Greetings!

Here at the ASC, we wanted to create a packet for you which could be used either with an academic coach or by yourself. Within this packet, you will be evaluating your current habits and how they affect your productivity as well as learning techniques on how to be more productive. It is designed to be completed and utilized whenever you feel like your productivity is not where you want it to be. This packet contains a variety of self-reflection as well as resources to help you become a more productive student.

The General Topics Include:

- Goal Setting
- Motivation
- Health and Stress
- Time Management and Prioritization
- Environment
- General Productivity Tips
Goal Setting and Motivation

SMART Goals
Smart goals bring structure and accountability to your goals and objectives. You could vaguely say “I want to do well this semester” or “I want a good job when I graduate”, but these “goals”, as good as they may sound, lack clear milestones to tell you how to achieve these goals. Instead, you are going to want to set SMART goals, standing for: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely.

A SMART goal explains a behavior using the following components:

**Specific** - A SMART goal identifies a specific action or event that will take place

**Measurable** - The description of a SMART goal and the outcome should be quantifiable

**Achievable** - A SMART goal should be attainable given available resources

**Realistic** - A SMART goal should require you to stretch some beyond your normal routine and regular abilities, but allow for likely success

**Timely** - A SMART goal should state the time period in which it will be accomplished

Write down 4 goals and ensure they are SMART with the checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motivation

Motivation is the force that pushes us forward towards our goals; it’s our drive. Without motivation, goals would not be achieved. Motivation is a very individual topic, so it’s very important to get to know yourself and discover what motivates you. Here are some questions for you to think about to evaluate your motivation:

1. **Do you get intimidated and discouraged by large goals? If so, what happens as a result?**

   - If you do, try setting very small goals and achieve them one after another. Many people like checklists because it gives them a sense of accomplishment when they check something off. Also, only focus on one thing at a time. When it comes to goals, you can only work on one at a time.

2. **Do you have a role model that you can get inspired and motivated by? If so, who is it and how does this help you?**

   - If not, find someone. Inspiration comes from those who have achieved what you want to achieve, so find a role model that you can take notes and learn from.

3. **How excited are you about what you are doing? Why?**

   - Get excited about your studies! Students, especially early in their collegiate career, change majors often. Find something that you are passionate and excited about. The work will then be much more pleasurable to do.

4. **Does anyone else know about your goals? How could this help?**

   - If nobody but yourself knows about your goals, then tell some people about it. These can be your family, friends, or colleagues. If nobody knows your goals, then nobody will be there checking in with you along the way. If people do, then they can hold you accountable and on track to reach your goals.
5. Do you think about how difficult something is to achieve rather than the benefits of achieving it?

   How does this affect your productivity?

   - Try to be optimistic about your goals. Take energy and motivation from the benefits of reaching your goals.

6. Do you try to deal with challenging times by yourself? Why?

   - You are not alone. Use the support system around you (family, friends, colleagues, and mentors) to lean on when you need help. A little chat with a friend can be the difference between you getting back to work refocused with a new attitude and giving up.
Taking Care of Your Body

Your health has a huge effect on your productivity. If your body does not get enough rest or is not fueled enough, you will feel sluggish and lack energy. In order to perform at your best, you need to be getting enough sleep and eating enough from day to day to keep up with your endeavors. Let’s evaluate your health and see how we can improve it to maximize productivity:

- On average, how many hours of sleep do you get a night? (Circle One)
  - 0-2
  - 2-4
  - 4-6
  - 6-8
  - 8-10
  - 10+

It is recommended that young adults get 7-9 hours a night. Sleep is very important because it affects your memory, concentration, mood, immune system, and much more. If you are not getting the recommended amount of sleep each night, here are some tips that could help:

1. Create and stick to a sleep schedule
   a. If you are consistent with your sleep schedule, it will be easy to fall asleep when you need to, and it ensures a full night of sleep to fuel your next day.

2. Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual
   a. A bedtime ritual is a great way to wind down at the end of the day. Whether it is meditating or reading a book, your ritual prepares the body for sleep and makes it easier to fall asleep.

3. Make your room perfect
   a. If you have a comfortable mattress and pillow and the temperature and lighting in your room are just as you like it, you will be able to fall asleep much easier as well as get a higher quality night of rest.

4. Be aware of sleep stealers like alcohol and caffeine
   a. These substances make it harder to go to bed at night and result in a lighter night of sleep because they are stimulants.

5. Try to limit technology before bed
   a. The blue light emitted by screens restrains the body’s production of melatonin, the hormone that controls your body sleep/wake cycle.
Stress

Stress is our body’s way of creating energy faced with a perceived danger. In some situations, stress can help our bodies react to emergencies with more strength and efficiency. Unfortunately, our bodies can’t always tell when we are in an emergency or not. Therefore, we may feel stress for things that are not a danger to our survival, such as taking a test.

Too much stress can lead to unclear thinking, mood fluctuations, and poor eating habits; but “not enough” stress can lead to unproductivity since nothing is motivating us to accomplish something. It is helpful to identify your personal stressors and react when you feel your body increasing in stress.

Stress is a hard thing to deal with and also differs greatly from a person to person basis. Here are some tips on how to avoid and deal with stress in your life:

1. **Avoid unnecessary stress** - Some stress is unnecessary and avoidable! Look at some of these tips to learn how to avoid the stress that does not need to happen in the first place. When you are already stretched too thin, say “no”. Do your best to limit contact with individuals that stress you out. Take control of your environment by knowing what stresses you out and eliminating them. Analyze your responsibilities and eliminate unnecessary tasks on your to-do list.

2. **Alter the situation** - Figure out what you can do to change things so the stressor doesn’t present itself in the future by changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life. Try expressing your feelings instead of bottling them but because that only leads to additional stress. Be willing to compromise with people to find a happy middle ground. Be more assertive and deal with problems head-on. Manage your time better so you have enough time to get tasks done and aren't blindsided by unknown assignments and deadlines.

3. **Adapt to the stressor** - You can adapt to a stressful situation and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude. Try to reframe problems when you can to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Take the perspective of stressful situations and look at the big picture; will it really be that important in the long run? Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection and adjust your
standards. When stress is getting you down, focus on the positive and take a moment to reflect on all of the things you appreciate in your life.

4. **Accept the things you can’t change** - Some stressors are unavoidable. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. In order to do so, try to not control the uncontrollable; rather than stressing out over things out of your control, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems. Also, when you are facing major challenges, try to look at them as an opportunity for personal growth. Also, try to share your feelings as much as possible. Talks to a trusted friend or therapist can do wonders in unwinding and dealing with your stressors. Finally, learn to forgive and accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes.

5. **Make time for fun and relaxation** - If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you will be in a better place to handle life’s stressors when they inevitably come. Try to set aside relaxation time by including rest and relaxation into your daily schedule. Spend time with positive people in your life who support you and help you with the negative effects of stress. Make time every day to do something you enjoy doing whether it’s stargazing, play the piano, or watching tv. Also try to incorporate healthy ways to relax and recharge in your days like going for a walk, calling a friend, working out, playing with a pet, reading a book, taking a long bath, etc.

6. **Adopt a healthy lifestyle** - You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health. Do your best to exercise regularly because physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Eat a healthy diet; this will allow you to be energized, mindful, and balanced all day. Try to reduce caffeine and sugar these temporary “highs” that they provide often end with a crash in mood and energy. Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs. They may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. And finally, get enough sleep. Adequate sleep fuels your mind and body. Feeling tired will also increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.
Time Management

Time management plays a pivotal role in a student’s productivity. Productivity measures how much work you get done in a given time period, so if you cannot manage your time and your tasks, then your productivity will be greatly affected. We still start off with an analysis of your current time management:

1. The time of day I am most alert is:

2. The time of day I am sleepiest is:

3. I am distracted by:
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

4. To decrease distraction I will:
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

5. I prefer:
   _____ Short intense study sessions
   _____ Longer study sessions

6. Ideally I should wake up at___________ and go to sleep at _____________.

7. To reward myself for getting tasks done I will:

8. Goals to improve my time management are:
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

It is good to know how you function as you can use this information to efficiently manage your time and be more productive overall. There are tangible tools you can use, such as a planner or a calendar, to manage your time on a day to day basis. Here are some handouts (see next page) that you might find beneficial and are available at any time on our website!
Semester at a Glance
This is the semester at a glance. This tool has the whole semester laid out on one sheet of paper. This is great for keeping track of assignments, projects, test, etc. The tool in this handout is rather small, but you can stop by the ASC whenever we are open and get this on a large sheet of paper free of charge!

Weekly Schedule
This handout will allow you to have a birds-eye-view of your average week. It will include everything from your classes, work schedule, meals, non-negotiable events, and even sleep! It will give you the ability to see all available time you could use for homework and studying. You could fill it out completely and then make photocopies, one for each week of the semester and plan your next week out every Sunday night!
Prioritization

Much like time management and every other skill in this packet, they all play into your productivity, and prioritization is no exception. **Prioritization** is being able to rank tasks based off importance. This is very beneficial because it gives students a starting point when you are completing these task. Most importantly, prioritization helps when you are overloaded with work because you are able to spend time on the most important tasks, resulting in getting the most relevant tasks done first. In order to evaluate your tasks, it is essential that you understand importance and urgency.

**Importance** - In the context of college, importance could be a task that is worth more points or maybe even a task in a class that you really need the points in

**Urgency** - In college, urgency will be the timeline of the task. So if you have an assignment due tomorrow versus an assignment that is due in 3 days, the assignment due tomorrow will be more urgent.

So when you are prioritizing your work, you should prioritize the tasks that are both important AND urgent first. We have many time management tools on our website that has a prioritization integrated into it. Here is an example of one of the tools that you can find on our website:

**Time Management: Weekly Task Sheet**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Activity/Task</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Time Est.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Activity/Task</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Time Est.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Activity/Task</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Time Est.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Midweek check: As you approach the middle of the week, evaluate what tasks you have remaining above versus those you planned to complete during the second half of the week. Which tasks are more urgent/higher priority?*
Environment

Believe it or not, your environment has a large impact on your productivity. Some people can get a lot of work done studying in their room, but other people will get distracted and be very unproductive. The individual’s preferred environment is different from person to person, so it is important to know what kinds of environments that you are more productive in so you can set yourself up for success. Here are some study environments on and around campus that you can consider depending on what kind of environment you prefer:

Like a space that is very quiet for studying?

- Periodical Room @ Parks Library
- Parks Library individual study cubicles along walls
- Dorm commons (depending on time)
- Booths in basement of Biorenewables (depending on time)

Prefer a space that is around other people with average noise?

- Coffee shops (on and off campus)
- 3rd Floor Parks Library
- Memorial Union
- College of Design Atrium

There are countless more study locations on campus, but it is important to explore different locations and find one that works for you. Consider even the smallest details like seating, lighting, and temperature because they all affect the location. Generally, if you go to an environment that you only go to for getting work done, you will be much more productive than if you study in your room where you could very easily take a nap, watch tv, make food, etc.
Outside of the many subject areas that has been covered in this packet, there are copious other things you can do to increase your productivity. Consider trying the following:

- **Prepare for your day the night before**
  - People tend to have less energy to get things done right when they get up. As a result, people, especially college students, occasionally skip breakfast, forget to bring things, etc. If you take a few minutes every night to prepare for the following day (prep breakfast, load coffee maker, layout clothes, pack bag, etc.) then you will have a much calmer morning and be more prepared to take on the day.

- **Turn your phone off and leave it in another room**
  - Many people get distracted by their cell phones when they are trying to get things done. If you are one of these people that can be easily distracted by your phone, then turn it off and put it in another room to completely eliminate the temptation and the distraction itself.

- **Work in a cool place**
  - Have you ever noticed how you feel groggy and sluggish in a hot or “cozy” room? Try turning the temperature down or moving to a cooler place. This is an easy way to focus your mind and body and ensure that you remain alert and focused when you are studying.

- **Develop a morning ritual**
  - Some people kick off their day by meditating, pouring a cold glass of water, or even working out. You should develop some sort of sequence to start your morning because this tiny routine signals to your brain that it’s time to get into the right mindset to take on your day. This helps you overcome a lack of motivation and get things done even when you don’t feel like it.

- **Take advantage of gaps in your schedule**
  - Do you have gaps in between classes? If you do, consider using them to get work done instead of taking a nap or watching Netflix. Once you are already on campus and your brain is active and ready to learn and work, it is beneficial to take advantage of this mindset to get work done on campus. Additionally, since you have kept your mind active in that gap, you will get more out of your next class after your gap.

- **Fragment your tasks**
  - If you have a large task such as studying for a test or writing an essay, instead of writing down that you need to “study for ___” or “write essay”, break that task down into smaller checkpoints. This presents an otherwise daunting task in a much digestible way. Additionally, this gives you a starting point and you can see your progression as you are working on the task. This progression will give you a sense of accomplishment that will motivate you to keep pushing forward.