



TOP 3 THINGS

TO KNOW GOING INTO

BRANDCENTER



Welcome to Brandcenter!



You're about to enter one of the most challenging, intense, and rewarding chapters of your professional and creative life. Brandcenter will test you, grow you, and if you let it, transform you.

To help you survive (and maybe even thrive), here are three things I wish I fully understood when I started.

1. DON'T TAKE THINGS TOO SERIOUSLY.



This place will stretch your limits but it doesn't have to break you.

Nike doesn't know you're working on a made up problem for them.

That hotshot brand you're sweating over? They aren't refreshing their inbox waiting for your slide deck. Most of the brands you work on won't even know you exist.

That's not to say your work doesn't matter but don't attach your identity or self-worth to the brief. Use the freedom that this "make believe" environment gives you to explore and take creative risks.

You won't always get the brand you want and that's a good thing.

Disappointed you didn't get the brand you use every day and know everything about? That's okay! Working on something you initially think is boring or stale will force you to dig deeper and think harder. That's where the magic happens and what you'll be asked to do in the real world.

Anyone can make a tech company feel cool. Making the ointment your grandmother swears by, interesting? That's strategy.



Give people grace.

This program is a pressure cooker, and sometimes people boil over. You'll see your classmates at their best and worst. Someone might snap in a group meeting. Someone else might miss a deadline. You'll probably do it too. Don't take it personally, most of the time, it's not about you.

Support each other when you can, and move on.

2. TREAT THIS LIKE A WORKPLACE.



Yes, you'll bond deeply with some of your classmates. But first and foremost, you're here to work.

Classmates = coworkers.

Sometimes you'll be group/paired with people you don't click with. That's life. You still have to make it work.

If you let personal tension get in the way, the work (and your reputation) will suffer. In the real world, you don't get to opt out of working with difficult people. Learn how to navigate that now.

Professors = bosses.

Treat your professors like clients or creative directors. Respect their time, take their feedback seriously, and come prepared. Push back when appropriate, but always with purpose and professionalism.



Make up and move on.

Disagreements happen. Apologize when needed. Talk it out. Don't let resentment simmer, it will poison the group.

You'll be working late nights and early mornings together. Keeping things healthy and collaborative is in everyone's best interest.

Gossip travels fast.

This is a small building. People talk. If you're consistently difficult, dismissive, or fake, it will catch up to you.

Build your Brandcenter reputation now the people you meet here might be your future coworkers, bosses, or referrals.



3. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.



You will never be able to pour from an empty cup.

Eat. Real. Food.

Yes, ramen counts in a pinch. But your brain works better with actual nutrients. Keep snacks in your bag, meal prep if you can, and don't underestimate the power of a balanced meal during a hectic week.

Basic hygiene is underrated.

Seriously, shower! Brush your teeth. Wear clean clothes. You'll feel (and look) more like a functioning human and less like a sleep-deprived goblin.

Sleep, please.

There will be late nights. But if you're constantly staying up until 4 AM, something's off-scope, expectations, time management, or all three. You're not more committed because you're more exhausted.

Keep your mental health top of mind.

VCU has great counseling services. Use them. Don't wait too long to ask for help because you think you're just "tired" or "stressed." You don't get extra credit for white-knuckling it.



Move your body.

Walk. Stretch. Go to the gym. Do yoga in the corner. Even a 15 minute walk outside can reset your brain and mood.

Treat yo self!

Indulge every now and then. Reward yourself. A new haircut, a long walk with your dog, a mid-week ice cream cone. You're doing something hard—celebrate the little wins.



**You were chosen for a reason.
You're here because you belong.**

Brandcenter will challenge you but it will also equip you with the skills and confidence to enter the industry stronger than you imagined.

**Be kind, stay curious, and
trust the process.**

