Gaining and Maintaining Academic Momentum

By Angela Sickler, Learning Specialist– Academic Success Center

Fall is a season for both physical and personal change. You’re presented with new classes, new professors, new information, and a clean slate. At this point in the game, it’s likely that your academic motivation is high and your levels of stress are low. However, many students begin each semester with a similar positive mindset only to be frazzled with fear by the time midterms arrive. Sound familiar? It’s important to understand that this eventual turn-for-the worse can be avoided entirely with proper planning and self-management. The following are three strategies to keep you on the right track at the beginning of the semester and beyond:

Maintain a practical school/life balance. Think of your life as a teeter-totter. At one end sits school and its weight is made up of textbooks and class notes. At the opposite end sits your personal life with friends and family as the weight. Much like the traditional teeter-totter, you want each side to have its turn being raised to the top of your proverbial priority list (just work with me here). In other words, work hard-play hard. You’ll enjoy your personal time much more when you’re on point in school and vice-versa.

Avoid self-deception. You, like all humans, have the innate ability to convince yourself of anything. Have you ever caught yourself thinking, “Of course I can study for my Physics exam while watching the Tigers game” or “I won’t miss anything important in this lecture if I answer this one text?” Eliminating this type of faulty thinking can save you a lot of time and extra effort in the end. Remember your priorities and honor them continuously.

Set and follow goals. It is imperative to set specific and measurable goals at the beginning of the semester. Without goals, it’s easy to stray off-track and settle for a lower GPA than you know you’re capable of. Once your goals are set, create a corresponding action plan that can help you along the way.

For additional assistance with study skills or self-management, register for our study skills workshops or meet with a study skills specialist one-on-one. All of the Academic Success Center’s services are FREE and can be found at www.success.wayne.edu.
Concentration: The First-Year and Beyond

By Angela Sickler, Learning Specialist– Academic Success Center

Your first year of college will likely present you with more distractions than you’ve experienced before. Between disruptive classmates, a talkative roommate, plus personal concerns and issues, you’re bound to lose focus more frequently than you’d like. Below are some quick and easy tips to avoid distractions and stay on task.

Be honest with yourself. Are you allowing distractions? Are you texting while reading or trying to watch the game while preparing for an exam? Don’t prolong study sessions by inviting interruptions. Complete your assignment in half the time by focusing solely on the task at hand.

Multi-tasking does not exist. Unfortunately, many students don’t realize this until much later into their academic career. It’s not possible for us to process more than one stream of information at a time (ex. checking Twitter while attempting to follow along in lecture). Multi-tasking is nothing more than switching your attention from one task to another, often times quickly enough to give the illusion of doing more than one thing at once.

Do not ignore personal difficulties. All students are human. All humans experience emotions. Not all emotions are positive. Therefore, at some point you’ll have to deal with a form of negative emotion during your first year. Whether it’s jealousy, loneliness, or fear, repressing that emotion will only intensify the effect it has on you. Talk it out with a counselor at CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services, www.caps.wayne.edu), work it out in the gym, or write it out in a journal. Any healthy activity will allow you to process those emotions and move forward.

How you treat your body will affect your mind. The choices you make regarding nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and stress-management will influence your ability to maintain concentration.

Simplification equals success. The changes you’ll experience in your first year of college are a lot to handle. Don’t add fuel to the fire by allowing drama, negativity, or questionable friends to distract you from your academic goals. You know what’s best for yourself so listen closely to your instincts and follow your gut.

Juggling Act: Get Your Priorities in Order

By Jazmine Wesley, Program Manager, University of Michigan

Each semester, students enroll in courses with a fresh outlook on their ability to manage their schedule. Working, maintaining a social life, and tackling coursework all seem like a “walk in the park.” But once it’s all begun, keep in mind that it may be your reliance on sound study skills that keeps your walk on the sunny side. Here are some important guidelines that can jumpstart your priorities and keep you geared toward success.

First and foremost, it is imperative to set yourself up with a good time management plan. Determine what your priorities are for the week and their level of urgency. Following a daily to-do list will ensure that your most immediate tasks get completed. Unexpected changes to your schedule may occur, so adaptability is a must. While studying, do not allow the intrusions of work or your social life get you distracted. By successfully accomplishing the most important goals early on, personal time will feel well deserved.

Similarly important is maintaining a positive attitude. Changing how you feel or think about an upcoming test or research paper may help banish burnout. Stress is inevitable in the lives of students but its effects don’t have to keep you in angst. One way to relieve stress is to focus on deep breathing. Deep, focused breathing regulates the nervous system and the effects produce a calming sensation throughout the body. Another way to aid in stress relief is by exercising. Producing a healthier lifestyle will enhance all aspects of your life – not just as a student, but also as a worker and a friend.

Finally, don’t forget why you have accepted so many challenges. Your motivation and drive have led you to develop your goals. It may all seem overwhelming at times but it can be done. Once you have things in perspective, don’t forget to enjoy the positive things in life. Take a walk, see a movie or read a book. Be realistic and work smarter, not harder.
Three Dangerous Habits of Highly Ineffective Students

By Angela Sickler, Learning Specialist– Academic Success Center

First things first, this is not a friendly, crowd-pleasing article on becoming an effective student. It will not provide you with overused, one-size-fits-all tips on how to manage your time or how to organize your tasks. This is the real deal. I am not just going to tell you what you should do, I will also tell you what not to do. There are three major things that you need to stop immediately in order to reach your semester goals. If you successfully cease each of these actions, it is to be expected that you will notice a positive change in your grades. Let us take a closer look at behaviors that can keep you from your dream GPA.

STOP wasting your time being inattentive during lecture and attempt to convince yourself that you’ll learn the material from the textbook at home. Prepare for lecture so that you can be active during the discussion. It takes 15 minutes to scan a chapter and see what material will be covered during class. That 15 minutes will be a major investment in your future study time considering you’ll master most of the material during lecture and be able to properly review (not relearn) after class.

STOP ignoring material that you’ve already learned, assuming that it is no longer pertinent. You must do short, frequent reviews in order to remember something effectively enough to be able to apply it on the exam. For example, you meet someone once in the student center and you run into them again three weeks later on campus. Your first thought is “I know that person but I just can’t remember where I know them from”. If you would have met the same person four times a week for 15 minutes each time, it’s not likely that you’ll forget who they are a few weeks later. The same applies for course material; frequent and short reviews are highly effective for exam preparation.

STOP deceiving yourself. Most likely, self-deception is not your intention but subconsciously students use it as a way to continue their negative habits. So with that said, try being brutally honest with yourself. If you know that you cannot effectively comprehend material in a study group, don’t study in a group. If you know that you lose focus in lecture because you don’t eat breakfast beforehand, don’t skip breakfast.

When written out, these examples sound like basic logic but students are professional excuse creators. Unfortunately, the excuses and continued negative habits are keeping you from your full academic potential. Take the time to consider what’s hindering your progress and begin brainstorming solutions today!

Free Apps for Student Success

By Kelly Loftis, Disability Specialist– Student Disability Services

With computers, e-readers, tablets, smartphones, and iPods, we have technology at our fingertips. With just a few clicks or the swipe of a finger, you can open the door to tools for academic success. Below are highlights of five free must-have apps:

Evernote- Available on the web, as well as in app version for both Android and Apple devices, Evernote is a large filing cabinet of ideas. Evernote allows you to upload content in text, photo, or voice recording formats to your account. It saves whatever you choose to upload in the cloud so it becomes accessible from your computer, phone, tablet, or anywhere with an Internet connection. Need to find information from an old note? The search feature not only recognizes text, but can scan photos for handwriting or other print to help locate what you’re looking for.

Babylon- This app is great for students taking foreign language courses, or students traveling abroad who need communication support. Babylon translates dozens of languages including Arabic, Farsi, Hebrew, Thai, Spanish, French, and Russian. The app allows you to copy and paste text, photo, or voice recording formats to your account. It becomes accessible from your computer, phone, tablet, or anywhere with an Internet connection. Need to find information from an old note? The search feature not only recognizes text, but can scan photos for handwriting or other print to help locate what you’re looking for.

Easy Bib- Have you ever finished writing a paper, sighed with relief, and then realized you still had the bibliography to complete? Easy Bib can help with that! Simply scan the barcode of a book and Easy Bib will take the information to create citations in MLA, APA, or Chicago style. Simply e-mail the completed citation to yourself from the app, and your bibliography is one step closer to completion.

iStudiez- Time management is a struggle for many people, but this app can help. iStudiez allows you to import your class schedule into a calendar, while linking each calendar event to the contact information for the professor. You can add assignments and the app will alert you with reminders of upcoming due dates and exams.

Circle of 6- This app can be especially useful for students who are on campus after dark. Circle of 6 allows you to select 6 contacts in your phone to put in your Circle. With one click of the car icon, a text message is automatically sent to your circle stating “Come and get me. I need help getting home safely”. The app also uses the GPS on your phone to automatically text a map of your location.
Top Ten Reasons to Love Wayne State

By Zsa-Zsa Booker, Project Manager– Academic Success Center

1. Location/Community – Wayne State is Michigan’s only urban research university, located in the heart of Detroit’s Cultural Center. Wayne State is centrally located in one of the most artistic and culturally diverse cities in the country. Plus, if you enjoy being involved in community outreach, there are always opportunities for WSU students to take advantage of activities in the area.

2. People – The staff, faculty, and students at WSU all share the goal of supporting higher learning. These individuals come from all walks of life which also helps to make Wayne State an incredible environment.

3. Education – Individuals who attend WSU receive a top-notch education that includes 13 different schools and colleges which offer over 400 major subject areas. Wayne State is a public research university that has been noted as a university with high research activity, a distinction held only by 2.3% of higher education institutions.

4. Academic Support – There are many departments and programs designed specifically to support student success. Some of these departments and programs include: The Academic Success Center, The Writing Center, Student Disability Services, Counseling and Psychological Services, and countless others.

5. Pipeline – Pipeline is the ultimate tool for WSU students. It allows you to view your grades, take care of financial matters, and even market campus events using the announcements feature.

6. WSU Libraries – There are a number of WSU Libraries on campus. Consider studying in the David Admany Undergraduate Library (UGL), Purdy/Kresge Libraries, the Arthur Neef Law Library, or the Shiffman Medical Library. On top of that, WSU students can take advantage of interlibrary loans which allow them access to a countless number of resources outside of campus libraries.

7. Campus Health Center – The Campus Health Center is an on campus health service center for WSU students. The Campus Health Center is staffed with health care providers who are nationally certified nurse practitioners and who also hold state specialty licenses as nurse practitioners. WSU students can visit the Campus Health Center to receive health care services such as: travel health, routine health exams, contraception care, management of chronic illnesses, and health promotion counseling. Plus, they offer students their first visit for FREE!

8. WSU Farmer’s Market – Every Wednesday from June through October, WSU hosts its very own Farmer’s Market. Vendors come from near and far weekly to feature their fresh fruits, vegetables, herbs, fresh-cut flowers, honey, baked goods, desserts and prepared foods. You can have lunch while shopping for dinner!

9. Campus Safety – WSU has its own police department, with over 54 sworn police officers who patrol the campus and surrounding area 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. Each WSU police officer is commissioned as a Detroit Police Officer and is also licensed by the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards. WSU police can be seen all over campus in squad cars, on bicycle patrol and with K-9 patrol units. While on and around campus, call (313) 577-2222 for all your public safety needs.

10. Wayne State University Planetarium – At the WSU Planetarium you learn about planets, stars, and the moon through full-dome film. To find show times and learn more, visit http://planetarium.wayne.edu

Mission Statement

The mission of the Academic Success Center (ASC) is to ensure that all Wayne State University undergraduate students become self-determined, motivated, and independent learners. We accomplish this through instruction and services that support students’ development of skills to achieve academic excellence.

Free services of the Academic Success Center include:
- Tutoring and Supplemental Instruction
- Individual Support with a Learning Specialist
- Study Skills Enhancing Workshops
- Math Success Workshops and Individual Services

Thank you to our editorial board:
Kate Bernas, Zeina Ghoul, Zsa-Zsa Booker-Assistant Editor, and Angela Sickler-Editor.