

TIPS FROM SUNY CORTLAND NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Support

- Don't ever underestimate your strength! Be sure to reach for the stars and be an example to all to show that all is possible when you put one foot in front of the other!
- Don't think your experience will be all that different from traditional students. But to make better friends definitely stop by the Non-Traditional Student Lounge every chance you get!
- Use the college services and professors as much as needed. The services are helpful and all of my professors have been very helpful.
- It is okay to reach out for help especially when you begin to feel overwhelmed.
- You have more in common with traditional-aged students than differences so don't let yourself dwell on the age/lifestyle gap. They respect you more than they will tell you. Your life experiences make you invaluable to this institution.
- We are all nervous about "fitting in". I have found most of my "outcast" moments so far have been more self-imposed.
- Relax and be yourself. Remember there are non-traditional students who are experiencing the same challenges of juggling school, work and family life.
- Set realistic goals for yourself. School can be challenging at times, especially for us non-traditional students who don't just have the responsibilities of school but work, family, obligations and household chores as well. Just remember there are other non-traditional students who are walking in your shoes.
- Do your best to focus on your studies. Try not to feel guilty for missing a few things now, the rewards at the end are worth it. Don't try to do everything. Learn what you are capable of and keep your expectations within your limits.

Parking

- Purchase your parking permit as soon as you can. They have run out in the past.
- Parking can be difficult. Be prepared to park in the route 281 lot and take a bus to your classes. This will give you time to catch up on your readings as you wait for the bus. Get to campus early.
- Drive around campus some day before your first class and acquaint yourself with where you are allowed to park that is relatively close to campus. The official parking lots may be far away from your classes. If you live close, it is often faster to bike than to drive to class.
- Get to campus before 8 a.m. if you want (free) parking on the street. Be prepared to do a lot of walking.

Academics

- A lot of the professors "get it" – many of them were also non-trads. So, don't ever be afraid to ask for help or to visit their office hours. Balancing work and school are hard, but professors are willing to work with you.
- Use the resources available for academics, social events and mental health.

- Speak with professors and tell them who you are (be proud to be a non-trad!). Communication makes life easier when they understand your situation.
- Be flexible when it's time to build your schedule. Schedule your classes so you have time on campus between them to do homework, if possible. I find it hard to get work done at home.
- Time management is important. Do not wait until the last minute to do assignments - start them as soon as possible.
- Go to office hours early in the semester and get to know the professors! They are almost universally kind, caring and willing to support all of us on our journeys.
- Try not to get too nervous about the first test/paper for a class. By comparison, life experience can be more helpful than one might think. The Writing Center is a great place to get help with those papers and is located in Brockway Hall.
- Don't hesitate to use The Learning Center. They offer tutoring. They are located in Van Hoesen B-205.
- Speak up about your expectations and concerns. Don't let a professor hold you to different standards just because you are a non-traditional student.

Meeting Others

- Keep an open mind about the traditional age students. Many of them are really chill and are already familiar with the campus.
- Find a few good friends in each class whom you can reach out to if you need some assistance and swap numbers. This way you can communicate about class. This was very helpful for me.
- Meeting up with other non-traditional students can help. Ask them for advice and to show you around.
- Do take advantage of the Non-Traditional Student Organization. Time can be limited but I wish I could have done more and been more involved.
- Use the Lounge! It provides space to work as well as a fridge, microwave, and coffee machine. And, if money is tight, what better way to save than to bring your own lunch and store it in the NTSO lounge. You can meet other non-trads there too. Everyone I have run into at the Lounge has been knowledgeable and very friendly. It is peaceful and quiet at night.
- The Non-Trad Lounge is a great resource for completing assignments and meeting fellow non-trads like yourself. It takes a lot of courage and commitment to return to school, but also try to enjoy it and try opportunities you would not have normally tried.
- Attend non-trad events whenever possible! It's makes a huge difference to have a broader community on campus.

Miscellaneous

- If you plan on eating on campus once in a while, put a little money on your Connections/ID card to a discount.
- Don't be afraid to be part-time. Yes, you'll lose some assistance, that hurts, I know. But balancing home, school, and kids, for me, would not have been possible if I was not part-time for some semesters.
- Be prepared for days when the local elementary schools have snow days and we don't. Be sure to have a back-up plan for daycare while you are in class.
- Don't forget to use your voice and advocate for yourself.
- Have patience with yourself, your family and everyone around you. Be sure to take time for yourself.