



Teaching Students Time Management

By Dr. Erin Bell, Assistant Director of Educational Development

Many college students — particularly those who are in their first year — may find it difficult to effectively manage their time. For such students, college is often the very first period that they are responsible for managing their workload and schedule to complete assignments and coursework. Without the daily meetings and check-ins that high school provides, it can be easy to miss work, procrastinate, and fall behind in their coursework.

In addition to attending classes and completing homework, students may also be balancing additional responsibilities including work, caretaking, and athletics, which can make planning daily schedules even more of a challenge. In some cases, students fail to submit homework or major assessments on time and request an extension from faculty, but in worst-case scenarios, students may fail to turn in the assignment at all, which can then set a negative pattern for the semester and ultimately impact persistence and retention.

According to a survey co-sponsored by Civitas Learning and the Center for Generational Kinetics, students view time management as one of the top challenges to finishing their degrees (Nazerian, 2018). Student opinions on the matter are supported by current research.

Anjali and Brunha (2020) note that “poor time management behaviours (*sic*) for example, not apportioning time appropriately or last-minute cramming for tests, have been as often as possible examined as a wellspring of stress and helpless scholastic execution” (p. 2333). Though a common sense approach suggests that the more time students dedicate to studying, reviewing, and reflecting the better their performance in a course will be, students may often fail to study for enough time (or study effectively enough) to be successful in a course.

The question remains, then, what can faculty do in their courses to help foster better time management skills?



Effective time management skills have a direct correlation to success so faculty and support staff must ensure that students learn and use those skills. There are several assignments and techniques that faculty and support staff can deploy to help students create and manage their schedules effectively.

Erica M. Graze, M.A.T., Assistant Director, Student Success Center (SSC), provides a roadmap for success right from the start of the semester. “I have my students take inventory of their use of time for about a week. I would also suggest that the students attach the amount of time a task/activity would take (like a job, morning routine, dinner, study groups, etc.). Next, I would have the students plot their activity in a planner or electronic calendar. I would have them start with their classes [including assignments, quizzes, exams, and other class responsibilities] then work or practice time, study time, and personal and social time.”

According to Graze, the experts at the SSC suggest that students allow for at least 15 hours dedicated to studying alone. “We know some students must work or have other responsibilities,” explains Graze. “I would also let students know that some classes may require more study time than others. “A few of my students are utilizing the Outlook calendar and Google calendar to plot their assignments, notes Graze. “Some say that it took a while to complete but it was worth it. An athlete mentioned that she likes the reminders

that she gets before classes.”

There are many scheduling applications available for use, but the Microsoft Office suite in use at Detroit Mercy also provides a calendar feature that students may find useful for creating such a roadmap.

Faculty can input due dates to all assignments in Blackboard to ensure that those assignments will be displayed in a student’s Blackboard calendar, shown below. Providing this mechanism may also help students visualize what their workload is in each course.

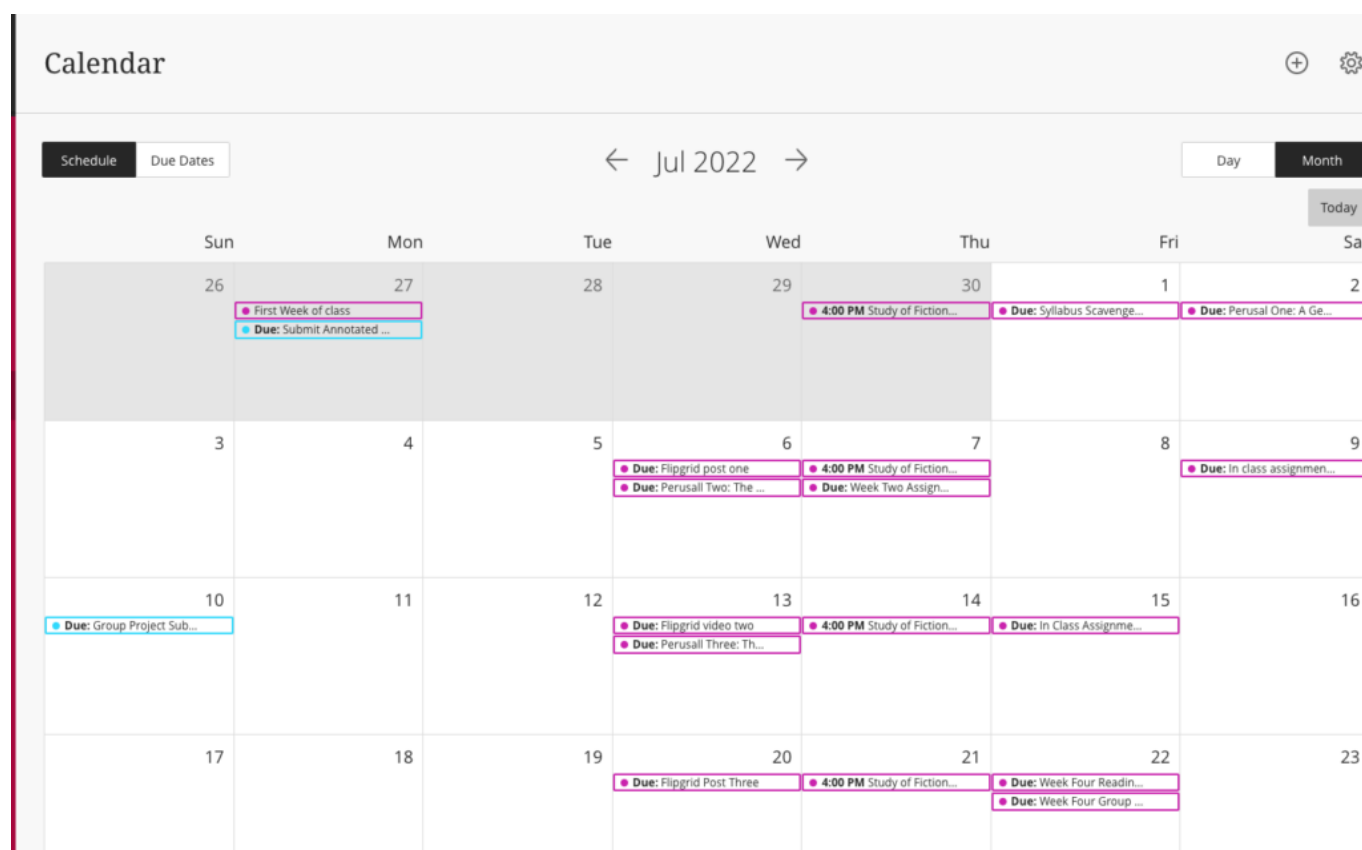


Image of Blackboard Assignment Calendar.

Sr. Sarah Ruth Foster, RSM, Academic Counselor, and Professional Mentor at the Student Success Center (SSC), employs similar tactics as those mentioned by Graze. “I have students fill out a weekly time management sheet to use throughout the semester. It includes class times, work times, and study hours equal to the number of credits carried per semester. If they are carrying 12 credits, 12 study hours must be included in their weekly schedule. I suggest study hours be put in before dinner as much as possible. In my experience, students that study the same number of credit hours that they carry are always successful.”

Next, Sr. Sarah Ruth Foster encourages students to transfer assignments, readings, papers,

quizzes, exams, and presentations from their syllabi to a daily planner for the semester. “That way,” notes Foster, “they can see what each week requires of them at a glance instead of having to leaf through four separate syllabi. Again I have found this to be quite successful for students.”

In her *33 Simple Strategies for Faculty: A Week-By-Week Resource for Teaching First-Year and First-Generation Students*, Lisa Nunn, professor of sociology and the director of the Center for Educational Excellence at University of San Diego, suggests that a time log assignment can help students develop better time management skills. This assignment could be incorporated into courses across the disciplines and customized (as detailed below) to help underscore learning objectives in a class.

Nunn recommends that students complete a two- or three-day time log which will provide the means for reflection, either on their own or with their instructor. As Nunn states, faculty can then share what good time management looks like and be transparent about their struggles with finding the time to complete everything.

Time Log Project extensions:

Depending on your field of study, several ways to create time management logs could become the impetus for an active learning assignment.

Students in STEM courses could compile data from logs; create spreadsheets or PIVOT charts in Excel and perform data analysis.

Students in psychology courses could research how time management can impact success, retention, and persistence.

Students in English courses could write a short research essay regarding time management.

Time Log Assignment Extensions Across the Disciplines:

Assign students a multi-media assignment in which they share and highlight time management strategies; have them interview experts in their fields or from other disciplines about how to best manage time.

Have students take [time management quiz](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_88.htm) and then discuss results in pairs. Groups can brainstorm ideas for better strategies to balance schedules

https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_88.htm

Build planning activities into the schedule. Create low-stakes engagement assignments for following up the time log to help students stay on track.

References:

Anjali, A. K. and Brundha. M.P. (2020). A Survey on Time Management Among Students of Higher Education. *Bioscience Biotechnology Research Communications*, 13(4), 2332-2340.

Nunn, L.M. (2019). *33 Simple Strategies for Faculty: A Week-By-Week Resource for Teaching First-Year and First-Generation Students*. Rutgers University Press.

Nazerian, T. (2018 July 12). Students See Anxiety and Time Management Among Top Challenges to Finishing Degrees. *EdSurge*.

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2018-07-12-new-survey-students-see-anxiety-and-time-management-among-top-challenges-to-finishing-degrees>