Finding Your Motivation: Identifying Your “Why”

Setting goals gives your semester direction and purpose. Whether you're aiming to improve your grades, build better habits, or get more involved on campus, clear goals help you stay focused and motivated. This section will guide you through setting meaningful, realistic goals you can actually stick to.

Finding Your Motivation

Defining Your “Why”

Knowing your “why” helps you stay focused and motivated, especially when things get challenging, it becomes easier to make choices that align with what matters most to you.

Consider these questions when considering your “why”:

- Why did I choose to go to college?
- How does school fit into my bigger goals?
- What kind of life do I want after college?
- What makes me feel proud of myself?
- What keeps me going when things get hard?

Reflect on these questions, then draft your “why”:

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Your “**why”** is not something you define once and leave behind. It can grow and change as you do. Take time to revisit it often, especially when you feel stuck or unmotivated.

Write it down and keep it somewhere you will see it every day, like your planner, mirror, or phone screen. Seeing your “why” each day helps you stay focused and connected to your purpose.

Visualization for Success

Visualization can be a powerful way to boost motivation. Close your eyes and imagine yourself living out your “why.” What are you doing? How do you feel? Picture the details clearly and take a moment to connect with that version of you.

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Thinking about your strengths and past wins can reveal what drives you. When have you succeeded before? What pushed you to keep going?

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Identifying Your Obstacles

Identifying the obstacles that get in the way of your motivation helps you better understand what's holding you back and reconnect with your deeper 'why' for pursuing your goals.

Examples:

External Obstacles

1. A noisy or distracting study environment
2. Work schedule or family responsibilities that limit study time
3. Lack of access to resources (like textbooks, technology, or tutoring)
4. Conflicting demands from multiple classes or jobs

Internal Obstacles

1. Procrastination or poor time-management habits
2. Negative self-talk ("I'm not smart enough to do this")
3. Fear of failure or perfectionism
4. Feeling disconnected from your long-term goals or purpose

YOUR EXTERNAL OBSTACLES	YOUR INTERNAL OBSTACLES

Creating Your Plan

Once you've identified your obstacles, the next step is to turn them into action.
Here are strategies to overcome each type:

Strategies to Overcome External Obstacles

1. Set clear, small goals
2. Build a consistent routine
3. Reflect on your habits and mindset
4. Strengthen weak skills
5. Use positive self-talk

Strategies to Overcome nternal Obstacles

1. Ask for support
2. Organize your environment
3. Plan your time carefully
4. Use available resources
5. Speak up about your needs

Which strategies might you use to overcome your own obstacles when they arise?

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Sometimes obstacles are unavoidable, so it's helpful to have a contingency plan. Think ahead about how you will respond by writing an if/then statement that identifies a specific action you will take when a challenge arises.

"If _____

then _____**."**

Now it's time to set your sights on what you want to achieve. Write down three goals that matter to you, and consider framing them as SMART or SMARTER goals to make them clear, actionable, and trackable.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

NOTE:Sustained success grows from many small wins, which build momentum and shape larger habits that lead to long-term achievement.