ever be afraid to ask questions.

The following are a few of the many strategies I have learned about and developed through practice in my time here thus far. They are incredibly beneficial, and I hope you find them as useful as I have.

I would suggest making to-do lists, no matter how you choose to create them, because not only will they help keep you aware of your schedule, to-do lists can also help you prioritize and plan your time, allowing you to use it more efficiently. You can create broad lists for the week or the day, more specific ones for each class, and even more specific ones for separate projects or research assignments within a class. Being organized will help you keep your sanity, and allow you to be more productive. You might also consider keeping a journal to write about your experiences. It's fun to look back on your first days and see how far you've come.

Another strategy I would suggest is to make decisions based on your values and your life plan. While it is good to be open to change and new experiences, you should never feel you have to compromise yourself or your principles for any reason. Keep in mind the goals you have set for yourself and your determination to see them through. Stay true to them so you don't risk jeopardizing your integrity or causing undue stress on yourself.

Expect and prepare to encounter a great deal of diversity here at school, more so than you already ever may have. Keep an open mind and realize how much you can learn from all the different people you will be lucky enough to observe and interact with. Be willing to learn about others, be accepting of their differences and make an effort to try to understand them so you don't make yourself feel uncomfortable by being unintentionally

offensive. Don't make assumptions. More learning is likely to happen when everyone is able to get along.

Consider being part of a study group. Not only can this help you with your studies, it can also introduce you to fellow students with whom you may become lifelong friends. Not only can members of study groups share the wisdom of their experience, they can help keep you motivated and teach you skills with different learning styles you may not have known about before but from which you may benefit from immensely.

I know your experience here at the college will be a good one. Be brave and make the most of it, because you are in charge and in control. It will be one of the most rewarding experiences you can ever have in your life. If I can do it, anyone can. I have faith in you. Good luck!

Best wishes,

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Christine Gardner