Tips for Success: Making the Most Out of Winter Break

After a long semester and finals period, you deserve to take a break. Enjoy being home, re-connect with friends and family, eat your favorite foods, and sleep! Once you’ve rested up, however, you might want to consider what you can do to make the most of the break and prepare yourself for the Spring semester. Here are a few tips:

1. Reflect on the Fall/Plan for the Spring. This is a fairly obvious piece of advice, but it is very easy to forget to process and reflect on the previous semester. After being tired by the semester—especially if there were academic or personal difficulties—it can be tempting to forget about it entirely to focus on the new. Resist the temptation! Consider your successes and challenges. Re-read feedback from your professors. Look at your bLUeprint. Set new goals for yourself and match those goals with specific actions that will help you achieve them.

   It may be helpful for you to re-read our archive of weekly emails. The busyness of the semester might not have allowed you to consider carefully the tips we suggested or to read some of the helpful links; you will more likely be able to remember and apply that knowledge now. Put important dates in your Spring calendar. If you struggled with a particular subject, now might be the time to take advantage of the many free on-line resources that can help you to, say, master that tricky foreign language or to strengthen your Calculus skills. Now might also be the best occasion to send thank you emails to the professors, staff members, and classmates who helped you over the course of the Fall. It only takes a moment to write a thank you, but it can reap huge personal and professional dividends.

2. Read a Book! You may feel wiped out by the amount of reading you crammed into 15 weeks, so this can appear to be a bizarre piece of advice. However, some pleasure or professional reading over the break can help you remember why you are pursuing a professional degree and what you enjoy about learning and reading—separate from the pressure of a grade, a requirement, or a deadline. Reignite your Creative Curiosity! Read a fun novel or a memoir by a CEO you find inspiring. You still have quite a bit of work ahead of you before you get your degree; take the time to remind yourself why you are drawn to do this work.

3. Update Your Resume and bLUeprint. Updating your resume is one of those regular tasks that can very easily slip further and further down your to-do list. The Simple Dollar suggests you take advantage of the break to cross this item off your list. Bonus: updating your resume is a practical way to reflect on the skills you’ve learned in the Fall semester and set goals for the spring, summer, and next year. What Professional Growth & Success goals did you set last fall? Which ones did you accomplish? Have your professional ambitions changed or shifted since you started at Lehigh? Once you have an updated resume and bLUeprint, make an appointment with Career Services to help you forward-think and prepare for the next few years. Don’t let internships or other professional opportunities pass you by!

4. Evaluate Your Finances. This is another piece of advice from The Simple Dollar. How did you get money through the semester? On what did you spend your money? Keep track of any student loan debt you may have and consider what you could do to keep that balance low. What can you do next semester to reduce your spending or generate more income? This might be a time for conversations with your parents or research online concerning the benefits and dangers of credit cards.

5. Network. As described in the Penn State News, networking can mean everything from “going back to a summer job,” shadowing someone at a local business, finding local Lehigh alumni, or joining LinkedIn. Whichever form of networking you choose, your goal is to set up opportunities—Collaborative Connections—near your home that will provide you with summer jobs or professional internships. Some time spent on this during winter break can save you future time and confusion.
For more advice on making the most of your break, read the full posts from Penn State News and The Simple Dollar. For ideas about fun leisure activities during break, check out some of the ideas on the Zen College Life blog.