5 Things You Should Know About Learning Online

Time Management

Learning online requires you to manage your time well. It is important that you check the course website on a daily basis to ensure you get announcements and stay on track. Prioritize your tasks by making lists and organizing your work. When you learn how much time it takes to read course materials, view videos, or complete assignments you'll find yourself getting into a rhythm which will help you stay on track and make the semester go smoother. If you find time getting away from you and you get behind, don't wait too long before asking for help!

Goal Setting

Thinking online work is "easier" because you can complete it at your own pace is a myth that can have dangerous consequences. Most online and hybrid courses are not self-paced, meaning it is expected that you will complete course work within specified time frames. Learning online can feel overwhelming, especially if you have never taken a course with online components. This feeling gets even stronger if you get behind. You should literally write down study time and assignment due dates on your calendar and stick to the schedule! Having scheduled time for course work is imperative to your success! Try setting some artificial due dates ahead of the actual due date for assignments so you can ensure you have plenty of time to complete assignments.

Motivation

There should be a good reason you are taking an online or hybrid course. Taking one because you think it is easier or not as rigorous will get you into trouble fast! Likewise taking an unappealing subject as an online course just to "get it out of the way" will not serve you well. Since online and hybrid courses require more self-discipline, select online courses in subject areas in which you are interested and excited and save unappealing courses for traditional face-to-face settings where structure is more likely to be externally enforced.

Independence

Depending on how a course is designed, learning online can be an isolating and impersonal experience. You may or may not have frequent interactions with your instructors or other students in the class. Therefore, you must be able to adapt to working independently and in isolation with minimal contact and feedback from others. If the social aspect of learning is important to your success, an online or hybrid course may not be right for you.

Technology

Some courses are more technically challenging than others. You should be comfortable with various types of technology that you may use to access materials as well as complete assignments. Your willingness to learn new technologies will also be tested as well as your patience with technical glitches and access issues. Problems WILL occur! You will need to be well-organized and prepared with a back-up plan (see time management and goal-setting above) to deal with access issues and other problems, especially if they occur at a time when an assignment is due.