

00:00:10 Maribeth Griffin

Hi and welcome again to Gab & GROW, our podcast about helping you become a more successful student. I'm your host, Maribeth Griffin, and I'm really happy to have you all here with us today.

We are fast coming up onto midterms time, and I know everyone is thinking that we're going to fill this time with study tips about midterms, but we're going in a different direction so you couldn't be more wrong on this one!

We're going to talk today about doing a mid-semester check-up, so we'll talk more about what that is later, but I want to introduce today's guests. So, we have with us from the Ansell School of Business, and the coordinator of academic support for the Ansell School, Elise Budnick. Hi, Elise!

00:00:52 Elise Budnick

Hi, thanks for having me.

00:00:53 Maribeth Griffin

Yeah, I'm so glad you're back here! And also from the Tutoring Resource Center, it's coordinator Lauren Eddy. Hi, Lauren!

00:01:00 Lauren Eddy

Hello, woo!

00:01:01 Maribeth Griffin

So, we're all excited to be here and I want to just dive right into this topic 'cause I find it fascinating. So, every once in a while, I actually read and do some prep for these kinds of things, and I found a list somewhere in my reading online about completing mid-semester check-ups or check-ins and why they're important. And the list that I read talked about allowing the student to have a good understanding of what their course grade was at that time. Kind of making sure they know where it [grade] was and using that to kind of propel themselves to estimate what their grade could be, and then to reflect on their own efforts in the class and what they've put into it. Is that what they're getting out? And how has that impacted their progress?

Determining if they need to make some changes and what's going on in class in order to complete them successfully, encouraging discussion with their professors and considering using other resources like tutoring. Or, you know, other academic support services there. So, I, I want to just, you know, start in in general and say, you know, what are your thoughts about that, that list, and what other reasons might people want to do this mid semester check-up?

00:02:29 Lauren Eddy

Yeah, I mean, I think that list is spot on. And for me - this is Lauren, from the Tutoring Resource Center- that the most important thing is for students to really accurately and honestly know how they're doing in their classes, and so sometimes going through the motions of the semester, you kind of lose sight of that.

Maybe you don't necessarily have a full picture, or you're maybe overly optimistic, or you're just anxious 'cause you don't know how you're doing it. It can be really helpful to sort of reset your priorities a little bit to know how you do it, how you're doing, because that then gives you really good information on what you might need to do, or what you might need to change going forward to achieve the grades that you wanted to achieve.

00:03:09 Maribeth Griffin

Any thoughts Elise?

00:03:11 Elise Budnick

I agree, I think a mid-semester check-in is a really important part of what you're doing. It's an opportunity to say right, what do I need to change to really achieve my goals, and if you don't have goals, it's a great opportunity to set them.

00:03:23 Maribeth Griffin

That's a really good thing, and you know, I look back on my own academic career, which was not stellar, to be honest. You know, it was adequate. And, and I think I'm like so many other people. You wait till the end to panic, and oftentimes that's too late to really be able to do anything. But I think, you know, if we're looking at doing something at this point in time, you've still got a good hunk of time that you can adjust and move things around and maybe improve what you're doing, or find that you're doing well because you're doing XY and Z and you want to make sure you keep doing that.

00:04:00 Lauren Eddy

Yeah, yeah, yeah, definitely.

00:04:02 Elise Budnick

And Lauren and I have both been reading a book, *Atomic Habits* by James Clear, and I would recommend that every student, because I think that you know the creating, making small changes, can really have a huge impact, even if you're like, setting a time that you're going to study or set a time in a place and, you know, having a clear cut, really detailed, specific plan for yourself. I think it's a...

There's a lot of things that you can do that you don't even maybe think of. You know, when are you going to put something? Where are you going to put it? How is it going to look? And not just thinking "I won't procrastinate anymore" instead? You know, "After this class or between these two classes, I will go somewhere, you know, not my bed, and study." And it's just such an effective way to approach, yeah?

00:04:52 Lauren Eddy

Yeah, Elise makes a really good point. And that I think sometimes students, when they're setting goals for themselves, it's that, "I'm going to get a B", or like Elise said, that "I'm gonna stop procrastinating." But it's that, like really concrete behavior that you're going to do, you're going to work on each day that is gonna help you bring your grades back up.

00:05:09 Maribeth Griffin

So yeah, I was the person who was gonna, you know, put the “I'm going to stop procrastinating” sign up on my wall and I, you know, stopped making the sign in the middle of it and never got back to it. I'm great at the procrastination thing!

So, you know, it's obviously, it's important that students are doing this kind of reflection. Whether you're a good student or a bad student or mediocre student, I think it helps everyone. And Lauren, you know we had all been talking a little and emailing some things about this and, and what you could do with that mid-semester check-in, and you came up with some really great ideas. So I wonder if we could start talking about some of those 'cause there are some simple things like using a GPA calculator, which some people may not even know is available to them.

00:05:58 Lauren Eddy

Yep, yeah. Right on your banner up there is a GPA calculator that is incredibly helpful. There's a couple of features you can use on it. You can see predict what you think you're going to get in your classes and see what your semester GPA would be. You can project what that would do for your cumulative GPA, and there's a really neat tool that lets you put your desired GPA.

So, let's say your goal is to get a 3.0 this semester. You can add the credits you've done, the courses or the grades you think you're going to get and see what you actually need for a GPA in order to achieve that goal, and that can be really helpful for students to see.

Like OK, I need to get an A or B and a B plus in order to get my, you know, 3.0 or 3.2 or whatever I'd like to get this semester, so I always show students. I think it could be really helpful.

00:06:47 Maribeth Griffin

So, it's right on their banner page when they look. Great! Elise, are there things you know about, too?

00:06:55 Elise Budnick

For me, I was also a bit of a mediocre student empowered, especially in the first few years, and then I sort of grew up a lot, but to me the idea of attending all your classes, being engaged. If you can make yourself do the reading beforehand so that you're not walking in and you're not hearing something for the first time, it just increases your understanding of a lecture and what's going on.

I'm paying attention. And take notes. I see a lot of students that don't take notes and I think, well, how are they going to go back and remember or recreate what happened in that class? Because when you have notes, you can look for gaps – things you didn't understand, other ways to use your notes. And both Lauren and the Tutoring Resource Center and my tutors in the Ancell Commons all have tools to help you learn to do that so that you're maximizing that time.

We don't want you to just sit and read a textbook. We want you to really have useful habits that will benefit you.

00:07:52 Maribeth Griffin

Yeah, it's really interesting 'cause I was talking with one of the ARMs recently and she's a brand-new ARM and she was talking about this real success story kind of thing that she had. She had a student who was not doing well – I think it was an anatomy class, so you know she was already going to be struggling because so many people do with that. But what she found was that she just couldn't take notes and listen and watch the PowerPoint slides and all the things that the professor was using. So, what she decided to start to do – they started to talk about possible things she could do.

She started recording the lectures. And so, while she was there, she just let herself focus on what was on the screen and what he was saying, and she jotted a few notes down about the PowerPoint, (but I know they give them to you often to look at) and then she would come back later, and she would go to the ARM's room, and they have this - I guess they use one of the lounges. And they have a little study period, and she sticks in her headphones and listens to the lecture again and makes notes. And then, she's already heard it, and is now reviewing it in her head, and I thought - "What a great – you know – what a great idea!"

It's the time you have to commit to doing your classes. I don't think sometimes we, as students... We often just think, well, you know, I went to the lecture, and I'll study before the exam kind of thing, and that's not always the best idea.

00:09:19 Lauren Eddy

So yeah, yeah, it's that repeating – coming back to your material all the time, that's going to help you learn it. And you shouldn't, when you're preparing for an exam or a test, you should never be learning information for the first time, so that means you should have already, you know, read your chapter or took your notes, done a little bit of review. And then, you go back, and you review the material for the exam. So that can be a really effective strategy we just talked about.

00:09:41 Maribeth Griffin

One of the things that I read that I thought was really interesting was talking about, you know, by midterms, students who are struggling sometimes they've built such a world of anxiety that they're living inside, so they've already, you know, "I've missed too many classes", and "I'm never going to be able to pass". Or, you know, "I'm feeling badly about this, and I just can't focus on studying". Or, you know, "My professor, I know, hates me 'cause I've asked a question." Other things, and so it's almost like they get frozen by that anxiety that they're building up. So why do you think this kind of check-in in the mid-year can help break through that anxiety?

00:10:27 Elise Budnick

So, I think it's really important to develop – while you're in school if you don't already have it - a solution-oriented brain so that you're not allowing anxiety to stop you in your tracks. And I know, not everybody has control over their anxiety, but using tools like getting outside in nature, you know, deep you know breathing, purposeful breathing, mindful breathing. There are a lot of things we can do to do that, to reduce anxiety and stress.

But one of the best ways we can do is just let the past be the past and move forward. So, what are you going to do from today? You know we can't always fix our past mistakes, but what are we going to do for today?

So, if you do think that you may be failing a course, I think it's so important to talk to your instructor as soon as possible. Go in there and go with again a solution mind set, because then you're trying to fix the problem, you're not going in and accusing your professor of not liking you, or you know, all the things that you may be thinking. You don't have to put it out there. You can go in with an eye to solving the problem.

00:11:37 Lauren Eddy

Yeah, no. I think that's a great idea. But just to kind of go off that a little bit, I think sometimes that like that anxiety comes from not knowing. And when students, or to put it off, they're not thinking about it. It's still in the back of their mind that, like, "I'm not doing well in this class", so doing something, like I mentioned, with the semester GPA calculation – well, maybe it's not going to come out the way you want, and it's going to be a little scary when you see that number. At least you know how you're doing in the class.

And I've had times where I've done a GPA calculation with a student and they were not happy with what it, how it came out, but they felt relieved because at least they knew where they were, where they were, and then they could make changes. So, I think that's really, really important to kind of face it head on and then, like Elise said, with a solution focused mindset, "OK, what am I going to do?" "How do I, you know, make some adjustments?"

And it's also important to know the academic policies as well. So, for instance, if you are at that time in the semester we're just, you cannot pass a class like you said, maybe you missed too many or whatever.

Maybe something like a course withdrawal or talking to your professor about an incomplete could help save your GPA. And Elise and I see that a lot of times - where students aren't always aware that maybe they could have withdrawn and that might have made all the difference for them. You know, save their GPA but also then be able to refocus on balancing their other classes or things.

00:13:02 Elise Budnick

I would also add that it is important to know the academic policies, because if you drop too many classes and you have financial aid, you could jeopardize your finances.

00:13:12 Maribeth Griffin

Yeah, and I think there are, I mean there are several areas that it can impact you, 'cause sometimes it can impact your housing and sometimes it can impact if you're an athlete, impact your eligibility. It always is going to, you know, have some kind of thing on your financial aid too, so you really have to... and sometimes (This used to be more when we had insurance that we offered here and now it's all your own insurance), but some students found that they lost their insurance because they dropped to a part time status, and it switched their insurance things

too. So, there are all kinds of things. Fortunately, we don't have to worry about all of those these days, but, you know, you want to work with somebody who can help you.

00:13:52 Lauren Eddy

Yes, Yep, exactly.

00:13:52 Maribeth Griffin

Figuring that out too, and you know, fortunately, we have, yeah, like, you guys.

00:13:57 Elise Budnick

Yes, so you could talk to your professor. You could talk to your academic advisor, and you could talk to someone in the registrar's office. We often have students who, we'll sit with them and make the call and say, you know what? Well, what should we maybe think about and what are our options?

00:14:09 Lauren Eddy

And we're referring to those offices and to academic advisors all the time as well. We do work with students you know on academics and tutoring and support. You know, we are always encouraging students to talk to their academic advisors into their faculty. It's a really important part of being a successful student.

00:14:28 Elise Budnick

We don't advise. We do refer.

00:14:41 Maribeth Griffin

What kinds of things can people do? What are some easy, or maybe even not so easy, but – what are some standard things that you should be thinking about doing for that check-up?

00:14:52 Lauren Eddy

Yeah, number one is: go back to your syllabus. First things first, pull out your syllabus and go back and see, you know... Read through for all of the course requirements. The grading policies. Maybe look through the assignments that you've completed already and just take stock of what you've done. Maybe if you've missed any assignments. What grades you've been getting? It's kind of like taking stock. It's like, "how am I actually doing in this class?" and then reviewing that. The syllabus, I think, is kind of the first step.

00:15:21 Elise Budnick

I grant something we don't always want to read is the learning objectives for the course, but they're actually pretty important because those are the things that your professor is likely to be testing you on. Those are things you want to pay attention to when you're trying to figure out what's important in a course and what's not as important, covering those learning objectives is something that is.

00:15:45 Maribeth Griffin

I think we forget how important the syllabus is. You know, as we look at it once and we kind of pull out the big dates and then you push it off in a corner of your room or your notebook or something. So, that reevaluation is awfully good.

00:15:58 Elise Budnick

And both of our centers offer sort of a semester outline calendar where we try to, you know, provide it as a tool for students so you can put the high points, all the exams and papers and projects that you might have due, and it allows you to take a look at it.

So many of our students work. We want you to think about, you know, during high stress times, maybe you can cut your hours and work a little bit, because part of this whole thing is having a priority, right? So is school your priority, or is work your priority? And if school is your priority, you should be here. You should be working and putting things first. But if your job is your priority, maybe you're not, you know, maybe being a full-time student could be too much, or you know maybe you're taking on too much. But while you're here, you're spending this money. Make it count, yeah.

00:16:50 Maribeth Griffin

Yeah, and really take advantage of all the resources - that the money you're spending on a class isn't just for that class. It's that you have things like Tutoring Resource and the Learning Commons, and you know the math lab and the writing lab.

00:17:08 Elise Budnick

And even non-academic. The Career Success Center, and this is a great time to be building all those skills that you need and getting ready for the future. You know, going to hear speakers or great speakers on this campus and you know it's important to take advantage of those things. It sounds like it's a lot, but if your education is your priority and where do you want to be in four to five years? You know, if you're thinking about that, that's a really good move to make.

00:17:33 Maribeth Griffin

Yeah, you talked a little about taking stock of your classes and things and I saw this. You know, some schools had a little chart kind of thing that they gave out to their students, and they were just asking them to make a list of their courses and then fill in how many times they had missed class, and what was their average homework grade. And what did they get on their quizzes and what did they get on their exams or papers?

And then looking at their overall score kind of thing? So it helped kind of lay out for them some of those things, 'cause sometimes we just forget about, if you're getting points for your homework, make sure that you're counting that.

00:18:10 Lauren Eddy

Stats, yes, that's actually really important. I think one of the most important pieces of your syllabus is that little, tiny breakdown of how your professor grades. What percentage are exams or percentage or quizzes? So, I think sometimes students will, you know, say they have 100% homework average and they're like, oh I'm doing fine. But they have a 60%...

00:18:31 Maribeth Griffin

But that counts for 20% of it, yeah?

00:18:33 Lauren Eddy

Exactly! Exactly! So you have to, you have to sort of do a little bit of math to know how to make the weighted average of your class. And thankfully, a lot of professors will enter grades on Blackboard and that will sometimes give you your actual overall average, which is really good to pay attention to. But sometimes if your professors maybe haven't updated on their grades or they don't have that total grade there to sort of know how to do the math, to calculate that out yourself. And there's all sorts of tools online. You can find the tutors and the peer academic coaches in the Tutoring Resource Center and the tutors in the Ansell Commons can help a student sort of maybe just do a little bit of calculation on, "OK, so what do I have in math? What do I need on the next exam in order to get a, you know, whatever grade I'd like, so...?"

00:19:19 Maribeth Griffin

Yeah, one of the other things that lots of the places I read and certainly in all the episodes we've done in the past about things is talking to your professor.

00:19:30 Lauren Eddy

Yeah!

00:19:32 Maribeth Griffin

You know, and I know some people are afraid of it and but why? Why would it be good to get some feedback from your professors?

00:19:44 Elise Budnick

Talking to your professor is one of the best things that you can do. To me, I think you want to go in at the beginning of this semester and introduce yourself just to get to know them. But you can ask questions. And a lot of professors really do encourage that. You know a tutor can help you to a certain point, but your professor is going to know exactly what they want from you, and they're the teacher.

Tutors don't teach. Tutors work with you to bring out your best and your knowledge. But, I think talking to Professor anytime they can help you look at how you're doing in the class. What your potential outcomes might be. They can help explain pieces that you might not be getting, and they can help you look at the course as a whole, to see you know what you might need to be doing that's missing.

I think you know they can tell you if your participation is good. You know, 'cause a lot of professors, they may not fully grade on participation, but it does matter. It really does.

00:20:41 Lauren Eddy

Yeah, yeah, there's so many times I talked to faculty and they're like, "Why aren't students coming to my office hours?" Like, "I want to talk to my students!" So, 99.9% of the time, your

professors are so you know, welcoming and they want you to come, and they're willing to work with you and answer your questions. The thing that I often tell my students is you have to just know how to do that in sort of a professional way. And so, that last minute panicked, "You need to help me out!" "Please give me extra credit," you know, might not be the best way to approach that situation.

00:21:14 Lauren Eddy

But like Elise said, going in with a "how can I improve my grade like I really want to" or "Well, I'd like to learn what I can do differently." Your professors will be ecstatic with that.

00:21:25 Maribeth Griffin

I think too that it's remembering that they're human beings. I mean, we put professors – I kind of look at them sometimes like celebrities, and you know, you're just afraid to talk to them. You're not going to sound like anything – so, many people are afraid. But you know, they go to the grocery store, and they have to buy socks. My mom was a teacher, and I can remember when I was a kid, we were in a grocery store and one of her students saw her, and it was like, "Oh, Mrs. Griffin, what are you doing in the grocery store?" It's like, "We're a family and we have to eat!", you know? You just think about people in different positions differently, and if you just remember – they have to go to the grocery store and eat, too.

00:22:04 Elise Budnick

It's like it's building a relationship with them starting at the beginning of the semester, before you run into trouble. Yes, it can be such a positive thing, because now you've already had this relationship. And so now, when you do need help or you do have an issue, you can go in and talk to the professor, and they already know that you're taking their class seriously and they already know that you're well-meaning students, so they really do want to put that time in.

And guess what, they might be writing your reference letter when you're getting ready to graduate, so stop.

00:22:35 Maribeth Griffin

Yeah, so I know we've been talking for a while now, so I want to kind of circle us back because we've done this evaluation. We've talked to our professors. We know where we are in their class. So, how do you close that loop? How do you make those goals go forward? How do you, you know, take some action from this?

00:22:51 Lauren Eddy

Yeah, that's a really good question. I think something... Absolutely is taking advantage of your campus resources and sometimes that can be a little bit of the spark that gets you back on track by working with a tutor in the Tutoring Resource Center or tutor in the Ansell Commons or peer academic coach or your ARMs; you know these are all peers that have been trained how to help students. So just starting that conversation, they might have some really good questions to ask you about how you're doing? And then, you know, through talking with them, you might be like,

OK, maybe I just need to refocus on my reading, or I need to study a little more and you can get some insight out to maybe ask what you need to do to get back on track in your classes.

00:23:33 Elise Budnick

Another thing you could do is if you're running into trouble solving problems or doing anything like that: Document what you're doing. Write it down. Say, all right. I tried this and this and this way, and then when you go and talk, either to a tutor or your professor, they are so going to know that you put the effort in, and they'll want to help you. They really, really do, and they're going to know how to help you. They're going to see where the problem is and what can be done. And I think that's such an effective way to ask for help, if and when you do. And as the semester moves along, you sort of have to up your game anyway.

I think it's important to realize that homework and studying are not the same thing. Do your homework, but as we come up towards midterms you might want to set an actual study schedule for yourself if you haven't already. Put it right on Account or Office 365. All students have that. That's a powerful tool, and so having that schedule and then if you miss one, it's not that big a deal, but try to hit, you know, maybe three out of five days, or four of the seven days for everything that you do. And make sure you're still taking care of yourself. Because sleep is important, eating well, nourishing food and keep working out. Keep getting outside. Break the stress. You know so that if you're putting yourself first, your education 2nd, and your job third, you're going to come out of here, I think, pretty well.

00:24:57 Maribeth Griffin

So, before we go can you just quickly remind everyone *what* your offices are and *where* they are and *how* they can get in touch with you if they want to?

00:25:07 Lauren Eddy

Sure, yeah. So, the tutoring Resource Center - we are on the 2nd floor of the Haas Library on the Midtown campus. We're an open study space, so students often come and will do group projects or sit on their own, but then they can work with a tutor.

So we are, uh, by appointment tutoring center so you work one on one with a tutor, and you need to actually request an appointment through our online schedule at least the day before. I always like to make sure students know that that you can't just show up on this the day you need help. You kind of do need to plan ahead a little bit to request an appointment.

Uh, we have peer tutoring in the mostly the Arts and Sciences, so biology, chemistry, pre-nursing, psychology, social sciences, history. We do a variety of classes that students can see what we have available on our online schedule and on our website.

00:26:01 Elise Budnick

And the Ansell Commons is located at the West Side campus inside the Roberts Young Library, and we're open the same hours as a library 9 to 9. Currently we do not have tutoring beyond 5:00 o'clock in the afternoon, and we also recommend that you make an appointment. And we have a website as well under Ansell Commons. We have a lot of other resources there for

students, too. We really specialize in justice and law, business courses, and math 118, economics 211 and Economics 213.

00:25:02 Maribeth Griffin

Great! And like I said, there are lots of other places too, so don't hesitate to look around. Ask around, find someone who can direct you to things we've mentioned (a lot of them) here on this show. So, you know, if you have questions, or you missed it, you can always do the "email me" kind of thing. But Lauren and Elise, thanks so much for being here again today. It's always great to have you guys on because you're just a wealth of knowledge, and I think just a really easy, down-to-earth, easy way for people to kind of evaluate where they are and be able to move forward. It's so helpful. I really appreciate your being here to talk with us about that.

00:27:15 Lauren Eddy

Alright, thank you, thank you.

00:27:15 Elise Budnick

It's always fun.

00:27:17 Maribeth Griffin

If you are a listener and you do have a question, again, you know the drill. Griffinm@wcsu.edu, and I'll do my best to get you an answer or get you to the right person who has the answer for you.

Also, I want to say if you've got, in your major or a department, something amazing going on that you think everyone should know about, email me, let me know, and we'll get them on the show here because I really love to know what's going on campus too. And this is a great way for me to find out! So, I think that'll be it for today. Thanks for being here and stop back in!

00:27:50 Elise Budnick

Thanks, Maribeth.

00:27:51 Lauren Eddy

Thank you.

Music plays out.