

Dear Students,

This is hard. No, let's be honest, this is devastating. For most of you, your campus is closing and transitioning online. This means you're facing challenges that were almost unthinkable just a few weeks ago: you are saying tough and unexpected goodbyes to friends, you may be in search of a place to live, you may no longer have childcare, you may have lost your job, you may have to go back home, you may need to assume childcare responsibility for siblings, you may be running out of money. Much of what we take for granted as "normal" has suddenly changed and nobody knows when it will come back. You may have no idea what to do next. This is hard.

I distinctly remember times during my own college experience where I felt like my world was turned upside down very suddenly and I was left feeling isolated, scared, overwhelmed, and unsure how to move forward. **I also know, however, that there is power and great reward in persevering during tough times.** As Director of the Every Learner Everywhere network, an organization that helps campuses use technology to ensure that you do well in your introductory courses, I have a special sensitivity to the challenges you may face during this time.

I'm writing to encourage you to **PERSIST** through this difficult time and give you some practical tips to help you adjust to online learning and stay on track towards graduation.

- **Finding a good study spot.** As more and more public and private spaces close in the interests of public health, it may be hard finding a quiet place with internet access where you can work. There are resources like this [one](#) to find free Wi-Fi in your area. [Spectrum](#) is also offering free Wi-Fi for student households. If a quiet spot is hard to come by inside your residence, don't be afraid to explore non-conventional options like going to a park (keeping the recommended distance from others, if possible) or working in your car, if necessary.
- **Keeping focused.** Even though you may be managing multiple responsibilities at the same time, studying while distracted can have a negative impact on your ability to retain the information. If at all possible, create time for multiple short (15-20 minute) disruption-free study periods instead of longer periods that include more interruptions.
- **Asking for help.** Please reach out to your professor if you are struggling with coursework, access to technology, anxiety, or any other issue that you feel is significantly impacting your ability to be successful in your studies. Your professor may be aware of additional support or accommodations that will help you.
- **Staying connected.** Community is still important even at a time when we're all being encouraged to practice social distancing. Call on your friends for video study groups or homework sessions. Keep each other motivated and don't forget to share tips and tricks. For example, here is a [\\$20 Bluetooth keyboard](#) that could help you write papers on your mobile device if you don't have a computer. Anything that helps you cope or succeed might benefit your friends or peers, so don't be shy about sharing what's working.

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- **Doing the best you can. One day this pandemic will have passed, and looking back** this may not have been your best semester. That is okay. There are still things you can do to keep yourself on track for greater success in the future. Take care of your physical and mental health. Support your family and friends. Be kind to yourself.

Yes, this is hard, but you can do this. You are not in this alone. We are all experiencing this together, and together we can lessen its impact on our friends, families, and neighbors. The Every Learner Everywhere network is rooting for you. Your faculty and institutions are rooting for you. Your families are rooting for you. Keep pushing forward.

Sincerely,

Jessica R. Williams, Ph.D.