

# Learning: It's what you *DO* that matters

*Tips and strategies from Academic Support Program Specialist Cristina Kerluke*

**“Greetings” to our new Huskies and “Welcome back” to our returning students!**

We hope you are geared up to have a great semester. Here are some academic tips and reminders to help you maximize your success early in the semester, because when it comes to learning, it's what you DO that matters.

## **Know where to go.**

Review your class schedule on MaineStreet for class days/times and locations. If you are attending classes at a new location, take some time to review your route before the first day of class. If enrolled in an online course, log in early to navigate the course site and confirm you can find what you need.

## **Go to class.**

Class attendance really does matter. Being a successful student starts with being present. Go to all classes and make a good impression starting day one. Get to class early, be visible

and pay full attention. Attention is one of the most critical components to learning. Keep phones in your bag and on silent.

## **Review each course syllabus you receive thoroughly.**

I repeat, review each course syllabus you receive thoroughly. The syllabus is an essential guide to understanding what the professor's expectations are of you, when assignments are due, how your work will be evaluated and the method behind calculating your grade. Try to think of your syllabi as maps that give you directions to arrive at the end of the semester successfully. Refer back to each syllabus weekly to keep yourself on track throughout the semester.

## **Create a semester plan.**

After reviewing your syllabi, map out due dates for the entire semester. Whether that be through Google Calendar, your phone or a physical day-planner, note all semester dates

and deadlines at the beginning of the semester, not just as they approach. It's important to know the big picture! Refer to your planner daily to get a sense of the day (and week) ahead, and to make your daily and weekly to-do lists. These planning efforts will keep you on top of your game.

## **Meet your professors.**

Studies have shown that students who make an effort to get to know their professors are more likely to succeed in college. Introduce yourself to your professor early in the semester, not just when a problem arises. Visiting office hours early on in the semester can help you build relationships, demonstrate your investment in the course, and proactively address any areas of concern. Your professor is here to help; don't miss the opportunities that office hours provide!

**Visit the Learning Commons.** The Learning Commons is an open

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- Cristina Kerluke

space in the USM Libraries designed to foster collaborative and active learning, filled with movable tables, rolling whiteboards and group study rooms. Many students choose to make the Learning Commons one of their “academic homes” on campus, where they can work with Reference Librarians, tutors, faculty and each other in a dynamic environment.

## **Be proactive.**

One of the greatest things about college is that you get to steer your own ship. You don't need permission to pursue the things that will make you successful, but you do need to be the one to take the initiative. Seek out ways to go beyond the minimum required and access help

resources early in the semester. The momentum to succeed starts within you!

**Become an AGILE learner.** We want to help you, as a USM student, increase your memory, performance, and enjoyment of learning. In our upcoming articles, we will be discussing how to become an effective learner using “AGILE” strategies, all of which will maximize your time and effort, so please stay tuned! In the meantime, visit the AGILE website at [usm.maine.edu/agile](http://usm.maine.edu/agile) for academic strategies, printable resources and a schedule of upcoming workshops.

Choose to make it a great semester! **FP**