Teaching Chapter 4

***Time Management***

Key Objective (Intended Learning Outcome) for this Chapter

Simply stated, the major goal of this chapter is to promote students’ ability to manage and maximize one of their most important personal resources: time.

Rationale for the *Placement* of this Chapter in the Text’s *Sequence* of Topics

Time management appears as one of the earlier chapters of the text with the hope that students will implement its suggested strategies at the outset of their college experience. While it makes sense to introduce practical strategies for time management early in the term, it’s been our experience that students are often not motivated or “ready” to learn about time management in depth until later in the term—after they discover how easy it is to start falling behind in college and begin to feel some of the stressful consequences of procrastinations. Thus, detailed discussion of time management is placed fourth in the lineup of topics so that it might be addressed closer to midterm—when students are more likely to realize its importance. Time management is covered just before the chapters dealing with academic-success strategies so that students might have a plan to actually get done what they’re about to learn *should* be done to succeed academically.

Key Points to *Emphasize* when Covering this Chapter

\* Point out to your students that managing time is a form of self-management that poses significant challenges for many first-year students. Time management is a self-management skill that students transitioning from high school to college often have had little prior opportunity to previously practice and fine-tune because their high school schedule often managed time for them. The greater temporal freedom encountered in college, along with its greater number of personal responsibilities, can pose a significant challenge for first-year students—no matter what their level of academic preparedness or intellectual ability happens to be.

\*Apprise students of research pointing to the fact that college students who display higher levels of procrastination also experience higher levels of test anxiety (Rothblum, Solomon, & Murakami, 1986). The pre-test tension created by last-minute rushing and late-night cramming can carry over to the next day (test day), resulting in higher levels of test-taking tension. In addition, students who lose sleep the night before an exam cut into their normal amount of dream (REM) sleep, the loss of which heightens levels of anxiety experienced the following day—the day on which they are expected to perform. Also, procrastinating on research (term) papers limits time and elevates stress, which can increase the temptation to engage in plagiarism.

\* The topic of time management may pose a significant motivational challenge for students because they’re likely to view the topic narrowly as a basic “study skill” rather than as a challenging and pervasive life skill. Dispelling this view of time management may be the key to stimulating greater student interest in the topic. Managing time can covered in a way that treats it as much more than a study skill, but as a life-management skill that’s pivotal for promoting success and reducing stress beyond college. It’s not uncommon to find people at all stages of life who procrastinate, who know *what* should do, *why* they should do it, *how* to do it, and yet don’t get it *done*! Inviting students to take a quick look at the number of books on managing time and combating procrastination that appear in the self-improvement sections of any popular bookstore should convince them that time management is a skill that remains relevant well beyond college.

\* Covering the very practical skill of time management can be raised to a more rigorous intellectual level by encouraging student to examine personal motives and psychological needs that underlie their time-spending habits. How we choose to spend our time is one of the truest indicators of our personal priorities and values. Raising penetrating questions and encouraging students to engage in such critical self-analysis of how they elect to spend their time is likely to generate greater student interest in the subject than lecturing or presenting them with a series of time-management “tips,” which would be better covered (or uncovered) through textbook reading and small-group discussions.

\* Emphasize to students that if they hope to gain greater control of their time and their future, they need to think beneath the surface and beyond the present. Poor time-spending decisions are often driven by short-sighted, impulsive thinking that goes something like this: “I know what I’m *supposed* to do now, but I’m going to do what I *want* do instead.” The content of Chapter 4 chapter lends itself nicely to discussing the deeper issues of impulsivity vs. reflection, immediate vs. deferred gratification, and short-term sacrifices for long-term gains.

*Learning Exercises* & Assignments for Chapter 4

***Time Monitoring Exercise***

Steps:

1. Have your students go to the following website:

<http://www.ulc.psu.edu/studyskills/time_management.html#monitoring_your_time>

At this site, students can estimate the hours per day or week they spend doing a variety

of activities (e.g., sleeping, employment, commuting). As students enter the amount of

time they engage in these activities, the total number of remaining hours available in

the week for academic work is automatically computed.

2. Have students submit the results of their self-assessment to you, along with their answers to

the following questions:

(a) After entering the time you typically spend on non-academic activities each week, how

many hours per week do you have available for school-related work?

(b) Do you have two hours available to you for academic work outside of class for each hour

you spend in class?

(c) What time wasters could you eliminate or reduce in order to open up more time for

academic work and other productive activities?

***Master Schedule Jigsaw***

Steps:

1. Form four-member teams.

2. Ask the team to divide into pairs. One pair takes on the task of compiling a list of key

academic dates and deadlines for the remainder of the year—e.g., last day to drop classes, pre-

registration for next term’s classes, and the other pair does the same for co-curricular events—

e.g., on-campus workshops, guest speakers, social events).

3. After the pairs have completed their respective assignments, have them reconvene as a quartet

and integrate the work they did in pairs to create a master calendar that contains key academic

and co-curricular events occurring during their first year of college.

***Procrastination Self-Assessment***

Steps:

1. As a course assignment, have your students take a free procrastination self-assessment test at

either of the following websites:

<http://webapps2.ucalgary.ca/~steel//Procrastinus/measure.php>

<http://discoveryhealth.queendom.com/procrastination_short_access.html>

2. Ask your students to submit their scores to you individually.

3. Form groups of three (triads) composed of one student who scored among the lowest one-third

of students in class (least procrastination), a student who scored in the highest third (most

procrastination), and one whose score has about average.

4. Have the triads brainstorm strategies for combating procrastination.

5. Ask a student volunteer in each group to report their team’s suggestions for beating

procrastination and record them on the board.

6. After the groups report back their strategies, ask the member in each group who had the

lowest procrastination score to stand. Ask them if they practice any of the strategies listed on

the board that may account for their low procrastination score; also, ask them if they use other

effective strategies that aren’t on the board.

***Rocks, Sand, & Water: An Exercise for Prioritizing Time & Values*** (Adapted from Covey, Merrill, & Merrill, 1994)

Materials Needed:

1) Empty vase or a wide-mouth Mason jar

2) Enough small rocks to fill the vase or jar

4) Small bucket of sand or gravel

5) Small pitcher of water.

Steps:

1. Tell students to clear their desk because they’re going to take a pop quiz on time management.

2. Pull out the jar or vase and place it on a table in front of the class and tell your students that it

represents the amount of time they have each week.

3. Put the rocks into the jar, one by one, until you can’t fit in any more. Ask the class: “Would

you say that this jar is full?” (Typically, they’ll say “yes.”)

4. Pull out the bucket of sand or gravel and dump some of it in the jar, allowing it to seep

through the spaces between the rocks. Ask the class: “Would you say that this jar is full?

(Typically, they’ll respond more tentatively this time, saying something like: “Maybe not.”)

5. Grab the pitcher of water and pour it into the jar until it fills to the brim. Ask the class:

“What do you think is the point of this demonstration?”

6. After giving students the opportunity to offer their hypotheses about the message behind the

demonstration, tell them that the message is this: The big rocks represent the highest priorities

in their life (e.g., their life goals, their education, their family and friend). If they don’t puts the

big rock in first, they’ll never fit them in (i.e., they’ll never make room or find time for them).

Note: A final (7th) step may be added to this procedure that asks students to think about what the

“big rocks” are in their life, i.e., what they would put into their “jar” first?