

Rho Chapter of Sigma Nu Fraternity Online Academic Support Program Strategies for Successfully Transitioning to An Off-Campus Environment, Online Courses and Social Distancing

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We acknowledge online courses are usually harder to manage and academic success is usually harder to achieve than in class/on campus courses, particularly when all one's courses are all online. Therefore, specific strategies need to be implemented to successfully manage multiple online courses, especially in an off-campus living situation punctuated by adherence to social distancing guidelines.

You need to be your own academic advocate, accessing all available academic support services, utilizing and implementing all available academic support strategies, reaching out for help from your professors, tutors or anyone who may be able to assist you with specific course issues. In addition you need to utilize online course management strategies such as, developing and implementing a realistic and doable daily schedule, determining and utilizing your peak productive time periods, designating a 'work zone' where all your online courses are attended, all your course assignments, projects and exam preparations are completed, etc.

Do not hesitate to contact Ben or myself if you need assistance with utilizing any of these suggested academic support strategies.

I. Develop an academic and personal daily schedule

- A. Develop a daily schedule, addressing effective and efficient academic and personal routines and habits,** that will support your successful transition to being away from campus, managing online courses, and navigating social distancing.
 - a. Developing a daily schedule puts you in control!
 - b. Use of a University of Missouri Day Planner is preferred, but if that is not possible, Google Calendar, Time Tree, etc. can be utilized to facilitate the development of your daily/weekly schedule.
 - c. Please see an example of a daily/weekly schedule at the end of this document.
- B. Try to utilize your previous 'on campus' typical schedule.** Doing so might make the transition and adjustment to being 'off campus' and taking all online courses easier, more efficient, and effective.
 - a. If that is not possible, or perhaps not your choice, then create a daily schedule that works for you.
 - b. Determine your peak productivity periods and organize your class times (if possible) and study, preparation times around those peak productivity periods.
 - c. For example: At the beginning of each week, listing scheduled class meetings times, or times to watch recorded lectures will compensate for not being in class multiple times a week to absorb information.
 - d. Set aside the necessary time each day to complete assignments for classes and refresh on lectures.
 - e. Set aside leisure time to work out, play video games, nap, etc.

- C.** In summary, possible components for inclusion in a daily schedule might be:
- a.** Class times
 - b.** Study times-segments need to be no longer than 45 minutes to an hour in length
 - c.** Break times-take intentional, planned, but timed, breaks—10 to 15 minutes of physical movement of some sort recharges one's focus/concentration batteries and supports more efficient and productive study times—a 10-15-minute mini workout, a 10-15-minute walk in the fresh air, etc.
 - d.** Workout times
 - e.** Social Interaction via technology, gaming, social media, etc.
 - f.** Hobby/interests times
 - g.** Mealtimes
 - h.** Sleep times

II. Set Boundaries

- A.** Physical: If possible, designate a room, or a private area, in your current environment as your 'work zone'.
 - a.** Attend your online courses and study at regularly scheduled times in your 'work zone'.
- B.** Interpersonal Interactions: Keep to an absolute minimum during your class or study times.
 - a.** Removing your phone from your 'work zone' may help in limiting these distractions.
 - b.** Notify individuals in your environment, parents, siblings, friends, etc. regarding your class times and study times and ask them not to interact with you at those times.

III. Academic Support

- A.** If you are experiencing academic difficulty in a course(s).
 - a.** Do not hesitate to contact your course professors or TAs if you have questions or need course assistance. Many professors have become much more flexible in meeting with students outside of class time due to the substantial changes in everyone's schedules and environments. Do not be afraid to reach out.
 - b.** Determine how your course professor or TA wants to be contacted.
 - i.** Professors during this time have sent out many announcements stating when they are available for assistance, as well as one on one assistance and many professors tend to open discussion boards.
 - 1.** Be sure and review your professors' discussion boards and search for questions regarding the class, such as, when will tests be administered, where will they be accessible, how much time will be allowed to take the tests, when will grades be posted, etc.
- B.** Contact your Academic Support Program assigned Team Member and request being connected to a Rho Chapter member who has volunteered as a tutor for the course in which you are experiencing academic difficulty.
 - a.** There have been countless Sigma Nus who have been through what you are experiencing now in your courses, and some are qualified to serve as tutors. Do not be afraid to reach out to Carson, or Ben, they can find you help for any course and point you in the right direction.
- C.** Join and participate in 'Course Study Groups'.
 - a.** These can be study groups involving candidate brothers who are taking the same course or study groups are sometimes generated through class members.
 - b.** Study groups can be particularly effective when it comes time to tackling course assignments, preparing for exams, answering course related questions and problem solving.

- c. Reaching out in a group message to fellow pledge brothers can be your first step in finding assistance.
- D. Academic Performance Enhancers
 - a. **Develop and utilize a daily hierarchical organized project list** that will provide you with awareness of what projects need attention/completion on **that day** and what projects should be attended to 1st., 2nd., 3rd., etc.
 - b. This may be one of the most critical components in effective time management. Leaving yourself multiple days to complete large assignments or studies is key to not cramming or overloading. Learn to prioritize what specific classes or assignments need your immediate attention and which ones may be set aside for a later date.
 - c. Please see an example of a daily hierarchical organized project list at the end of this document.
 - d. Do your most difficult assignments during your best concentration periods and when your focus and energy is fresh.
 - e. **Always** take advantage of and complete 'extra credit' assignments.
 - i. While extra credit assignments might not always be deemed 'worth the time or possible points, completing extra credit assignments does show your professor that you are interested in doing well in their course. This may help you in a number of situations when you need to ask something of your professor.
- E. Contact the MU's Center for Academic Success/Excellence and The Learning Center.
 - a. **All the Learning Center's student academic assist programs are now available ONLINE**, as an example, the Tutoring Programs are utilizing and available through ZOOM and programs such as the Writing Center are still available online and can be accessed and results returned within one day's notice.
 - i. [Center for Academic Success and Excellence](#) (573) 882-9208
 - ii. The Learning Center (573) 882-2493
 - 1. Net Tutor—Provides on-demand online tutoring to MU Students-For Contact: Call the Learning Center
 - 2. Tutoring— (573) 882-5535
 - 3. Help Sessions—Tiger Tutors-Student Success Center-For Contact: Call the Learning Center
 - 4. Study Plan Consultant—Help with organizing a student's study and time schedule (573) 882-2493
 - 5. [Writing Center](#) (573) 882-2496; writingcenter@missouri.edu

IV. Intentionally **CONNECT**

- A. **Use FaceTime, video chat, Zoom, etc. to help you create a community of individuals with whom to interact.** This extra step, as opposed to texting or emailing, will provide the opportunity to see, hear and connect with your candidate brothers, friends, etc. and can make a major positive difference in your interpersonal interactions, particularly in this time of social distancing.

V. Intentionally **MOVE**

- A. **Take intentional, planned, but timed, breaks.** Most psychological research centered on focus and concentration reveals most individuals begin to lose focus and concentration after about 45 to 60 minutes.

- B. 10 to 15 minutes of physical movement of some sort recharges your focus/concentration batteries. So, get out of your 'work zone' and MOVE—a 10 to 15-minute mini workout, a 10 to 15-minute walk in the fresh air, etc. can wake you up and make you feel great.

VII. Tips for success in online classes during the coronavirus outbreak

Source: [Texas A&M: Academic Success Center: Undergraduate Studies: Tips for Success in Online Classes During Coronavirus Outbreak](#)

Bonus tips if your course is synchronous (presented online live)

- Use your webcam if possible. Instructors read students' faces and body language to gauge if they need to slow down or explain things differently.
- Mute yourself during lecture and then unmute if you need to speak. This minimizes distracting background noises for participants.
- Resist the temptation to look at other websites during lecture. Avoid 'multi-tasking.'
- If it is comfortable for you to do so, consider taking notes by hand despite being on a computer.
- Sign into the meeting 5-10 minutes early to ensure you can connect. Your instructor may answer questions during this time.
- Your instructor may stay connected once lecture is over to answer questions from students so do not log out right away.
- Ask your instructor if they (or someone else) will be reading the chat box. If so, feel free to use it but understand that there will likely be a delay.
- In Zoom you can use the 'Raise your hand' feature to let your instructor know you have a question. In very large classes this may not be as useful since your instructor can only see 49 people on their screen at a time.
- Consider using a headset with headphones and a microphone (or AirPods). This keeps the noise level down in your study area and allows for better audio when speaking.

Bonus tips if your course is asynchronous (recorded lectures posted online)

- Do not try to write down everything your instructor says. Take notes as you usually would in person (without the ability to stop the instructor or re-listen).
- Do not skip ahead in the recording. Listen to everything.
- Listen to the recording until it is done playing. Your instructor could wrap it up and say goodbye and then remember one thing to tell you.
- Listen to recordings soon after they are posted. Your instructor could announce an assignment or opportunity for you that you could miss out on if you wait.
- If your course uses discussion boards, aim to be one of the first people to post/reply. Contribute to the discussion with thoughtful posts. Write more than 'I agree' and 'Good point.'
- Follow up with your instructor with any questions you may have. Visit their virtual office hours or send an email.

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Resources

- [Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc.](#)
 - [Scott Smith: Director of Leadership Development](#)
 - Personal Email Interactions
 - [Zeta Nu Chapter: Montana State](#)
 - A description of the Chapter's concepts and strategies for its members to successfully address online course management and social distancing.
 - [Rhys Collins: Leadership Consultant: Rho Chapter](#)
 - Personal Email Interactions
 - [Coronavirus Webpage "Covid-19 UPDATES AND RESOURCES"](#)
 - Collegiate Members Section
 - [Best Practices Library](#)
 - [Virtual Operations](#)
 - [Intellectual Development](#)

- [Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values](#)
 - Five Ways to Get It Done

- Internet/Google Search
 - Multiple websites—some more helpful than others—a **particularly helpful website is listed below**
 - [Texas A&M: Academic Success Center: Undergraduate Studies](#)
 - "Tips for Success in Online Classes During Coronavirus"
 - This Texas A&M document offers a several suggestions for successfully managing online courses; however, the most helpful and different from other website suggestions were:
 - "Bonus Tips If Your Course is Synchronous"
 - (Presented online live)
 - "Bonus Tips If Your Course is Asynchronous"
 - (Recorded lectures posted online)