The End of An Era - But Now What?

by Kenny Ward, Centennial ARM

As the semester comes to a close, many students are likely coming to the surreal realization that they are about to enter their final semester of college. For seniors, graduation is fast approaching; however, there are still a few months for everyone to deal with the unending anxiety and stress. Within these months, a lot of people will probably be forming college bucket lists and trying to use up every last second to savor the fleeting final days of college. While most of us have probably muttered—or maybe screamed at the top of our lungs—about our frustration with school and desire to finally get out of here, there is no doubt an unsettling permanence to the idea of graduation. To add to this emotional turmoil, students realize that they aren’t only having to think about leaving, but also about what exactly they plan to do after they leave.

The Career Development Center at Western can be a very useful tool in weighing your options for post-grad plans and employment. Students who visit are able to discuss potential careers that have a strong relation to their major, but also just general ideas about growing career fields and potential careers that are often overlooked. Other options to consider are some that may seem unconventional, but can be not only enjoyable, but very beneficial in the long run.

The first of these ideas involves Western’s International Student Exchange Program, or as you might have heard it called: ISEP. This program offers Western students a chance to study in a foreign country for a semester. While a lot of people consider partaking, not everyone gets a chance to. If you’ve gone through all of your time at Western without having taken advantage of this program, you could always consider sticking around for an extra semester. The cost is relatively equivalent to the cost of a semester’s tuition with the university, so if funds are not a major issue, this can be a great way to expand your global horizons and have a fun and educational inter-cultural experience.

The other somewhat “unconventional” idea is one that often has a stigma attached to it: taking a year off. This year off can be between graduation and looking into graduate school or even just before really hunkering down. Continued on page 3
New Semester Resolutions!

For some, November means three days off for Thanksgiving break. For others, November means finding out how you did on that math midterm. November may even mean a new major. Whichever mindset you are in, November definitely means that there is only one full month left of the fall semester!

As we approach the conclusion of the fall 2014 semester, one important thing you should do is reflect. Evaluate the choices you made during this semester. Congratulate yourself on the successes—maybe all of that studying paid off! At the same time, however, reflect on your not-so-successful moments—maybe you took on too much by taking seven classes. By examining both experiences, you’ll learn a lot about yourself and how you can improve for the spring semester.

The next step is effective goal setting. While you may have big plans for the semester and the rest of your time in school, “a goal not written is only a wish”. The best way to achieve any goal is to plan. One format suggested by the book Peer Mentor Companion, is the SMART goal.

Specific—Your goal should be clear and to the point. If you know what your goal is and can explain it to others, you’re on the right track!

Measurable—You should have a way to track your progress. One way is to write out steps toward achieving your goal.

Attainable—You should make a goal that you can achieve. If your goal is impossible due to timeframe, for instance, you may find yourself frustrated and disappointed. If your goal is too easy, however, you may not try as hard.

Relevant—Your goal should be important to you. It is great to get another person’s opinion, but don’t let someone make a goal for you.

Time-limited—Your goal should have a deadline and you should be able to identify when you’ve completed your goal. Not only does this give you a day to celebrate, but it also solidifies your plan!

A new semester brings new opportunities to grow and improve. Take this time to plan out your goals and work toward an even greater semester!

The First Thanksgiving by Alex Saraceno, Pinney ARM

On the fourth Thursday of November, Americans celebrate Thanksgiving, a national holiday we’ve come to know as time for giving thanks through sharing a meal and perhaps spending the day with our family. Some celebrate by preparing the traditional foods, attending a religious service, or watching a football game. Despite all the variations on how this day is spent, we all have been told the same story of the first Thanksgiving.

American history textbooks and the teachers who use them teach young students especially a fantastical myth of Native Americans and English settlers uniting and peacefully gathering to share a meal. While this version holds such optimism and a positive message: to put aside differences, to learn about another culture, and to work together to create something beautiful, it is largely untrue.

Many consider these “pilgrims” or settlers the real savages - invaders of a land that was already inhabited and cared for. There was nothing peaceful about their presence. Some historians believe this first Thanksgiving celebrated the Pequot Massacre, which had happened right around the same time in Plymouth, Massachusetts and wiped out over seven hundred native men, women, and children.

We can’t change history, but we can educate ourselves to make a better future. Perpetuating this myth and idyllic fantasy of the relationship between the Pilgrims and the Native Americans erases the true history of people indigenous to this land. This Thanksgiving, give thanks to having the means to know better and stand up to racism and genocide.
down to apply for “real world” jobs. While it might not be for everyone, a lot of people feel that this is one of the most beneficial things to do before getting fully immersed in the workforce. Taking a span of time to relax and re-focus can help you avoid getting overwhelmed, unsatisfied, or even plainly bored within a few years of graduation. Once on a career path, it can be hard to take a break and really experience the world; however, this is much easier done if you take out some time before you fully dive in. A year off doesn’t have to mean doing absolutely nothing, though—and it shouldn’t. During this time, you can work part time and try to save up some money while still taking time to rejuvenate and re-focus yourself. Of course, there is also always the option of traveling, which can be much easier before you have quite so many professional commitments. Overall, a “gap year” can actually be a very beneficial experience rather than the embarrassing last resort that many people are made to think it is.

The looming future is stressful to think about, and while a plan of action is of course a helpful tool, it should be noted that there is more to life than having every second planned out. A lot of people spend so much time thinking about exactly how their life will go after graduation that they end up becoming a frazzled mess and emotionally burning themselves out before graduation even rolls around. To avoid this, it can be best to calmly consider all that life has to offer, and remember that no matter what, you can make it through. If you’ve made it through four years of college, you can survive whatever may come next, even if it takes a little time to figure out.
Fall semester is nearly over and you're writing your final papers and studying until the wee hours of the day, and the last thing you're thinking of is packing your things and returning to the same room where you once made posters about meiosis in high school and wrote an analysis paper on Hamlet. While moving back home between the Fall and Spring semesters should be a time of rest, you will once again have to blend back into your household family dynamic, so here are a few tips to getting back into family life.

1) Pack Early
The fall semester is often times a long haul and hard to keep energy reserves up after midterms. Though finals are fast around the corner, take some time when you're not sleeping, eating or working to start packing some of your clothes or other belongings you wish to take home with you. Doing so will make move-out day much easier and faster, and after your brain is mush from all those exams, the last thing you want to be doing is trying to think about what you left behind at Western when you're back at home.

2) Learn how to sneak around
For many students, staying up until 2:00am is a normal endeavor at college. There simply isn't enough time during the day to do everything, so becoming a night owl is perfectly normal and may be beneficial to studying if your class is at noon or later the following day. However, your family at home is not used to this kind of lifestyle. For them, 11:00pm or midnight is late, and may be beneficial to studying if your class has late night class student habits.

3) Laundry
Laundry usually gets put off until there are absolutely no more clothes to wear for most of us. This means it tends to pile up in the corner of your room, or perhaps all over the floor or bed as time goes on and more essays get assigned. Regardless, this habit will probably not go on unopposed at home. If your mother or father walks into your room and sees a pile of socks rivalling Mount Vesuvius, you're likely to get told to wash it. As a general rule, the best way to deal with this is to establish one day as laundry day during the week. Consider choosing a day that's obscure, like maybe Tuesday or Wednesday, to avoid conflicting with your family member's laundry schedules. Even if your parents don't care about laundry, it's still a good habit to get into and hold onto when you're back at school. Trust me, your friends and guests will thank you if you do.

4) Eating Habits
For much the same reason above, tests, classes and projects will indubitably have altered your eating habits from three square, balanced meals a day to two meals consisting of ramen noodles, cheerios and milk and maybe some fruit and granola as a late night snack if you're lucky. Ok, so this is only during peak finals season, but you get the idea. Eating every day when you're hungry and at strange times is a foreign idea to your family. For them, they eat breakfast, either go to school or work, have a break for lunch and then come home for dinner. Sorry, but we don't really have that luxury as college students, eating whatever we can get our hands on at any time of the day. Keep a secret stash of snacks in your room, either under your bed or in your backpack, for those strange times when you're hungry, and try to avoid the schedules of your family's eating habits if you have a hard time adjusting to home life. It's not easy having two or three people working in the kitchen at once, and it will inevitably end up in an angry battle over who deserves the last chicken wing from the football game last night. Choose your battles wisely when it comes to food, my friends.

5) Netflix
Netflix seems to be everyone’s best friend these days. It can be a very fun way to blow hours of your time, or if used correctly, release some stress watching TV shows or movies after you've spent a few hours on projects for class. However, being back at home, it can be easy to go into full hermit mode and plow through entire seasons of your favorite shows in a matter of days if you're not careful. Instead of staring at your favorite carbon based lightbulb, why not spend some time with your family or try to reconnect with friends from high school you haven't seen in a few months (if not longer). Use this time wisely. Your shows will always be there. But your friends and family won’t be able to tag along wherever you go.

Of course this list is not complete and will continue to grow and change as the years progress and our culture changes, but hopefully this will give you some assistance when you move back home. Remember: with great change there comes great opportunity, so use your time at home wisely!

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**Tips to Surviving Finals**

So you think you know what you need to do to pass your finals? How about looking at these 5 quick tips from *D News* and Laci Green.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDJSZ7ONPjU
Winter break is just around the corner! It’s a time when we finally get a break from the craziness of the semester, and get a chance to de-stress. It can be hard to stay productive when the urge to stay in bed and binge on Netflix is so strong. Not to say that watching Netflix is bad, but four weeks straight on a Netflix binge is a bit excessive. The majority of us would rather not sit in the library conducting our own research on a topic that interests us. But there are other ways that we can stay productive over break and not see a month go to waste. If you don’t already have a job you could apply for a seasonal job at the mall. Stores try to hire around the holiday season to accommodate the influx of holiday shoppers. This way, you can stay productive and make some money at the same time!

Another option is volunteering in your community. Local soup kitchens and shelters look for extra hands around the holiday season to deliver food baskets and toys to those in need and to serve food. You could also volunteer at a nursing home and visit with the residents. Many don’t have anyone to visit and feel lonely, especially around the holiday season. You could also pick a book or two to read. They don’t have to be academic in nature; they could be fiction, or just on a topic that interests you. I know after finishing the semester when you were required to read many books that do not interest you that reading may be the last thing on your mind, but for some, reading is relaxing, especially when it is on a topic that you enjoy!

In short, try not to let Winter Break go to waste. Relax and have fun, but also try to be productive, so you don’t regret the time wasted!
Preventing for Finals
by Jamie Maitland, Newbury ARM

Start Early: The earlier you start preparing for finals, the less you will have to do when they arrive. You can read over notes, go over flashcards, and even write down key points. Either way the information will be fresh in your brain!

Get Enough Sleep: A lot of students think that they are going to pass their finals if they stay up all night and cram. Getting at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep will allow you to remember more information.

Stay on top of your schedule: Prioritizing is extremely important when it comes to preparing for finals. If you have a final on a Wednesday and your next final is not until the Monday after that, focus more on the final that is the closest.

Get the help that you need: If there is a certain topic that you do not understand, make sure that you get help for it because you will probably see the material again on the final. Do not simply overlook the material because you do not think that you will ever use it in the real world. Your Professor taught it to you for a reason.

Use your resources: WCSU has many resources that you can use to help you. If you need help in math, visit the math lab. If you need help in writing, go to the writing lab. The tutoring resource center has specific tutors for you as well. Your Professor is also an excellent resource because he/she is aware of what you need to know for the final. I (or your ARM) can help you with anything that we have taken before, so just let us know if you need help.

Keep calm: If you look at your exam, do not immediately think that it is too hard and become discouraged. Go through each question one by one and answer it to the best of your knowledge. If there is something that you do not know, skip it and go back to it. Once you choose an answer make sure that you stick with it! Remember not to change an answer unless you are sure that it is wrong.

Review past work: If your final exam is cumulative, make sure that you review your previous tests, quizzes, and homework. By doing that you know what to expect on the final and you can be confident.

Study in a quiet place: While studying for finals you need to concentrate on the material. You may think that you are fully concentrating on work while around a group of people or in a distracting atmosphere, but you are not. Grab some snacks and a water bottle and find somewhere quiet to study.

Winter break is coming (you know—that time after finals?!)
If you haven’t already started, it may be time to clear out your things and take some stuff home before the last day hits.

If you need to stay on campus for the break, Centennial and Pinney are the buildings that will be open. If you do not live in either building, YOU will need to identify a friend’s or acquaintance’s room to use, and get the permission of each roommate (signed on your application form).

Applications to stay will be available after Thanksgiving. There is a charge to stay for the Winter Break. See your RDs for details.

Want more hints on studying for Finals? We’ve got tip sheets on our Academic Success Spot webpage:
http://www.wcsu.edu/housing/arm.asp

** Don’t forget to look for campus events in the WOW email each Thursday! **