So welcome everyone to this Planning for Study Time workshop. My name is Christine Connerly and I coordinate the student learning center and I have actually been teaching study skills for longer than most of you have been alive. I think I started in 1982, maybe '81. So I have a lot of experience both as a student and now as a parent of a student, in fact a freshman here this year and definitely it's always a struggle. But guess what, when you leave college there's still the struggle of time management. So we started with this little activity of the balancing act and I'd like to hear from you what kinds of things you thought were the number one thing that you would start with on this list of things?
The English paper.
The French test.
Chemistry
So I want to guess that probably whatever you listed as number one has something to do with the kinds of classes you're taking this semester and which classes you feel are the most difficult and challenging or the most time consuming that you know you're going to need a lot of time for. So that's usually what you choose as number one. Now what I'm curious about is what did you have as number 10? What did you put down as your lowest priority?
Party.
Party? Okay, good for you. How about, what did you have down as number nine? Laundry? Socks, okay, socks. Anyone put socks down as number 10? Okay. I don't think, you know, I think when you've got so many things to do, so many competing things to do chemistry exam, English paper, all these different things, French test, laundry doesn't seem all that important. So a lot of planning your time and figuring out what you're going to do really
depends what's most important and what's most urgent.
I heard something the other day that said, things that are important are rarely urgent, things that are urgent are rarely important. Something to think about a little bit. And it may or may not be true. However when you're a student and you have deadlines hanging over your head, we have a writing assistance available here in this office and we had a line out the door today pretty much one after the other people wanting help with papers. Because when they're due you feel a lot of urgency about wanting to get that reviewed and make sure that it's okay. So this is just kind of a preliminary activity to get you thinking about prioritizing. And we're going to continue with that as we go. And I'm going to close this door over here because it's a little loud. So does anyone have a test this week? Any test this week? Okay. So some of you are already kind of in that mode. Does anybody have a test right after they get back from break? Pretty much not because you know what happens when you get back from break? You have two weeks and then it's finals. So a lot of this workshop is really focused on helping you plan between now and the end of the semester to maximize your time and make sure that you balance everything out as much as possible.
Okay, I'm going to start with this quote that I really love, the secret of getting ahead is getting started, the secret of getting started is breaking complex overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks and then starting on the first one. So if you think about something that you have to do this week and just think about maybe doing one little piece of it, maybe one little step that you can take to accomplish that. If you have a test coming up tomorrow or the next day, what could you do tonight to help you do that? And just think about how it would feel if you took that one step toward that. It would feel pretty good right? It would relieve a little bit of the pressure I would think. Okay, so this is a quote I really enjoy using in most of my study skills workshops.
So we're going to talk about a variety of different strategies here, planning ahead, so important and setting goals, creating a study kit for Thanksgiving break because let's be honest about what we're really going to do over Thanksgiving break, it's not going to be a focus on studying most likely so a little study kit that you can do that will help you focus. And then lastly just talk about accountability, some ways that can help you stay on track with what you plan to do.
So first we're going to start with planning ahead. How many people in here have a planner? How many of you use it? Okay, so that's a pretty good match up between those of you who have a planner and those of you who use it. So that's great. The one thing that's important to keep in mind is that if you do have a planner you want to make sure that you put all of your deadlines and major due dates on one sheet. Does everybody have that? All your major deadlines, due dates, papers in your planner? Okay well I'm going to help you out here. I have this handy dandy two page semester calendar and I'm going to make sure that you all go away with one and but you can actually do this between now and the end of the semester. And put your major due dates, your major test dates all on this one piece of paper. I asked my son to do this, the freshman, and guess what, he hasn't done it because, you know, what do I know? I've only been doing study skills for a really long time but, but I found in the past that students when they do this it's when your major crunch times are. I do a little saying that oh, I can't do this thing tonight because it turns out that I actually have a project due tomorrow but I didn't realize it was due tomorrow, I thought it was due later. Well he written it down in a planner. It would have so to do this. And I kind of like this particular sheet because you can actually post it, you know, in a visible place where you can see what's coming up. And just being to visibly see it and have it on a piece of paper will help you focus and be more prepared. So if you have two things due or two tests in the same day or the same week, you're going to be a little bit more prepared with that. And it's also really important to set aside specific times to study. One of the other tools that we have here in the student learning center is a college schedule. And some people kind of on a weekly basis or weeks that they know that they've got a lot going on. And they'll plan out the hours that they are going to work on specific projects. So that's also a really helpful resource.
And I'll just put a few on each table for you. Does anybody do anything like this, have a regular daily schedule that you kind of look at or not? I know a lot of people do these things online now with Outlook or G-Calendar or things like that. Does anyone do online or electronic calendars? Okay, just kind of a little bit? Like in Outlook you can have your task bar, you can have little reminders. On your phone, how many use your phones for that? Okay, well that's good. Something reminds you, that's a really good thing. Whatever it is that you want to use to help remind you, I find there's something there's really satisfying about writing things down on a piece of paper as opposed to just putting them onto a computer because it can actually help you see them a little more visually and also get them out of your head because you're not waiting for that alarm to go off. And it helps kind of get it so that you're not worrying about it or thinking about it.
Okay, so when you're planning your study time it's really helpful to think about using daylight hours as much as possible. Studies have actually shown that one hour studying during the day is worth two at night. People don't think about this but if you've ever tried to study for an exam late at night like say after 9:00, 10:00, 11:00 o'clock, you know, time goes by a lot faster it seems like. And maybe you've been working on a paper or something like that late at night and it does make a big difference. So if you can try to do it during the day and based on the way the human body works and the human mind works you're far more likely to be able to focus during daylight hours. Sometimes it's hard because you have other commitments during that time. So what I'd like you to do on this little card that I passed out is just to list all of your classes that you're taking this semester. So take a minute to list the classes that you're taking this semester. And next to each class, you know, just after you've listed all of the classes think about which one is your most, which are your most challenging classes? Put a little check mark next the one or two that are the most challenging, most difficult classes. And we're going to use that list again in a little bit later on so hang on to it. So which classes did people put down as the most challenging? What did you put down? Anthropology.
Critical thinking, that's a very challenging class. How about you, what did you put down? So everybody's got a little bit different idea of what's challenging for them this particular semester. And it just depends on, you know, what you're taking and what works, what you're best at. So those are the classes you're going to want to try to study for during the day whenever possible, even if it's the weekend. Yes, people do actually study sometimes on the weekend. I know my son doesn't. Sorry, I keep using him as a bad example but he's taking applied computer graphics and video game design so I think he thinks he's doing a lot of
research on the weekends by playing video games. So that's at least the story that I'm getting from him.
Okay, next thing you can think about it thinking about where you study. A place that doesn't have too many distractions and distractions could be, you know, your cell phone, your especially if it's an iPhone or something like that and has all kinds of wonderful things on it. Make sure that it has enough light, it's comfortable but not too comfortable, not so comfortable that you're just going to fall asleep like your bed or something like that. What are some places people all study that they like the best? How about you?

Library.

My room.

Your room? Okay, yeah if it meets all that criteria, it's great. And anybody coffee shops or anything like that sometimes? Okay good. So it just depends on where you feel most comfortable, that you have what you need. A lot of times if you use a regular study place the minute you go to that specific place your mind is going to go right into study mode because your, your brain is already used to that and will associate it, that spot with studying so you'll be able to focus more quickly. So keep that in mind when you're thinking about studying.
And it's also helpful to get ready to study. I really like this little quote, I was going to look up the source of it and I didn't find it but, set a goal for when you sit down to study, Parkinson's law, I hadn't heard this before. Work expands to its completion. So if you say I'm going to study tonight and you don't put down a starting time and an ending time and figure out what you're going to accomplish during that time you could just be there for long, much longer then you would actually need to be there. So if you can set a specific goal and say, okay I'm going to study until 10:00 tonight and I'm going to do, work on creating flash cards for this and I'm going to work on this paper here. And just set very specific goals for your study session. It's actually going to help you be more efficient and get things done instead of just randomly kind of like wandering around and doing a little bit of this and a little bit of that. Yes?

Do you have, do you think that one is better to like study for a long period of time?

That's an excellent question because that's actually I'm going to talk about that. So that was perfect. And it's good to break your study sessions into smaller parts actually. And the kind of optimum is like about 50 minutes at a time with about a 10 minute break and that's if you're learning new material, working on complex information. Some of those classes you were talking about like anthropology especially when you've got a lot of stuff to memorize, if you do about 50 minutes and then you take a short 10 minute break where you walk around a little bit, get a drink of water, do something like that it will help your brain consolidate the information. If you try to do cramming, you know, you think about cramming in terms of like eating food and if you try to eat everything that you would eat for
a week in one day that would be, you'd be really full, it wouldn't be able to digest.
And the brain is similar. It needs a little bit of time and space to digest. So about 50 minutes. If you're doing notes and memorization just reviewing information that you already have learned then that wouldn't necessarily need to be quite such a long period of time. However, if you're doing a lot of problem solving, if you're doing like math or physics or something that requires a lot of problem solving, you may need a longer period of time and if you're writing a paper of course you definitely need a little bit longer period of time. So, good question and I had the answer. I'm so excited.
Also it's important to study actively when you're working on things. Studies show you remember things best if you have a personal connection to the material. So like with anthropology and, you know, if you can think about any relevant information about the material what you may already have learned about it. I know one instructor that used to teach that class used to get up at 5:00 in the morning, go workout, then he would go to look at newspapers and come up with articles that were relevant that showed the relevance of anthropology, what he was going to talk about that day and he would put articles from that days newspapers. So if you can find ways to try to start making connections it's really helpful. Sometimes it's a little bit harder to do that like with logic and critical thinking you may not always find a personal application but sometimes you can think about reasoning and things like that. It's also really important to do something active with the material. You know, make sure you take notes when you're studying, underline, highlight, talk about it like with a study group or with a tutor or something like that, someone else from you class. That really helps a lot as well. It's also helpful to create visual images. If you make flash cards, if you draw pictures that help you remember the information that's going to help you remember it and bring it up on exams as well. Coloring can also help quite a bit. Like if you sort through information by color like you have a math or physics or something and you have a certain kind of problem, all the momentum problems are highlighted in blue and all the different, you know, some other problems are highlighted in yellow, something like that. So that can help you a lot.
It's also really helpful to ask yourself questions as you study. And that really helps you kind of develop some curiosity about the subject you're studying even if it's not natural curiosity. It's like why is this relevant, how does this relate to what we learned in class and is there something I could use this material for after I graduate and what are the practical applications, all of that. It also helps you focus your mind when you start asking questions. And of course when you're doing any kind of problem solving class math, physics, chemistry anything like that, you have to ask questions to solve problems. What's the next step, what formulas do I need, what information do I need to know to solve this problem? So questions are an extremely important way to focus.
And it's also helpful to kind of think about hidden time. Like carrying pocket work, when you're maybe out and about if you have made flash cards for your information you can carry those with you and if you're waiting in line for your coffee or you have a few minutes before class you can kind of flip through those. And even if you like before class starts instead of chatting with people, maybe take a few minutes to look over your notes from the previous lecture. It helps you focus so that you're more prepared for that day's lecture.

Anything that you can kind of carry with you and we'll talk about doing this over Thanksgiving break in a minute here. Also using mental free time, actually thinking about the information while driving not to the point of being distracted hopefully and that maybe while you're working out you think about it a little bit and vacuuming, showering, whatever just take some time to actually run through oh, this is what we talked about in class today. Doesn't have to be a long period of time but just, you know, thinking about it a little bit can help quite a bit. And sometimes problems get solved, connections get made at the most odd moments. It's like when you're trying to remember the name of something and you can't remember it and suddenly you're in the shower and then bing there it is, you know. So that's like a good thing to keep in mind. Also you can actually use your subconscious to some extent. You can keep a notepad or [inaudible] journal next to your bed so you can write ideas that develop while you sleep. I've taken to actually to keep a journal and I write down every morning just whatever comes into my head and it does help me kind of focus and keep me organized during the day and kind of helps me think about what I want to focus on that day for my specific goals.
And as I mentioned earlier it's really helpful to talk about information. As anybody whose ever tried to help somebody else learn information knows, has anybody ever tried to like explain something to someone else or teach something to someone else? When you do that you know that you remember that material far better because you had to explain it to somebody. So if you can find opportunities to talk about what you're learning in a class you're far more likely to remember it. You can either join a study group, we have tutors here that's what people report is one of the best things about tutoring is that gives them an opportunity to talk about the material. You can talk about what you're learning with friends, family, pets, coworkers, stuffed animals, or yourself in the mirror. Just ways to try to like engage yourself and talk about it openly will help you remember the material. You know, if you ask a question in class you probably find that you remember the answer to that question because you asked that question as opposed to listening to somebody else ask a question. If you ask the question yourself you remember it better.
And it's also helpful to build on what you know. And this is Dr. Patterson upstairs in the counseling center uses this plan. Study day per chapter plus two not including the day of the exam. So that means if you have a four chapter test you start six days prior to the test and you just do a little bit each day instead of cramming all at once which will be less stressful and more effective in terms of remembering the material. And it helps you kind of use the pyramid study. You're reinforcing, you're learning from prior days, you're thinking about what's going to be on the test and he likes to say good test takers are good test makers. If you have a very difficult especially a final exam coming up this is really helpful to keep in mind.
And here's an example of how that might work. So on day one, like a four chapter exam, day one you'd review all the materials just kind of go through everything in a real general way. And figure out, the next day you'd kind of think okay, what do I know and what do I not know? If you have flash cards you can divide them into piles, this I know, this I don't. I used to kind of just make a list of all the different topics with gaps on a piece a paper or on several pieces of paper and then fill in what I already knew about it. And then on the third day I would focus on what I wouldn't know and I would actually fill in that information on, based on from my notes and book and things like that. And then day four you could review all of your note cards or your study sheet and then create a practice exam. Take the practice exam and then you are totally ready to take that test. It sounds like a lot of work but actually it's probably not that much because you're just doing a small amount each day instead of doing a huge amount at the end.
I was kind of thinking about next week, we will be off right? Thanksgiving break. How many plan to go out of town? Okay, all right. Most people have plans. And be realistic about what you're actually going to study. I mean, if you know you have a test when you get back then you probably, you definitely need to study during break at some point. If you have a paper due the Monday you get back obviously you're going to have to some work. But be realistic. I mean it's really important that you do have some rest. We are all really ready for a break. I can see that in all of your faces, I know I'm exhausted, I noticed everybody in here and the student learning center coming in for tutoring looked so tired. Everybody needs a break so you do need a rest. You do need to have some fun but you also have some things that might stress you out when you come back if you don't take care of some of those things as well. So set priorities. That's why we did that little prioritizing exercise at the beginning of this workshop. Set priorities for what's the most important thing that you need to work on.
And then you can put together what I call a study kit. You're more likely to do things if you actually organize them. So you could include like if you have flash cards for a particular course that's difficult or a course you know you have an exam in. Make sure you have some writing material. So you could just put it all in one backpack or one bag or whatever. Maybe one or two of your notebooks from your hardest classes if you know you have a test coming up. And obviously a laptop or flash drives if you are writing papers and need to save information. Maybe a calculator if you need, you know, all of that. Study guides, vocab lists. Anything else, can you think of anything else that you might put into a study kit over break? A what?

iPod.

An iPod, yeah that could be useful if you have study music that's helpful, okay. Or if you have a podcast that you listen to that might be useful. Anything else you can think of? Okay, the idea is to kind of wean this done and make it very small and so that you're not taking home, sometimes people have these good intentions and they take home all their books and then they don't look at any of them because they're just not, you know, they're not going to really time or they have other things going on. So if you take time to actually organize a few things you're far more likely to actually do them. So think about what you would put in your study kit as you this.
So you're actually going to start now. You've already listed all of your current classes and I'd like you to think about this. Do you know what grade you might currently be earning in each of those classes? And I want you to write that down next to that. Nobody needs to see it, we won't look, I'm not going to collect these. So take a minute to write down what grade you think that you are currently earning in each of those classes, okay, right now if the class ended today. It's hard to think about sometimes. And then I want to think about what grade do you want to earn? What grade would you like to get out of the class? Hopefully it's not too different and but it might be a little bit different. So on the back of that card what I'd like you to do is list assignments and exams that you have to do between now and the week after break. So between now and the week after we get back from Thanksgiving break, any papers, any assignments that you have to do, anything like that. Some of you obviously have a lot, others maybe not so much. You're the lucky ones. Although sometimes if you only even have one thing but it's a big thing it may not be so lucky. And so think about when you might, you know, which of these things are most important and what you're going to need to spend the most amount of time on. And think about some of the stuff as you're thinking about next week while you're on break and this week what you can get done. One time I did this workshop and the first time I did this workshop I remember I had a student who was so stressed out and somehow just writing it down on a piece of paper just helped. It was like, oh it wasn't quite as bad as I thought it was so hopefully that's been some of your experience as well.
And another thing you can do to really help with making sure that you stay on track and do what you say you're going to do, tell someone you trust, some friend or relative or someone what you plan to do over break in terms of accomplishing a goal toward being ready for your tests or papers, things like that. Tell somebody and ask them if they're going to check in with you, they'll text you or, you know, message you on Facebook or something just to check in and say hey, did you, have you worked on that yet? Did you get that accomplished yet? Because if you have somebody who's going to do that for you that's going to help you feel much more apt to go ahead and do it because you know you’re contacting me and so I want to be able to tell them that I got that started and I got done with it. And so try this and see if it works especially with the most important thing on your list. And think about also what are you going to do to reward yourself if you follow through on your study goals?

Have an extra piece of pumpkin pie over Thanksgiving break and maybe you do something early in the week, you know, after a couple days off do something early in the week and then you can just travel a little bit more or just relax, you know, watch TV, whatever, just zone out, whatever it is, play video games. That would be my son's. Whatever it is that's going to help reward you. Because your brain is obviously more apt to want to do this if you know that once you're done with it you're going to do something special for yourself.
And so that's basically the workshop. And I'd like to close with this quote, genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. As a result, a genius is often a talented person who's simply done all of his homework. So if basically can stay on track with what you need to do, you're a genius, you're a genius. All right.