Eleven Tips for Success in the School of Engineering and Technology at UWT
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1. **Make a commitment.** Succeeding in a university program requires a serious commitment, both time and psychologically. Devote yourself to your schoolwork as much as your other obligations in your life. You should expect to spend 3 hours per week for each class credit you are taking. So, a full load of 15 units requires about 45 hours of class time and home study time. That is as much time as a full time job. Of course, this is just a guideline. In reality, all that matters is whether you understand the material or not, and you should strive to keep studying until you understand the material. This may require you to spend more than 15 hours per week for a 5 unit class.

2. **Be realistic about how fast you can progress through the program.** Taking 15 credits and having a full-time (40 hours per week) job is a recipe for disaster. Taking 15 credits and having a part-time (20 hours per week) job is also a bad idea. Taking 10 credits and having a full-time job is also unrealistic. 10 credits and a part-time job *might* be feasible, if you have no other obligations.

3. **Be an active participant in your education.** An education means more than just showing up to class, taking tests, and receiving a grade. Students who get the most out of their time at the university are active participants in their education. That means participating in class, asking questions, and challenging ideas and instructors. Read the book *before* lecture and read the book after lecture. Students who do not talk to other students or their instructors outside of class tend not to get the most of their time at the university. Other ways to contribute to and participate in the community of learners (which includes other students, advisers, and even your instructors) include: being involved in the ACM, finding out what activities are going on campus.

4. **Be aware of how you are learning – seek the conditions under which you learn the best.** Some people's idea of studying is while playing video games, listening to the radio, and watching TV. These people generally do not learn efficiently. Successful students are able to focus their attention to solve complicated problems. They understand that effective studying requires quiet. Another way students can learn more effectively is by studying in groups and hearing other people's points of view. A word of warning, however: if you work in a group, be sure to meet regularly and get down to the business of studying when you meet. Study group time should not be spent primarily socializing.

5. **Take homework seriously.** The first (or second) answer you come up with is almost always wrong. Double-check your work. Understand the *reason* why your answer is correct or incorrect. Doing homework only because the instructor asked you to do so (or that you will get points for doing it) is essentially a waste of time.

6. **Go beyond the homework and book.** Change the problems in slight ways and see if that changes your answer. Ask yourself why the problems you were assigned for homework are intellectually important. Ask yourself why the book presents the material in the order it does. Notice the way in which your instructors and the book reason through a topic. Don't be satisfied with just memorizing facts, because it's not enough. Be critical: ask why things are the way they are and make judgments.

7. **Find out all you can about what computer science, engineering, and/or information technology is and what career opportunities there are.** It is likely that after taking a few courses, your view of your major will be different from what you thought it was. Not everyone who gets a computer science degree ends up working for Microsoft. Discover *for yourself* what about computers attracts you, what skills you have, and seek career opportunities that require them.

8. **Find out all you can about things other than your major.** The purpose of a university education is more than just getting a job after you graduate. It is also to be exposed to the whole range of ideas that exists. Talk to students outside of the Institute. Participate in university events that involve other students and faculty. Run for a student office. Take your non-major classes seriously. Talk to the other people in these classes; you will probably find their perspective on things to be eye-opening (and yours to them). Your time at UWT might be the only time in your life where you have the opportunity to interact with others and discuss ideas in this way.

9. **Do not underestimate the importance of communication skills.** It might seem that computer technology fields do not require much skill in written and oral communication. In fact, it is just the opposite. Because computer programs are abstract entities – written in languages that are not English – written and oral communication are essential for discussing computer programs with other people.

10. **When you are stuck, seek help.** Everyone has a little trouble from time to time. If you are struggling academically, faculty, mentors, advisers, and fellow students are all here to provide support for you. If you have a disability, DSS (Disability Student Services) is available. If you are having personal problems that affect your academic performance, there is professional counseling available on campus.

11. **Being at a university is an adventure – treat it like one.** You are taking a great risk by being at a university. Are you going to learn enough to be a productive worker? Are you going to be able to find a job after school is over? What will you do with your life after school? Even though there is much uncertainty, no one ever got anywhere by sitting still. There will be times when you feel you are not making any progress or that the challenges of the courses you are taking seem insurmountable. The way to persevere through these difficulties is to realize that anything worth achieving requires a positive attitude, a sense of adventure, and hard work. Fortunately, there is a whole community of instructors, advisers, and fellow students at the university to help you achieve all you can. Having a clear idea of what you want will help those who are trying to help you.

Recommended Reading
Professors' Guide to Getting Good Grades in College by Lynn F. Jacobs and Jeremy S. Hyman.
First in the Family: Advice About College from First-Generation Students by Kathleen Cushman.