

Getting The Most Out Of Online Class Experience

(NAPSA)—Whether you're a first-time college student or well into a degree program, chances are you have considered taking an online class. You're not alone. According to Pew Research Center, more than three-quarters of college presidents say that their institutions offer classes online and an estimated half of all those who graduated college in the last 10 years say that they have taken an online class.

Online classes offer flexibility and access to rigorous academic programs for students whose schedules make it difficult to be in the physical classroom. So how can you make the most of your online learning experience?

It comes down to personal commitment, said Nicole Cabrere, Ed.D., senior vice provost for Strayer University, which offers online undergraduate and graduate courses to students worldwide.

"It's amazing what can be taught online; courses from business to writing, even biology and how to dissect frogs," said Dr. Cabrere. "As a society, we're adapting to rapid advancements in technology, and our education reflects that."

"The key is to apply personal commitment and recognize that online programs require the same focus and discipline as campus-based classes."

Dr. Cabrere offers three tips for making your online learning experience a success:

1. Manage your time. In addition to the time you spend reviewing course materials and preparing assignments, you may have to build in time for live online discussions, viewing taped lectures and interacting virtually with classmates. It's important to understand the various requirements of your class and work them into your schedule.

2. Participate. "The fact that you are not in a classroom setting shouldn't take away from your active participation," she added.



Education experts advise online learners to e-mail thoughtful questions to their professor, participate in online chats and distribute helpful articles or other resources.

"To 'raise your hand' virtually, e-mail thoughtful questions to your professor regularly, participate in online chats and distribute helpful articles or other resources."

3. Network. Get to know your classmates and professors. Hold study sessions virtually through video chat services or in person with classmates in the area. Strayer University lets students connect with each other further by hosting Facebook pages for various communities such as writers or geographic areas. Your fellow students can share insights into occupations you're interested in. Be sure to add them to your professional network.

Before enrolling, Dr. Cabrere suggests, students should become familiar with the computer and space that they will use to take their online class. "Unless you are in a highly technical program, you will need basic computer skills to navigate an online class. If you run into trouble, don't be afraid to ask for help and raise that 'virtual hand' at any point."

For information about Strayer University's online and on-campus academic programs, visit www.strayer.edu.