Start on Track: The First Week

By Sarah Michienzi, az4268@wayne.edu

Starting your semester on track can set you up for success all semester long. This means: taking care of business during the first week of classes, internalizing tips on getting started and grasping the first exam, understanding your syllabus, planning your semester and organizing notebooks during the first week of classes will help keep you on track.

Why is a syllabus needed, how do I use it, and what does it include? The syllabus is your guide to the course. It is there to anticipate all of your questions and concerns. Read it, understand it and refer to it throughout the semester. Information about the professor such as their office hours can be found in your syllabus. The syllabus will also include the class schedule and important dates.

So now that you know the key dates for your classes, how do you plan your semester? Transfer these dates to a planner, PDA or calendar. You may already have a system that works for you, or you may need to discover one. However, act quickly; you don’t want to let these dates slip by you. Plan now.
Food for Thought
By Angela Zanardelli, au1072@wayne.edu

Eating serves many purposes for college students. Students eat to fuel themselves for their busy schedules, they eat with friends to catch up, and they may even eat for comfort. More important than the why of student consumption is the what. What are students eating and how can it affect their academic success? We rarely think about what we eat until after the fact. What many students don’t realize, however, is that what they eat has a great deal to do with their performance in lecture, study sessions, and on exams.

Eating fast food, foods high in sugar and in trans fats can lead to a sudden energy crash once the food begins the digestive process. Ever notice how eating a quarter pounder with cheese meal is so good while it lasts but afterwards, your body is begging for a nap? In many cases this “food coma” happens when you are in class or are trying to study. You are essentially unable to concentrate when you need to the most.

According to researchers at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, the after-effects of caffeine are similar to those of highly processed foods. Caffeine can be effective in reasonable amounts. It's when students ignore their caffeine boundaries and surpass their personal limit that caffeine becomes an issue. Heart pounding. Jittery. On edge. Sound familiar? Know your limits with caffeine and don't allow a beverage to become a distraction.

On the other hand, when you eat a balanced meal that your body finds easy to process, rarely does it come back to haunt you. So, where can you find such a meal around the WSU campus? To name a few: Subway, Jimmy Johns, Einstein Bros, La Pita, Byblos, Blimpies, Cass Café, the Towers Café, and the weekly WSU farmer's market (pictured left). If eating out is not in your budget, brown bag it. Sandwiches, leftovers, and soups brought from home are an economic and easy way to eat lunch on the go. If you have trouble finding time for breakfast, carry granola bars, or yogurt and fruit along with you in your book bag.

Students interested in a further exploration of diet and nutrition can take advantage of the free nutritional services offered at the Mort Harris Recreation and Fitness Center. On-site nutritional specialists offer personalized guidance on a variety of issues including diet tips, sports nutrition, and weight loss. Learn more at http://rfc.wayne.edu/nutrition.php.

Keep in mind that you control what you consume, and you also control what distracts you. Make good choices during mealtimes on campus or, better yet, save money and bring your lunch from home. You do have options when it comes to eating healthy on campus. Be smart about how you treat your brain and body.

Getting Ahead With SI
By Lucas Korte, ak3938@wayne.edu

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is a free service offered through the Academic Success Center consisting of group study sessions targeted for specific 1000 and 2000 level courses. SI leaders are undergraduate students who have received an A in the course they are supporting. They also attend each lecture along with the students.

Attending SI regularly has been shown to increase a student’s performance up to a full letter grade. Here are some tips students can use to maximize the effectiveness of SI:

**Attend SI regularly**—Students who attend frequently do better than students who do not. Try to make it to an SI session at least once per week.

**Always attend prepared**—read any assigned readings, keep up with the text and make time to review your lecture notes.

**Participate**—The benefits of SI come from group interaction and a cooperative spirit—working together to learn and teach your fellow students, answering questions, presenting your findings, and going to the board to do work.

**Use your handouts as study tools, not busy work**—SI leaders spend a lot of time preparing practice exams, quizzes, and handouts. If you go to get a handout, stay for the whole session, otherwise, you will probably miss information that will help you use the handout most effectively.

**Take practice exams and quizzes as though they were real tests**—Find a quiet place to take the exam, allot yourself time to take the test, grade your performance, and focus your study on the material which you need to master.

**Come to SI with questions you want answered**—but expect to be guided in finding the answer. SI leaders are not simply Q&A experts. They are there to help you learn. Be prepared to learn the best ways to find the answers to your own questions.

The current SI schedule can be found online at success.wayne.edu.
Advisor’s Corner: Choose Your Courses Carefully

Kate Bernas, ab9599@wayne.edu

One of the most common advising requests students have each term is for help with selecting courses. Even students with a clear understanding of their degree requirements still take the time to confer with an advisor regarding the many factors involved in planning a successful semester. From the advisor standpoint, the most important of these factors are credit load, prerequisite planning, and content balance.

Determining how many credits to carry each semester involves more than just deciding whether you are a full or part-time student. For many students, there is a credit hour “comfort zone” they hold to in order to maintain outside responsibilities and still be academically successful. In addition, students trying to stay on-track for a projected graduation date or professional school admission need to plan out their courses long-term to make sure they can achieve their goal.

Prerequisite planning is another essential consideration for all students, but especially important for those planning admission to a professional program with firm deadlines. For these students, course planning must take into account individual placement results in areas such as math and chemistry, as well as the number of terms available to complete all requirements. A student may be surprised by how few choices he or she really has for a given term when working toward such a deadline.

A student’s major will also affect the need for planning. Major advisors within the departments are the best resource for this kind of planning since they know how the department plans to offer its courses in future terms as well as the common mistakes to avoid with their courses. For this reason, students are strongly encouraged to meet with their departmental advisor on a regular basis.

A final consideration has to do with picking a well-balanced set of classes. This means encouraging a mix in the types of courses (i.e. combining more quantitative courses requiring daily homework with courses requiring heavier reading and longer papers) as well as the kinds of challenges they provide (a major course you’ve been looking forward to along with a general education course in an area that is completely new to you). Typically, courses requiring different demands and a variety of skills make for the best combination.

Ultimately, successful course planning is about taking the right number and combination of courses in the right sequence. The advising process facilitates this process but only with the student’s help. Knowing your limitations, providing thoughtful insight to your advisor, and being willing to adjust your expectations when discussing academic goals can go a long way in maximizing your advising experience and securing your success.

Getting and Staying Motivated

By Angela Zanardelli, au1072@wayne.edu

Every semester starts the same, your goals are set: Your GPA won’t dip below a 4.0, you’ll manage your time perfectly, and so on. But then something happens, you stumble on your first exam or you can’t seem to find the time to study since you’ve met so many new friends. You become frustrated and put school lower on your priority list.

Sound familiar? It’s common. How do you keep your motivation levels up? What factors decrease academic motivation for you? It could be difficult adjusting to college, homesickness, peer pressure, personal issues, or intimidation from course material. How do you keep these common motivation busters at bay?

Start your semester off realistically. Create goals that are attainable and that you find desirable. If you set unrealistic goals you will most likely be disappointed in the end.

Be honest with yourself. If you know that cramming for an exam is going to leave you unprepared and anxious, create a study plan that paces out your learning. If you know that you aren’t comfortable in a social situation or have a bad feeling about something, don’t do it.

At the very beginning of every semester, you rank your top five priorities. After you’ve done so, identify the activities that accompany these priorities (e.g. study time for classes, family time, etc.) and block off the necessary parts of your schedule to accommodate these activities. Try to always stick to your schedule so that you avoid falling behind or missing something important.

College is a great time to get to know yourself. Be aware of which strategies work for you and which ones do not. Throughout the semester, remember your personal goals, make choices that reflect your values, and manage your time effectively for success. In the end, you’ll see that your motivation levels will remain consistent and that your GPA will reap the benefits.
1. **Go to class and participate.** Professors test on what is discussed in class as well as grade for attendance and participation. Don’t abuse your new freedom. Being there is your responsibility.

2. **Find and get to know one individual on campus who knows you and cares about your success.** Try your advisor, a professor, an organization sponsor, or a learning specialist.

3. **Learn what helping resources your campus offers, where they are located, and what their hours are.** Use the Academic Success Center website success.wayne.edu to see what is available for you.

4. **Set up daily and weekly schedules and stick to them.** You’d be surprised how much more time in the day there is, once you plan it all out. Make a semester schedule, too, with important due dates for all of your classes.

5. **Take your health seriously.** How much sleep you get, what you eat, whether you exercise, and the kinds of decisions you make about drugs, alcohol, and sex all contribute to the way you feel. Get in the habit of being good to yourself, and you’ll be a happier person... and a more successful student.

6. **Learn how to manage stress.** College can be very stressful—minimize the impact on your peace of mind. University Counseling is on the fifth floor of the Student Center and has information on beating stress.

7. **Try to have realistic expectations.** At first you may not make the grades you made in high school. Improvement comes with new skills and practice. (This goes for your social life too. College can feel very lonely in the beginning, but time will allow you to build a new set of friends and interests!)

8. **Try the Writing Center** on the second floor of the Undergraduate Library.

9. **Visit the University Advising Center in the Undergraduate Library and the Career Placement Office in the Faculty Administration Building.** Your grades, major, and career plans are part of one interrelated process.

10. **Know how to use the campus libraries!**

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**Mission Statement**

The mission of the Comerica Academic Success Center is for all Wayne State University undergraduate students to become self-determined, motivated, and independent learners. To support students’ success in the University environment, the Academic Success Center provides individualized services and the tools to develop effective learning skills.

**Free services of the Academic Success Center include:**

- Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction
- Individual Support with a Learning Specialist
- Study Skills Enhancing Workshops

**Editorial board:**

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