Time Management

As a college student, you have a lot of commitments to juggle, such as school work, extracurricular activities, employment, social time, etc. It is important to develop time management skills in order to keep on top of everything. Below are some tips to help you develop your own time management strategies.

Dedicate Time to Create a Plan

- Take time to sit down each week and make plan for what you want to accomplish
- Block out fixed time commitments such as work, organization meetings, and class times
- Don’t forget to include time for sleeping, personal care, working out, and travel
- Schedule study blocks throughout the week for every class.
  - Study 2-3 hours per credit hour each week (i.e. study 6-9 hours weekly for a 3 credit class)
  - Study groups, tutoring, professor office hours all count towards that study time
  - Study blocks should be kept to 60-90 minutes to help you maximize concentration
  - Reflect on what time of day you concentrate best and are most productive

Think Long-Term and Plan Backwards

- At the beginning of semester, identify all test dates and due dates for large papers and projects
- For exams, determine how much time you will need to study and schedule those times in the week leading up to the exam
- For papers and projects, identify your milestones and schedule deadlines for yourself. For example, with a paper use the deadline to determine when you need to:
  - edit the paper
  - finish writing the first draft
  - write an outline
  - finish research
  - pick a topic

Make To-Do Lists

- Make to-do lists at the beginning of each week for everything you need to accomplish. It may be useful to assign every task to a specific day if you find you are not consistently finishing your weekly tasks
- Keep your to-do list with you so you can complete tasks during time between classes, add items to your list as they come up, etc.
- You can physically write out your to-do list (a notebook, planner, sheet of paper, sticky notes) or you can use an app on your computer/phone
- Refer to your to-do list frequently
- If you are extrinsically motivated, use rewards to motivate yourself to complete tasks and/or find an accountability partner
- Refer to the To-do List Strategies handout for more information about maximizing your to-do lists
Recognize Your Distractions and Reduce Them

- To maximize your study blocks, make sure you reduce the distractions around you
- If your phone is a distraction, turn it on silent and put it away during your study time
- If you get easily distracted by your roommate, study outside of your dorm room
- If noise distracts you, study somewhere quiet or wear headphones and listen to non-distracting music
- Don’t underestimate the importance of an ideal room temperature. Find somewhere to study that isn’t too cold or too warm

Be Realistic

- Look at your schedule and to-do list and determine if you can actually accomplish everything in a single day that you want to accomplish
- Be truthful with yourself about your ability to stay motivated with the tasks you have laid out.
  - Can you really do nothing but study and work for an entire day?
  - Do you need to schedule in self-care activities like exercising, watching your favorite show (in moderation!), hanging out with friends, etc.
  - Do you have time for all of your extracurricular and your academics? If not, which extracurricular(s) can you give up or reduce your time commitment in?
- Avoid perfectionism. As a college student you have a lot of tasks to get through. Not everything needs to be perfect and sometimes “good enough” is sufficient

Leave Flex-time for Yourself

- Leave a couple of hours of unscheduled time in your schedule for emergencies, last minute opportunities, and projects that take longer than expected
- Flex-time is best reserved for the end of your day. If something comes up that prevents you from studying in the afternoon, you can move your studying to the flex-time you have at the end of the day.
- If you do schedule flex-time in the morning/afternoon:
  - Avoid using it for time-wasting activities like Youtube and social media
  - If nothing important/urgent comes up, get a head start on your tasks that you have scheduled for later in the day
  - If you finish your tasks early, you can unwind at the end of the day
- See Stress Management and Self-Care handout for tips on taking care of yourself during the semester