OPINIONS

Managing your time can be tricky

Karly Lamm
News Editor

Welcome to the first week of your fall semester! The best advice I can give to incoming freshmen would be to keep track of time. It might feel like the semester is lagging on at first, but it speeds up quicker than you may realize. After three years, I learned—sometimes the hard way—better time management skills that might benefit others the way they did me. Here are my best time-management tips:

Buy (and use) a planner. I admittedly lose track of plans very easily. I tend to overbook myself without realizing it, so having a planner, or some form of a calendar, allows me to easily see all my plans for the week. I also like to color code everything as I find it helpful to categorize my priorities.

Arrive 30 minutes early to find parking if you commute. While commuting parking passes are cheaper than residential parking passes, there is a pretty big downfall: terrible parking. This is something I had to figure out the hard way. I was always making it to class five to 10 minutes late because I was not calculating the time I would need to find parking. Most of the parking spaces available for commuters are a good distance away from most classes and still fill up rather quickly. Leaving 30 minutes earlier than the time you need to be on campus provides you with ample opportunity to find a spot, park and walk to your class on time.

Communicate when something goes awry. Life happens. If something goes wrong, and you're feeling like there's too much going on—let someone know. Whether you're running late or behind on studying, send an email to your professor or boss to keep them in the loop. Communicating these may not get you completely off the hook, but communication is key. As long as you're doing your best and not missing assignments daily, your professor, boss or whomever will most likely work with you. Just make sure you are communicating your progress when need be.

Set time for projects. I find when I need to get something done it helps to set aside time specifically for whatever project I'm working on. Setting time for your projects allows you to manage how much you can get done in a day. For example, if you have three assignments due for separate classes, try to set aside anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes for each assignment. This ensures you are putting forth equal amounts of effort toward each of your classes while getting them all done on time.

Schedule time to relax. One of the most impactful things I've learned in college is to set aside time to relax. School and work are important, but focusing solely on them can cause a lot of stress. It's just as important to care for yourself and make time to destress. I found reading a book, watching a TV show or taking a nap helps me feel less stressed at the end of a long day.

Successfully managing your time in college can be tricky. I hope these tips help you make the most of your time and have a successful fall semester!

Take advantage of SFA resources

Kaylee Lopez
News Editor

Transitioning from high school to college can be a stressful and intimidating change. There are fresh faces, new information and an overall unfamiliar environment, which can lead us to not properly taking care of health, mentally or physically.

My freshman year I was constantly forgetting basic needs for my body and mind. I was so focused on making sure I knew which classes needed what, if I was going to get my textbook on time, if I was going to meet anyone, what organizations should I join and every other worry there is entering college. I felt exhausted and lost. It was not until I learned about the services and options SFA offered that I finally paid attention to taking better care of myself.

Here at SFA, we have Counseling Services that help students identify goals and potential solutions to problems which cause distress, improve self-esteem, increase coping skills, and promote social connectedness and optimal mental health. They provide confidential individual, group and couples counseling free of charge to all SFA students.

College is a time when individuals find themselves entering new relationships and keeping up with classes, and making sure your physical needs are met can be challenging. All these things can get overwhelming, and you might find your body wanting to shut down. Therefore, getting enough physical exercise is important. Research shows being physically active not only increases strength but also improves your overall mood and health and helps you live longer.

The Student Recreation Center on campus provides an excellent way of getting active and keeping your mind and body strong. They offer a wide range of services from yoga to personal training. The Rec has multiple workout machines, an indoor track, indoor basketball/volleyball courts and an outdoor pool.

Whenever you feel overwhelmed, take some time for yourself and breathe. College is a journey, and it will feel hard at times but there are hundreds of students who are in your shoes or have been in them.

It is important to be aware and use these services that are provided to help you grow and manage in college. Life is already a challenge as it is, and adding work, school and making connections can be added stressors. So, drink plenty of water, get enough sleep, talk to a trusted counselor, go for a walk around the Ag Pond, work out your frustrations at the Rec Center, and always remember you are not alone.

Leave drama behind in high school

Renee Fain
Editor-in-Chief

When we first leave our hometowns for college, it's easy to bring some of the habits we have at home with us. We eat at the same places, keep the same hobbies and try to make similar friends—but that's not always the best plan. Probably the biggest difference between high school and college is that we're adults now; we don't have time for the petty drama that happened in high school.

The best way to avoid drama in college is to surround yourself with people who are mature. Not mature as in they don't play video games or go to parties—but mature as in they respect you.

Respect means they don't try to pressure you into doing things you don't want to. They respect what you want to do and don't try to change your mind. Respect is allowing you to speak your mind even if you have a different opinion or it's something they might not want to hear, and they still love you all the same. It's also not trying to make things about them whenever you need emotional support, and they actually seem to care. Respect is a lot of things, but it's mainly things that should make you feel good.

If we surround ourselves with immature people, we don't feel good. We get distracted from class and work, and we start to perform badly. Not only can immature people affect your mental health, but they can affect your grades, too.

My advice is, if you see someone with immature habits—run. Hit that unfriend button. Hit that block button. Do whatever you can to get that person out of your life. You're going to think about the possibility of hurting their feelings, but if they don't make you feel good, then their feelings don't matter. This is important in college because we don't have time for drama, and we should never make time for drama. This is a period when we are forming who we'll be for the rest of our lives. We have better things to worry about than what someone else is doing or thinking.

Maintain relationships with family

Corrie Martz
News Editor

In high school, I wasn't close to my mom at all. The majority of the time it felt like fighting was our only form of communication. Our relationship was so bad that I could not wait until I went to college, especially one that was three hours away from her. However, when I went to college, our relationship changed for the better.

I didn't realize how unprepared I was for life outside of my parents' house until my first month of college. For the first time in my life, I was grocery shopping for myself, learning how to share a room with another person and having to be responsible for my own well-being. I no longer had my mom there to remind me to wash my bedding or to schedule my yearly doctor's appointment. During my first semester of college, I called my mom multiple times a week to ask her so many adulting questions that I had no idea how to solve.

Those weekly phone calls helped save my relationship with my mom. For the first time in my life, I was learning to view her as someone I could learn from instead of someone I could resent. Now, going into my third year of college, I don't have as many questions as I used to, but I know that if a problem were to ever arise, I would have someone to go to. Looking back now I realize how harsh I used to be with her, and I am forever grateful that my college experience opened my eyes and made me realize how much I need her in my life.

Oftentimes people who are going to college for the first time get so caught up in the experience that they forget to reconnect with the people who helped them get there in the first place. The one piece of advice I would give any incoming freshman is to preserve the relationship you have with your parents because you won't know how much you actually need them until you don't live with them anymore. Something as simple as a weekly phone call will make a world of difference.

Take time to explore your SFA home

Sandra Carranza
Managing Editor

Being away from the place we grew up can be exciting and a bit nerve-wracking. You are days or weeks into your first semester on campus, and you have yet to feel that at-home feeling everyone raves about. I have the solution for that: Take a walk around campus.

I'm not talking about a guided tour with a group but rather a solo trip around your new home to familiarize yourself with it and find all the nooks and crannies that would otherwise go undiscovered.

On your walk, go to all the places you didn't see on your tour, or explore places a step further. Explore the arboretum and walk the trails into the azalea gardens. Find all the shady benches and picnic areas. Find the cool and quiet study spots in the library. See the resources available in the student center. Take a trip to the SFA Rec Center and see what all it offers. Walk through the buildings your major isn't housed in, since you won't go there often in the next few years.

And do some research, too. Find out about the shuttle bus route. If you have a car, find all the places you can park. Know where the University Police Department is located, and make a note of where emergency call boxes are on campus.

A home is a place you go to where you know you will be safe and welcome. It's the feeling that so many students rave about. And that is the feeling you have to find for yourself.

This "walk" might seem pointless if you've already gone all over campus plenty of times, but I encourage it because taking this time by yourself is about so much more than finding a cool spot to destress. It's about being familiar with your surroundings in case of emergencies and knowing where to go to find what you need.

You don't want to graduate without stepping foot in all the cool places, and you don't want to go through college without knowing what all SFA offers. While you're here, take time to slow down, look around and explore.

Failure can present opportunities to learn from your mistakes

Alyssa Coker
Newsletter Editor

I'm a senior. A whole senior. I just want you to keep that in mind while I tell you this.

I took some online classes in summer 2021, and I ended up having some questions for my professor. I'd been pretty busy with work and family and doing school at the same time was just a lot on my plate. I got the job done, but I wasn't able to communicate as well as I should have with my professor. So, I thought to clear everything up, we could have a little Zoom meeting.

I want to preface that I went into this meeting confidently, thinking that everything would be ironed out in my favor, and I didn't do anything that bad. The main issue that I thought was affecting me in this class was that my discussion post videos kept uploading upside down. I thought that was the entire problem.

But, during the Zoom call, I learned I was wrong. There was a whole other issue that I had no clue about because I missed two crucial videos my professor posted on our class discussion board. My professor went on to tell me that continuing what I was doing (which was completely the wrong thing to do on my part by the way) made him think that I was openly disrespecting him in front of the entire class.

So, this was a punch to the gut. That was not my intention at all. But, instead of apologizing calmly like an adult, I cried. CRIED. As a senior in college, I cried in a one-on-one meeting with my professor over Zoom. That was a humbling experience.

And a learning experience. I've been in college for years now, and I obviously still have a lot of work to do on myself.

In college, things that don't necessarily reflect your best self will happen. You may be late to class on your first day (like I was), you may make your first C (like I did), and you may even only have a total of one friend for your entire first year (like I did). All of those things seem like such a waste of potential and may seem to ruin your college experience, but they don't. Good things take time.

I encourage you to take your failures in stride and know that a failure doesn't have to be a complete failure. You don't have to give up completely and run back home, feeling terrible about yourself.

My freshman year, I thought I was supposed to have everything together. I needed to be the perfect student, employee, girlfriend, friend and family member all the time, and I needed to be those things immediately. Don't get me wrong, striving for those things should always happen. But, when you fail at something, it's not going to be the end of the world. You can recover; believe me.

By the way, the professor I literally poured out my feelings to is a professor and a dean that I'm going to need to keep in contact with for the rest of my college career. So, if I can show my face after crying into this poor man's web camera, you can overcome any obstacle college or whatever throws at you.

Get to know your faculty

Nathan Thompson
News Editor

Stepping into your first SFA classroom is exhilarating. Behind those doors is a sea of endless possibilities, potential, and… stress. I am sure you have heard about the challenges waiting for you in college. High school teachers emphasize the absurd amount homework you receive and the extreme callousness of your professors. However, as frightening as those rumors may be, they are far from the truth.

In college, the structure of your class is largely determined by your professor. With some exceptions due to University or state policies, your professor will determine your reading material, schedule and assignments. Professors are the medium by which you will receive your education, and with how important they are, it is vital to know how to create good relationships with them.

The first step in creating a relationship with your professor is understanding them. Professors come in a variety of forms. Some are rigid and strict and will do anything to stay on schedule, while others are more flexible and will rearrange their schedule if needed.

It is important to know which kind of professor is going to fit best with your personality. If you're deadline oriented and want to work ahead, then find one that will stick to their schedule. If you want to go with the flow and complete your work one week at a time, then find a professor who isn't afraid to change the pace of the class if needed.

Do research on your professors before you take their class. There is plenty of information out there, whether you use ratemyprofessors.com, ask some of your friends, or ask an SFA student group (there are numerous on Facebook), you will be able to find a professor who best suits your learning style.

After you have found a professor that matches your needs, the second step is to read their syllabus after your first day of class. As I am sure you have heard, the syllabus is the single most important document you will read in each class. It contains all your homework procedures, class policies, class schedule and the most important thing for our purposes, contact information for your professor.

In your syllabus, your professor will list out their office hours, location and phone number, along with their email address and specify which way of contacting them is best. This is how you will get in contact with your professor outside of class hours in order to ask questions, request that they review your work for a project or discuss other material related to your education. Not only will doing this boost your grade in the class but it's also one of the best ways you can build a relationship with your professor, since you are interacting with them one on one. Your professors will accumulate a sense of your academic needs, while you will learn how your professors teach.

Lastly, the third step is to pay attention in class and be engaged in the classroom discussion. This doesn't necessarily mean that you must answer every question, although attempting to answer questions will be beneficial. But it means that you will want to pay attention to your professor the best way you can and allow yourself to become absorbed in the learning experience. You don't want to be on your phone or zone out throughout the class, because that is something your professor will notice (especially in smaller classes) and will harm your reputation with them.

Building a relationship with your professor will be one of your most important steps in succeeding at college. Later down the road, you may find yourself choosing certain classes simply because they are taught by professors you love.

Transitioning to college can be scary, but by building relationships with your professors, you will fill your new home with more familiar faces.

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