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The Rinella Learning Center Newsletter

• learning •



INNOVATION »

Workshops & Webinar

Online workshops for students and a webinar for parents and families.

To compliment the existing in-person workshop series, the Rinella Learning Center staff released new online workshops to promote positive and effective study behaviors. These workshops cover standard topics like time management, test taking, and note-taking strategies, but also address topics like developing problem-solving skills, how to effectively use office hours, and stress management. Engaging multiple learning styles, the workshops employ interactive media including webcasts, apps, and inventories.

In collaboration with Parent and Family Programs, the Rinella Learning Center also hosted a webinar on how to support students academically during the second half of the semester.



Professionalism 101

New collaboration to support graduate students

A new Graduate School initiative is underway to provide support and build community among Miami University graduate students – and the Rinella Learning Center is at the forefront!

This new initiative, titled “Professionalism 101,” brings together resources across campus through a workshop series designed to help graduate students in their academic, personal, and professional journeys.

Learning Specialists Dr. Ana Baratta and Tory Lowe led the inaugural Professionalism 101 workshop, focused on helping international graduate students thrive in Oxford. Over 25 graduate students were in attendance for the event to discuss

expectations for graduate study in the U.S. Such was the success of the event that Baratta and Lowe were invited to deliver two additional sessions. In September, they presented “Time Management for Graduate Students,” where they discussed managing one’s varied professional roles as a graduate student and prioritizing tasks associated with those roles.

October’s session, “Critical Reading Strategies for Graduate Students,” allowed workshop attendees to examine different reading strategies and practiced them on reading selections from diverse academic

UNDERSTANDING EXPECTATIONS, MANAGING PROFESSIONAL ROLES, AND CRITICAL READING

disciplines. Baratta and Lowe welcome the opportunity to expand RLC’s learning support services to the graduate student community. From their own years of graduate study, the duo bring stories, anecdotes, and perspectives that promote graduate school success. Plans are already underway for RLC to contribute additional workshops for the Professionalism 101 series in Spring 2019. The Rinella Learning Center will present on “How to Teach Effectively,” part two of “Thriving as an International Student,” and “Combating Imposter Syndrome” over the course of spring semester.

Supplemental Instruction

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is targeted and proactive academic support for students taking historically challenging courses at Miami University.

Specialized Review. SI offers students a chance to review concepts and content with a trained peer SI leader. Supplemental Instruction improves student performance by teaching students how to integrate course content with reasoning and study strategies.

SI Leaders. All SI leaders have taken the targeted course at Miami University, typically earned an A in the course, and received a recommendation from faculty to serve as an SI leader. SI leaders attend a majority of class sessions with students, work with the faculty member of the course to develop relevant review materials, and offer at least two review sessions per week. SI leaders use collaborative learning techniques and model appropriate study behaviors.

Expansion. To provide the most effective academic support, the Rinella Learning Center has placed special emphasis on the expansion of Supplemental Instruction since 2014. A comprehensive statistical analysis of Miami's SI program found a strong correlation between students attending SI sessions and earning a grade of A or B in the course.



KC Cottrell, RLC graduate assistant and EDT 110 instructor

Managing Time

One of the biggest obstacles for students is time management. Among all my students, through coaching and EDT 110, we do a time management activity. I created a fake student (Jane) with a class schedule, and a list of things that she needs/wants to do during the day. I then create large post-it notes with times on them from 6AM-11PM. Each group of students must determine how to schedule "Jane". Once they create the schedule, we discuss the choices they have made for her schedule. Through this, students can see what needs to be prioritized. In addition, they get an idea of how to dedicate their time during the day. My students found it very helpful to see the day broken down into hours and seeing the list of things that need to be done. Students also engaged in critical thought of determining what should take priority in their lives and determining the things they want to do, versus the things they have to do.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD»

Associate Director: Presents and Publishes

Gary Ritz, Associate Director of Rinella Learning Center, attended and presented at the National College Learning Center Association (NCLCA) national conference in Niagara, NY this last October.

Gary's presentation was related to best practices for empowering international students with their academics in higher education. He attended other sessions and brought back valuable materials and ideas for the staff.

Also this past October, a book was release which contained a chapter co-authored by Gary. The book is titled *Learning Centers in the 21st Century: A Modern Guide for Learning Assistance Professionals in Higher Education*. The chapter co-authored by Gary was about tutor training models, collaborative learning, learning styles and guided practice activities.



Preparing for Final Exams

How can students most effectively manage the stress of Final Exams week? The Rinella Learning Center has several tips to help students maximize their achievement during exams.



Knowledge is Power.

Some classes have cumulative exams (exams covering all the material from the entire semester), some classes have term exams (exams covering material only from the last test), and some classes have papers or research projects. Students should ask themselves the following questions: Do they know which classes they have exams for? Have they met with their professor during office hours, calculated their grade, and checked Miami's official Final Exam Schedule?

We recommend gathering as much knowledge as possible about Final Exams week

week beforehand, and consolidating it into one place. This will allow students to have a quick, easy guide to their exams ahead of time. Generally, exams are about 2 hours long. Some exams may fall at times that are outside normal class periods. Keep in mind, too, that students may be able to change their schedule either if two or more exam times conflict, or if they have an excessive number of exams in one day.

Study Smarter, Not Harder.

We recommend beginning the study process for final exams about two weeks ahead of time. Equally as important is how the student studies: rather than spending hours the night before a test staying up late and cramming, we recommend periodic 30-45 minute study blocks throughout the two-week period prior to the exam. During those times, the student should try to accomplish active learning tasks: writing summaries, creating study guides, working through sample problems, and testing themselves. These active learning tasks allow students to interact with the information they've gained, rather than simply re-read it or review it.



Self-Testing is Key.

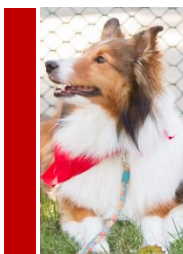
The most important study tool is testing oneself. Students should recreate the test-taking environment as much as possible before the test, as this will lessen their anxiety and help them feel more prepared during the actual exam. When self-testing, try to solve practice problems, write down key concepts from memory, or complete a study guide **WITHOUT HELP** from notes or textbooks. After completing the self-testing exercise, refer back to the original resources to check for correct and incorrect answers. This process helps identify gaps in knowledge while also reinforcing already learned information.

Use Test Time Wisely.

Many students walk into a testing environment and dive right in without being mindful about their test-taking practices. We suggest beginning by surveying the entire test – what type of questions are on it, how long is it, and where are most of the points allocated? Reviewing the test as a whole can defuse unexpected surprises later during the test period. We also recommend “data dumping”: writing down all the important formulae, theories, and essential problem-solving information at the beginning of the test, so the student can refer back to it as needed. This is especially helpful for science and math exams. Students should be mindful of multiple-choice and true/false questions that use quantifying words like “always,” “never,” and “sometimes,” as these occasionally change the meaning of the question – and the correct answer. Essay questions tend to take more time and carry more weight in the overall test grade, so students should prioritize such questions accordingly.

Students feel increased stress during finals

It may help students to learn and practice relaxation techniques, so that they can address anxiety in productive ways. In addition to relaxation techniques, students should utilize positive self-talk and affirmations to help them feel more empowered and capable of success during Final Exam week. Remembering previous successes and/or unique talents or abilities can do much to build confidence.



Dog Day at Finals

To help students manage their stress during final exams week, the Student Counseling Center will be having pet therapy available in the Shriver Center on Tuesday, December 11th from 1:00-4:00pm.

final thoughts

Learning in college can be a challenging process. Not only are students asked to acquire and comprehend vast amounts of new and complex knowledge, they are also challenged to critically evaluate their assumptions, beliefs, and identities.

The goal for a college learning center, therefore, is to provide students with strategies for understanding and retaining new knowledge and to help them develop the capacity to reflect on their experience, to critically evaluate their view of the world, and to develop an internal voice that guides them throughout their educational journey at Miami University.

The Rinella Learning Center strives to create safe and supportive learning environments and services where students can securely engage in this process. The Rinella Learning Center recognizes and celebrates the educational journeys of all students across intersections of race, ethnicity, age, ability, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic class, social class, and national origin.

Contact us at **513.529.8741**

www.miamioh.edu/learning



MIAMI UNIVERSITY

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