

what it takes

For All Students

March 31, 2024

Tips from Faculty

Hey there Dons and Red Foxes,

It's that time of year again—crazy weather, March Madness, and that moment of realization when you recognize it's almost April. That means we have exactly five weeks left of this semester. Whoa. Summer is coming, but there's some unfinished business. We need to finish this semester **STRONG!**

You've received various What It Takes emails this year about stress and anxiety management, campus resources, and time management. This time, we thought we should share some tips from faculty members about what they think you should be doing to finish the semester with success and style.

Here's what they had to say:

Spring semester can be the hardest time to be motivated to be studying. You are at the end of the marathon with just a few miles to go – yet those can be the hardest. The weather is getting nicer and you are possibly low on motivation, energy, money, brain power and/or sleep. How do you power through? Take the time between classes and use that to study/work on homework instead of catching up on your phone, playing video games or watching Netflix. If you use those couple of hours between classes and apply them to your classes, that will free up your evenings where you can accomplish the rest of your work and still be able to get enough sleep, which will give you more energy.

-Michelle Parker, clinical associate professor of practice in information technology

As exams approach, feeling a little stressed about grades is perfectly normal. Grades have their place, but what makes a more significant difference to your career and even personal lives are the qualities you cultivate while slogging through the preparation process – traits like perseverance (ability to work hard even when you don't feel like working), resilience (ability to bounce back from setbacks), and self-compassion (ability to be kind and encouraging to oneself for personal shortcomings). In the long run, grades fade in significance, but these character strengths stick with you, propelling you toward greater success and lasting happiness.

-Paresh Mishra, department chair and associate professor of organizational leadership

1. *Take a walk outside to increase your energy.*
2. *Drink water and herbal teas. Lots of caffeine can negatively impact your sleep and cognitive processing.*
3. *Sit tall and breathe deeply. Slouching and postural misalignment can cause a person to feel more tired.*

-William Sauerland, assistant professor of music

1. *Set study goals and stick with them: Stay rested, well-fed, and hydrated (water or juice; avoid caffeine). Ask for help if needed and/or study with a partner. Don't forget to reward yourself with something fun.*
2. *Time: Schedule times when you can study uninterrupted. Space out your time; ideally study in 20 to 30-minute chunks separated by 10-minute breaks. Get up from your desk/table and walk away from the books—take a walk around the block, get a snack, even take a quick shower or splash water on your face—anything that gets your mind off the study material. Don't extend your breaks too much longer than 10-15 minutes or you will be less likely to return to the books.*
3. *Avoid distractions: Find a comfortable, distraction-free environment. Silence your phone, except for maybe music or timers for study.*
4. *Repetition helps: Re-reading the chapters does help. Reading out loud to yourself or a study buddy. Using more than one sensory modality helps solidify the learning.*
5. *Reward yourself when you have completed a goal. Rewards can be food, going out with friends, watching a favorite movie, whatever works for you.*

-Jeannie DiClementi, associate professor of psychology

Remember, there's a point of diminishing returns when you study for finals—if you aren't ready 1 hour before the exam, 1 hour won't be enough! Start early and focus on ideas as much as memorization.

-Alan Legg, assistant professor of mathematics

I would recommend that students create a concept map summarizing the core concepts they have learned in one specific course for the semester and, more importantly, depicting the relationships among the core concepts using a diagram. This should help students have an overall picture of the subject, and the map can be used as a study guideline for their finals. In addition, once they build the connections among each core concept, they realize how much they have learned and mastered in this area of study, which boosts their confidence and sense of achievement, which I believe helps keep them motivated.

-Wenjia Han, assistant professor of hospitality and tourism management, Doermer School of Business

When taking a break from school work, do something that is restorative, that recharges your batteries. Quiet your brain by setting aside electronics and, if possible, get outside.

-James Burg, associate professor of counselor education

Start by giving yourself credit for all that you have accomplished this semester. Keep pushing and finish strong, you are almost there!

-Alanna Olah, clinical associate professor and department chair, hospitality and tourism management

So, it seems a lot of professors think that spending time taking care of your holistic wellness is important, as is identifying some specific strategies that are useful for your specific classes. It also sounds like believing in yourself and finding the meaning and purpose in what you are doing is vital to long-term success. Thank you to each of these amazing profs for sharing their experience and wisdom with us.

We wish you the very best as you prepare for this important part of the semester!

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