Almost Midterms!
By Rachel Neumeier

How is your semester turning out?
It sure seems as though this semester is going by fast. Can you believe we’re already nearly at midterms? Spring break is coming up in the second week of March! That’s right around the corner.

So this may be the right time to pause and take a good look at how the semester is going. Are you satisfied with all your classes so far? If you’re earning all B’s and A’s, that’s great! But if some of your grades need to come up, then you might want to think about what you could do differently. The longer you wait, the harder it is to turn a class around.

EXCEL Awards $15,000 in Supplemental Grant Aid
By Matt Sopko

Congratulations are in order for 25 EXCEL students who were awarded Supplemental Grant Aid of $600 each.

It was surprising to discover that only 35 students applied for their share of the $15,000. The money is made available by the government to be directly awarded to EXCEL students, but you can’t get it if you don’t apply. The governmental regulations required that students must be receiving a Pell grant and have freshman or sophomore standing with remaining (financial) need of $587 or more. The EXCEL program required students to have an updated SAP.
Social Class and Educational Opportunity

We are the working class. We like baseball and bowling, not ballet and opera. We like meat and potatoes, not vichysoise and caviar. We like being the working class; we are not interested in changing our social identity. Besides, what could be more important than our work ethic? Obviously, I am referring to the sordid topic of social class.

But we don’t have social class in the U.S., right? This is the land of opportunity and if we don’t like our lot in life, all we have to do is pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, right? ... Not necessarily.

Everyone knows that being in the upper class is good and being in the lower class is bad. However, in America, the effects of social class are much more subtle, especially when it comes to the middle range of socioeconomic statuses. For example, how does the probability of educational success differ for members of the middle class (manager or white-collar) versus the working class (technician or blue-collar)?

Working class students are more likely to come from a home where neither parent has a college degree. It is well established that students who have at least one parent with a 4-year college degree outperform First Generation (FG) college students on a wide variety of measures of academic achievement, e.g., grades and persistence. Investigation of factors that may underlie this FG Effect suggests at least three likely sources through which disadvantage may accrue for FG college students. These factors include limited financial resources, limited academic preparedness, and limitations in various non-cognitive factors, e.g., academic mind set, perseverance, and social and emotional skills.

Pell Grants, EXCEL Scholarships, and EXCEL/SSS Supplemental Grant Aid are available to address

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The middle of the semester is a good time to look at where you are now and where you want to be in May. If you need to improve your grades in a class, then often the first thing to do is look at how you’re using your time in the classroom.

Classroom attendance correlates with course outcomes. To put that another way: students who attend class most of the time usually get better grades. This isn’t a surprise because it’s like everything else: what you get out of a class depends on what you put into it.

But what if you’re taking a class in a subject that just makes your eyes glaze over with boredom? Maybe your instructor lectures in a soothing monotone that just puts you right to sleep. How can you handle boredom in a class if the subject isn’t really your cup of tea?

There is only one main key to making your classroom time useful even if you’re tired or bored:

MAKE UP YOUR MIND TO PAY ATTENTION.
Passive listening is what you do when you watch TV. It is the wrong way to listen when you are in the classroom! In the classroom, you should be making decisions all the time you are listening. You decide whether you really understood what the teacher just said. You decide whether to write it down. You decide whether it’s important. You decide how it fits in with the rest of the lecture.

If you understand a lecture, then it’s much easier to tell what’s important, much easier to take clear, neat notes, and much easier to remember the material. It’s a terrible waste of time to sit through a lecture without learning anything – If you do that, then you just have to learn all the material later, when the test is about to land on you like a ton of bricks. If you actually
The Tutor’s Corner
By Rodney Wilson

The 10 (Not So) Secrets of Success

Doing well in one’s classes comes down to many factors, including these (not so) secret ten:

1. **Showing up.** Missing a class is serious business. It puts the student at risk. Miss a class only when you must. Get to class on time, too.

2. **Reading assignments.** Sure, sometimes a reading assignment is a bit on the dry side. Do it anyway. Instructors assign readings for a reason.

3. **Completing homework.** Don’t neglect it. Don’t wait until the last minute to complete it.

4. **Writing early.** When you have a writing assignment, tackle it early. Don’t wait until the night before it’s due. Getting started early is always the way to go.

5. **Studying for exams.** Review notes. Review readings. But don’t study in an attempt to cram so much stuff into your brain that it all flies out your ears the moment the exam is over. Instead, study for life. To learn. To grow. It’ll show in your grades.

6. **Reviewing exams.** Before turning in an exam, review it one more time. It’s easy to miss a question due to reading it incorrectly. Errors are better caught before the exam is turned in.

7. **Sleeping appropriately.** Don’t study all night for an exam. Get a good night’s sleep instead. On exam night and every night.

8. **Checking email.** The only way instructors will communicate with you (out of class) is via email. Same with the college. Check your email at least once a day. Twice a day is even better.

9. **Contacting instructors.** If you have a question or concern, bring it up with the instructor. Teachers love to help those who are taking an initiative. Be the student who stands out by working hard and taking seriously all of your classes.

10. **Scheduling tutoring.** If you have a problem/assignment/exam that seems insurmountable, make an appointment with an EXCEL tutor. We are here for you!

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**EXCEL/SSS Mission**
To provide the support necessary for each EXCEL/SSS student to reach his/her own level of academic excellence and succeed in achieving a postsecondary education.

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**EXCEL/SSS Web Pages**
More information about EXCEL/Student Support Services is available at www.MineralArea.edu. Click on the **Students** tab, then **Student Resources**, then **EXCEL/SSS**. Links are at the bottom of the first page:
- Advisory Services - Tutoring Services - Staff - Economic Literacy - www.Cashcourse.org
- Student Memo - Newsletter - Scholarship Memo & Application

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**Final Exam Schedule**
Click on the Mineral Area College homepage link below to go to the Final Exam schedule.

[http://www.mineralarea.edu](http://www.mineralarea.edu) click on
- Faculty and Staff then click on
- Faculty/Staff Resources then under
- Final Exam Schedule click on
- Spring/Summer 2014
the limited financial resources of working class students; tutoring is available to help with academic preparedness. But how do members of the working class address deficits in the non-cognitive areas such as academic mind set, perseverance, and social and emotional skills? One word… advising.

Rodney Wilson and I are ready, willing, and able to talk with you about these and any other issues that you may want to discuss. We are available by appointment or on a walk-in basis, Monday through Friday, from 7:30 am to 4:30 pm.

**Grant Aid**  
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on file and a minimum of 7 face-to-face tutoring or advisement contacts. Fifteen of the students who applied did not meet these requirements. EXCEL will again be awarding $15,000 in grant aid funds in the spring of '16. The same requirements will be in place.

You must:

1. Submit an application
2. Be a Pell grant recipient for the 2015-2016 academic year
3. Have a remaining need equal to the minimum award amount or more
4. Have freshman or sophomore standing
5. Attend at least 7 face-to-face advisement or tutoring sessions
6. Have your SAP updated during the summer or fall of 2015.

Make sure that you are eligible for SSS Supplemental Grant Aid in 2016!
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understand the lectures, then you have much less work to do as the test approaches.

There are two techniques that are really helpful if you have trouble understanding the lectures. You use one before the lecture and the other afterwards.

The first is: READ THE TEXTBOOK BEFORE LECTURE. This is especially important if the teacher goes too fast for you. Read ahead even if your teacher says that he isn’t really using the book. Even if he isn’t, you can, and it will help a whole lot as you try to learn and understand and remember the course material. (If you fall asleep when reading, then take notes out of the book to help yourself stay awake.)

The second is: REVIEW, CLARIFY, AND SUMMARIZE YOUR NOTES AFTER LECTURE.

EXCEL’s Challenge Problem for February

How strong is the gravitational pull of the Sun on a person standing on the Earth? To calculate the gravitational force between two objects we use Newton’s law of universal gravitation:

\[ F = G \frac{m_1 m_2}{r^2} \]

where \( F \) is the force given in units of Newtons, \( G \) is the universal gravitational constant and is approximately 6.67428 \times 10^{-11}, \( m_1 \) and \( m_2 \) are the masses of two objects in kilograms, and \( r \) is the distance between the center of mass of the two objects in meters. The mass of the Sun is approximately 1.989 \times 10^{30} \text{ kg}, and the distance from the center of the Sun to the Earth’s surface is approximately 1.5 \times 10^{11} \text{ meters}.

Problem: What is the acceleration on a person due to the Sun’s gravity? (Hint: Use \( F = ma \), where \( F \) is force, \( m \) is mass, and \( a \) is acceleration). Compare your result to the acceleration of a person due to the Earth’s gravity which is approximately 9.8 \text{ m/s}^2 at the Earth’s surface.
EXCEL/Student Support Services at Mineral Area College is a federally funded TRiO program. It is funded at $1,452,580 for five years. Mineral Area College’s total contribution is approximately 2.55% of the total budget. EXCEL/SSS serves 200 students.

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