**ENGAGING IN ONLINE EDUCATION**

As we’re all learning very quickly, learning online is different from traditional learning. It can feel harder to stay engaged, especially the longer we stay in social isolation. Yet, remember that you are not alone in your academic pursuits. You’ll be surprised how quickly you can become accustomed to the online learning environment and how you can be very successful. Here are a few suggestions that will make you feel better with online education.

* **Be open.**

When it comes to online versus traditional education, an open mind is the key. Online education isn’t classroom-based education and it’s not supposed to be. Embrace the differences, participate in discussions, ask questions, reach out to classmates and instructors, and let your personality shine.

* **Be purposeful.**

Remember being in a virtual classroom doesn’t mean you’re being let off easy! You must be purposeful, accountable, and self-motivated to be successful in an online world.

* **Log in often.**

This is critical. Exams. Quizzes. Papers. Discussions… The special instructions and detailed explanations that you’re used to receiving from your professors before or after the lectures simply will not exist anymore.

That’s why it’s important for you to log in often to keep up with what’s going on in each online class. If you’re not logging in every day you may miss feedback from faculty, posted grades, announcements, and much more. So check your e-mail, course website and any medium related to your class at least once a day to ensure that you’re doing everything that is required.

* **Engage with your online community.**

Community is very important. You may not be on our campus. The importance of learning ***together*** does not change even though you are not in the same physical place as your classmates. In fact, if there is ever a time to dial-up peer-to-peer interaction, it’s now! Take extra time to meaningfully respond to your cohorts in discussion forums. Reach out to your professor when you are really struggling with a concept instead of sweating about it in isolation. Share the stimulating content you learned that day with your family at the dinner table that night.

* **Prepare and plan ahead of time, don’t underestimate the time commitment.**

Our online courses are rigorous. Don’t treat them differently than you would a regular class. Though online courses are inherently more flexible than traditional face-to-face classes, the time commitment required to succeed is no different. You’ll need to manage your time well.

Build in time not only for completing assignments, but also participating in discussions and peer conversations. Without face-to-face reminders, it can be easy to overlook approaching deadlines and end up in scrambling to finish at the last minute.

To avoid this, schedule regular study time, preferably daily. Watch out for upcoming assignments to ensure you’ve budgeted enough time to give them all your best effort.

Are there any procrastinators out there? We love you, but this is not the time to put all assignments on hold until the last possible minute. Don’t treat remote learning like an extended spring break. Your classes are still in session. You will experience heaps of stress at the end of the semester when you are trying to get everything started and finished at the last possible minute.

Remember, learning takes time.

* **Dedicate time to your learning.**

It’s important to set healthy boundaries around your school time. Block off a time frame for your textbook reading, a time to listen to lectures, and a time to write assignments for each class and stick to it.

Minimize distractions. When you are setting yourself up for study time, make sure the TV is off, your phone is put away (preferably in another room), and tell your family members, “I’m going to class,” and get in the zone. Pretend like you are actually in class, and prioritize that time.

Schedule break times because it can be very easy to get sucked into your work. Make sure you set a timer. Having a 15-minute break every hour can do wonders for your mental health and can help you absorb the material better.

Make it fun. Listen to some study music in the background as you tackle assignments (if it helps you focus), ask a friend or family member to quiz you on your notes to facilitate some personal contact, and make sure you’re comfortable and have healthy snacks to keep your energy up.

Take your work seriously. You may not be in a physical classroom, but you should act as if you are when you begin every study session. It’s up to you to take responsibility for your work and to appreciate the knowledge being given to you!

* **Dedicate space to your learning.**

After your time slot is secure, choose a space for your studies. Perhaps you already have an office space in your home–now is your time to actually use it! (Be honest, it gets less use than you originally expected. But that’s ok! Move the stacks of paper–it’s the office’s time to shine!) And maybe you don’t have an office. Find a corner in your home where you can focus, and claim it!

Dedicating boundaries with your space and time will tremendously help you maximize your online education.

WE KNOW YOU CAN DO IT!

CIAD Team