

Alumni Blog- April 2021

Motivation to Finish the Year Off Strong

College is a marathon, not a sprint! It takes a lot of blood, sweat and tears dealing with the assignments and studying for those exams. But just like any marathon there comes a point where you hit a wall and you lose the momentum to keep going. This time of year is normally one of those points where students start to lose focus and get tired or overwhelmed. From taking on a full load of classes, trying to stay afloat financially, getting involved on campus and still having time to eat, shower and sleep- college is far from what you originally thought it would be.

There are many reasons why you may find yourself losing motivation:

- COVID-19 has taken its toll on you mentally, physically and emotionally.
- Your classes are not as interesting or engaging as the course description stated.
- Your classes are difficult and instead of tackling them head-on, you're avoiding them.
- Your priorities are misplaced and not focused on college.
- You have other things outside of college that prevents you from focusing on your education (e.g., medical problems, family problems, financial issues, etc.)
- You lack support from friends or family who can help you stay motivated in college.
- You chose the wrong major and now you feel stuck.
- Your class changed from being in-person to being online and you lack the structure needed to stay motivated in online college.

If this is you, then just know that you're not alone. Many students struggle throughout the semester with motivation. However, it's the students who are able to come out of a rut that will find the most success. We will talk about some ways to get your motivation back!

Realize the Possibilities

As a college student you are taking important steps toward doing something that you really want to do, even if you aren't sure what that may be just yet. It is so important to realize the possibilities and the choices in front of you. Instead of wandering from job to job that you dislike, you can determine your own future. This doesn't mean that you won't be disappointed from time to time, but a college education can take you into a career that you really care about. The choice is yours and it's important to realize that.

Remember Your Original Intention

Think back to high school you. What did you initially set out to do when it came to applying to college? Did you want a higher paying job after graduating? Did you want to go on to pursue a master's degree to become a lawyer, veterinarian, or a dentist? Did you want to meet and interact with new people from different cultures? Did you want to utilize college as a way to travel and/or study abroad? Whatever your initial reason for going to college, it means something to you. Remember that moment in your life when you were excited about college no matter the price or challenges it would bring. Use that energy to motivate yourself to study and continue on. Would you be proud if you dropped and gave up now? If the answer is no, keep on going.

Reassess Your Major or Minor

Did you know that around 30% of college students change their major at least once within the first 3 years of college? Sometimes the lack of motivation is because of the major/minor you have chosen. This doesn't mean that you chose wrong, it just means your interests or priorities have changed. And that is okay! Changing your major/minor is relatively easy if you aren't too far along in them. It is important to think long-term rather than short-term. Think about where you see yourself in 5 to 10 years. If you are having a difficult time choosing a college major, you can always take a career inventory test or speak to your college's career center. You can also make an appointment with your academic advisor to talk through different college major and minor options that align with your current interests and future career/life goals.

Success = Hard Work, Dedication and Sacrifice

Ever heard the saying, "Nothing worthwhile is easy"? This is definitely true when it comes to getting a college education. College is a "weeding out" process. People get good jobs in part because of how they proved themselves through hard work and dedication. They demonstrate they have what it takes. Think back to your hardest class your freshmen year of college. How many people were left standing on the exam day? How many students dropped between your freshmen year to your current year? Make your education a top priority and don't shy away at something just because it is hard. Find help, pivot your course and push through.

Visualize the End Goal

How have your goals and intentions to attend college changed since you first entered college? What is your ultimate goal, short and long-term, once you graduate with that degree? Picture yourself walking across the stage with your friends and family cheering you on, getting your first job out of college and becoming financially independent, or you buying your first house. Whatever your end goals are, visualize them.

Don't Get Defeated

There will be moments when you don't think you can do it and moments when you doubt your ability to succeed. This is normal, but don't let those thoughts overwhelm or defeat you. You will be faced with challenges that seem too much for you at the time, but won't work against yourself. You have the potential and strength in you to keep going and conquer the obstacle in your way.

Create a Routine

If you are taking all virtual classes, this can feel like you have absolutely no structure. Even if you are taking some asynchronous classes it is important to create a school routine for yourself. Having this routine in place will help you identify exactly when you are feeling unmotivated or burned out because your routine will feel off. That will let you know it is time to take a break and come back later. Without this, it can be hard to pinpoint where the problem is.

Attend and Engage in Class Lectures

To be truly engaged with your education and make it worth your time and money, you need to be attending your class lectures whether they are in-person or online. Actually attending class lectures can really boost your motivation in college. When you disconnect yourself from the college classroom, you disconnect yourself from all the opportunities college can bring. As an online learner, it is even more essential that you log on, attend the online lecture or watch the per-recorded lectures, and engage in the course materials by actively participating in discussion posts or emailing your professor or classmates if you have a question. If you attend your lectures you won't feel so alone in your college studies. Your classmates and professors for each class automatically becomes your support system for the semester, so use them to your advantage.

Don't Overwork Yourself

One of the major causes of students not succeeding is due to the fact that they place unreasonable expectations on their own workload. Some students give themselves such a heavy workload that it is nearly impossible to complete. It's not uncommon for a professor to hear something like "I'm sorry I did not complete the assignments, but I work and go to school full-time." The general rule is that you should expect to spend a **minimum** of two hours working on assignments outside of class for every hour that you spend in class. So if you are taking 12 credit hours, you would need to spend at least 10 hours a week attending class, along with at least 20 hours a week working on assignments outside of the classroom. You probably spend at least five hours a week getting ready for class and driving to and from campus. That's 35 hours a week as a minimum amount of time you need to devote to your classes. That is the equivalent of a full-time job. It's crazy to think about someone having two full-time jobs yet many students think that they will have no problem handling a full-time job and a full load of

college courses. These expectations don't always turn out well. Realize that college takes a lot of time. Give yourself some room.

Make a Study Plan and Commit

At the beginning of the semester, hopefully you created some type of study plan or at least wrote your due dates in a calendar. Ask yourself if this study plan still works for you. If it does, then perhaps you are just having a bad day or week and just feel unmotivated. Don't fix what isn't broken. However, if your study plan is no longer working, it is time to re-evaluate to get back on track. The key to making a study plan in college is that you make it realistic and manageable so that you are able to consistently do your assignments, meet deadlines, and feel less overwhelmed. If you have not created a study plan, try to do this. It can help you stay motivated by giving you a way to intentionally navigate your semester. Think about trying to drive to a new location without directions or GPS. Not having a solid study plan is like flying by the seat of your pants every single day, which can get exhausting very quickly. Once you create or revise your study plan, make sure that you commit to it. You should refer back to it every day and make time to complete all of the tasks you planned to do.

Take Breaks to Avoid Burnout

College burnout is real! It's okay to take a half-day or even a whole day off to rejuvenate. Take some time to do the things that you really enjoy like writing, working on a hobby, enjoying a meal, spending time with friends, or perhaps just taking really long naps. Be sure to take breaks while studying. Take a break every 25-45 minutes after focusing on a single task. This will help you stay motivated because it breaks down overwhelming tasks into chunks of time that don't seem as intimidating.

Visit On-Campus Counseling Center

When you have tried every trick in the book to motivate yourself, but nothing is working, it may be time to talk to someone about what is going on. If you find yourself staying in bed all day, not enjoying or engaging in your classes like normal, or your grades steeply decline, it is time to seek out the help of a mental health counselor. At most, if not all, colleges and universities, there are either counseling or psychological services that are free for students. They tend to offer one-on-one weekly, bi-weekly, or as needed counseling sessions, group therapy, and workshops to help you cope with the stresses of college. Even if you don't think you need psychological help, it may not be a bad idea to just have an initial consultation and just let your feelings and thoughts out in a safe and confidential space. You may feel a huge weight lifted from you and perhaps even be able to identify what is causing your lack of motivation.

Celebrate Every Win

It's easy to overlook how much you have accomplished in college when you are rushing around. Keep a small notebook or find a place where you can keep track of the various accomplishments you have achieved. Track good grades, praise or feedback you have received from a professor, job or internship offers, publications or presentations you have done, etc. Not only does looking back on these accomplishments give you a boost of encouragement, it can also be a great reference tool when you are creating a resume for jobs or graduate school. Be sure to reward yourself when you achieve your goals. When you get an A on a test you studied hours for, take yourself out for a celebratory lunch or buy yourself a small gift.

There are many reasons for a student to drop out of college. Remaining motivated can play a huge part in deciding whether or not to continue on. If you are currently lacking the motivation to do your college studies, we hope that these motivation tips will be exactly what you need to reignite that fire in your college journey.