Midterm Reflection

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It’s been a whirlwind semester so far, and I can’t believe that midterms are upon us. My first term in college has had its ups and downs, but was overall successful. I’ve learned about my study habits, how to manage my classes, and how to get involved on campus.

My academic habits from high school are mostly sufficient for college. I already had a rigorous studying plan in high school, so luckily I was prepared that way. On the other hand, exams mean a lot more and grades are a lot more permanent. I have had to adjust by doing my work farther in advance, especially when I went out of town for a week. My organization methods have gotten a lot more refined, as I have begun using both a paper and electronic calendar to keep track of meetings, classes, clubs, and other engagements. Procrastination is definitely still a bad habit of mine, but I think that I understand my own limits and when I need to work on something I will ignore distractions and get it done. Overall though, I am continuously improving and hope to get better at doing projects farther in advance.

Midterms will be the first real measure of my success this first semester. I hope that my grades will reflect the effort I put into studying and reviewing. One class that I am particularly proud about is Linear Algebra. I studied a bunch and reviewed all of the previous homeworks and quizzes, and that truly paid off. I walked out of the exam room feeling very confident in my answers and how I solved them. That feeling is like no other and it’s very rewarding when hard work pays off.

We never truly accomplish anything alone, and I am very appreciative that there are resources for me if I am struggling. This semester, I’ve utilized professor office hours, classmates, the library, and the Computer Science Mentor Center (CSMC). Although it can be intimidating visiting a professor, I always feel better after I do so as they are very helpful and really do want to help us students. That also carries over to my peers in class, who often struggle on the same concepts as I do. Working and studying together can be very beneficial. The CSMC is particularly important for Computer Science students, as the tutoring center puts on review sessions, test corrections, and has tutors available for us. I am currently struggling a bit with one of my projects, and I am planning on paying them a visit if I can’t figure it out.

I prepared for my midterms by reviewing my detailed notes, doing practice problems, and reading through the textbook. If I had homework assignments, I also would redo those problems and make sure I understood the concepts. In my classes that required memorization, I would make study guides and continuously review them until I knew the material by heart. The key to studying for me personally lies within constant reinforcement. If I keep doing the problems, then I know I will be able to do them successfully on an exam. This has worked well for me so far, but it is very challenging to commit to doing hundreds of practice problems. For the next round of exams, I want to work on starting earlier and getting more practice done.

In order to stay organized, I keep a detailed calendar. I don’t plan out every minute, but I know which assignments or tasks I need to prioritize each night. I also know generally how much time I need so I set aside chunks of time to get things done. Breaks are important too, so I make sure to balance those as well.

I had a unique situation where I missed 6 days of school (so 1-2 days per class) since I was invited to speak at a conference. I made sure that I submitted all assignments I could early so I wouldn’t have to worry about them while traveling. Unfortunately, my midterms began right when I came back. To deal with this, I took one exam early and turned in all of my assignments for the next 2 weeks. That way, I would have a singular focus of studying for my exams when I returned. This process required me to reach out to professors in advance and gather notes from classmates. I was very stressed during the entire 2 week period, but everything was made manageable due to my preparations.

For the rest of the semester, I plan on dedicating more time to my extracurriculars. Now that I’ve gotten my classes under control, I am turning my attention to being an undergraduate lab assistant and working with the Formula SAE Racing team. Additionally, I want to continue to improve on my studying skills. Getting things done sooner is always preferable, and getting better at that will definitely boost my grades. Overall, I’m pleased how my first half of a semester went but I’m excited to keep improving.