

## It's Beginning to Look A Lot Like Spring Term, Everywhere You Go



(hum along to Perry Como's It's Beginning to Look a lot like Christmas)

It's Beginning to look a lot like spring term,  
 everywhere you go.  
 Take a look at the Registrar's line, bustling once again  
 with adds and drops and schedule changes aflow.  
 It's beginning to look a lot like spring term, students  
 everywhere,  
 But the prettiest sight to see is the student that will be in  
 our own class.....room.  
 A pair of attentive ears and a yearning to learn are the  
 wish of all that teach.  
 Pupils that will question and think critically are the  
 hopes within our reach.  
 And Mom and Dad can hardly wait for school to start  
 again.  
 It's beginning to look a lot like Spring term,  
 everywhere you go,  
 There's help in Success Center I and also in number II,  
 the wonderful kind that doesn't mind at all.  
 It's beginning to look a lot like spring term, soon the  
 bells will start.  
 And the thing that will make them ring is the  
 persistence that we bring right into our rooms!

Have a great semester! Remember to visit the  
 Success Center and utilize the free tutoring, attend  
 one of the many workshops, access the online  
 resources, or use the computers for word processing  
 and internet research. Many friendly faces in the  
 Success Centers are available to help SWIC students  
 with academic pursuits!

## Looking Back...And Ahead

For many students, the spring semester  
 represents returning to another college  
 term. We challenge you to explore what worked for  
 you last semester and what did not. Create a written  
 plan to address those areas that created stress or  
 interfered with academic success. Share the plan with  
 someone that can help you stick to it and then several  
 times during the semester, refer back to the plan to see  
 how you are doing.

## Note Taking Skills

Taking class notes is challenging. Part of the difficulty  
 in taking good notes is that teaching styles and lecture  
 styles vary from instructor to instructor. Some  
 instructors provide engaging examples  
 during lectures, but students are tasked to  
 absorb the text on their own. Others  
 provide sequential lectures with lots of  
 definitions and students are tested on  
 application of the materials. Developing  
 good lecture notes is an essential  
 component of college success and it is not an accident  
 that the best note takers are often the most successful  
 college students. It is essential for students to  
 determine an instructor's lecture style, the method he or  
 she uses to divulge important ideas, and the testing  
 style. Active listening, pre-reading assignments, and  
 critical thinking are all components of creating good  
 notes. Take this survey to evaluate your current note  
 taking skills:

<http://istudy.psu.edu/FirstYearModules/NoteTaking/Survey.htm>



## Back-To-Back Classes:

### Hindrance or Help?

Taking classes back-to-back is appealing to many  
 students who often cite work commitments,  
 childcare responsibilities, and transportation costs  
 as core reasons for scheduling classes in as few of  
 days as possible and back-to-back. But is this  
 strategy the most beneficial for academic success?  
 Most students would agree not, yet believe they  
 will still meet their academic demands while working  
 full time or close to that and taking a full time load of  
 classes. Often the balancing act doesn't become  
 unmanageable until school demands kick in. If you  
 found yourself feeling overwhelmed by the demands of  
 school, work, and home in the past, consider spreading  
 your class schedule out a little more and spending more  
 time on campus. Breaks give students a chance to eat,  
 relax, review notes, prepare for classes, meet with  
 faculty, connect with other students, study, and use the  
 resources in the success centers and libraries.  
 Community college students have many competing  
 responsibilities to juggle. Carving out time for  
 homework can be easier if a schedule is created which  
 includes breaks and designated study periods.



## Reading Assistance on the R.I.S.E.

A new program, Reading Improves Student Excellence (RISE) was piloted in 7 Basic Reading classes during the fall 2005 semester. Five sections of English 001 at Belleville and two at the E. St. Louis Community College Center were selected to be part of the original pilot. English professors Faith Christiansen, Mardy Eisloeffel, Billy Yates, and Ruth Walthers supported developmental reading students by encouraging their participation in weekly reading labs. Small groups, tutor facilitated discussions, help with assignments, and caring mentors who maintained regular contact with the students, were just part of the RISE program. RISE was a collaborative effort between the Success Center, Americorp, the reading faculty, PALS, the Counseling Center, and the Minority Transfer and Multicultural Student Center. The pilot was aimed at improving successful class completion and retention rates of these at-risk students. Tutors attended some of the classes with the students and incorporated activity-based learning strategies with them during the weekly small group labs. Historically, there has been a very high withdrawal rate and low successful course completion rate of Basic Reading students. Initial outcomes show a 5 percent increase in successful class completion of the pilot classes over the outcomes from last fall semester. In the spring, 6 English 001 classes are targeted.

## Margins

In every book there is blank space around the words, “The Margin.” Imagine a book where the words started at the top left edge of the page and ended at the binding-line after line all the way to the bottom edge of the paper. How overwhelming it would feel to read!



Yet, this is how many of our lives seem to be run: fast paced and hectic with little room for life’s unexpected events such as traffic, sickness, car problems, inclement weather, etc. Like the overwhelming book, we have filled our lives with nearly constant activities and commitments. This can lead to stress, becoming sick, feeling overwhelmed, getting behind on class work, quitting on dreams, and in the best case scenario, just losing sleep. Make a conscious effort this semester to create margin in your life. During the periods that you may have some extra time, use it wisely. By thinking ahead of tomorrow’s responsibilities, you might save yourself some aggravation. One specific idea might include getting entirely ready for the next day of school on the night before by packing your backpack, laying out clothes, filling up the gas tank, and making a list of what needs to be done the next day. A little forethought can eliminate a lot of frustration.

Concept adapted from Richard A. Swenson’s book: *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*.

## Financial Aid Study Skills Workshop



The Success Strategies for Financial Aid Students Workshop is another pilot program which began in the fall 2005 semester. The collaborative effort between the Financial Aid and the Success Programs departments is designed to assist students on financial aid suspension by equipping them with college success strategies. During the 2 hour workshop, students are empowered to identify their strengths and determine how these characteristics can be applied to their academic pursuits. Additionally, students identify potential barriers to success and alternative solutions. They explore self-defeating behaviors and commit to one goal to overcome this behavior. Before school ever starts, the students have been challenged to create “safety nets” in the way of identifying potential resources or solutions to problems that may arise during the semester. The participants’ evaluations have been quite favorable. Retention rates of the participants will be tracked as well.



## A Concept That Grew On Me

For me it was always  $8 \times 7$ , and the inevitable evil cousin  $7 \times 8$ . I could not conquer 56 for some reason unknown to me and the rather frustrated elementary school teacher, Sister Mary James. She suggested I make flash cards and I think mom and I wore out those two 56 cards, dog-eared them like a page with a favorite poem. But those flash cards saved me. So when Latin II and Caesar were throwing irregular verbs at me junior year in high school, I returned to the concept. A couple of friends on the bus made fun of my deck of Latin cards until I scored well on the first test. We then all had cards.

So why not in college? Just because it worked for an eight year old does not mean it will not apply to the life of an 18 year old or a 48 year old. The concept is the same. The terms have just grown up a bit. There’s a test coming up in sociology and there are all those terms to keep straight. How about making some flash cards? I can’t remember the difference between a vertebrate and an invertebrate and I probably need to pass biology. Hmm. Some cards could help. There’s a double benefit here. As I make the cards, I am learning just by writing out the information. Plus I am thinking about what I am writing. Then I have a wonderful tool for study, something I can use almost anywhere when I have a few minutes. Flash cards are portable, easy to use, and cheap to make. I believe Sister Mary James was on to something.

Thanks to English Specialist Cheryl Blake for submitting this article. For help with note cards or other study strategies, visit the Success Center I in the Main Complex.