

## *New and Improved Learning Center*

By Rachel Neumeier

As you may have noticed, EXCEL has moved! We have merged with the Learning Center and now share the familiar Learning Center space with the new Academic Resource Center. We still offer a large computer lab where you can work on your homework, with space also available for you and your friends to work in groups if you wish. Individual and group tutoring is more available than ever – if you could use a little boost with (almost) any of your classes, the Learning Center is the place! EXCEL is sharing not only the space, but also responsibility for tutoring, with the

See “*Learning Center*” on page 2

## EXCEL-SSS GRANT AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS – APPLY NOW!

EXCEL students have the opportunity to apply for the Bernadine Ratliff Scholarship, which will be awarded to two students this fall, and for

SSS Supplemental Grant Aid (SGA), which will be awarded in the spring semester. The “Bernie” Scholarship is funded by Mineral Area College and is non-renewable, in the amount of \$500. Supplemental Grant Aid will be awarded to a maximum of 24 participants, and the minimum award amount is \$620. Both the scholarships and the SGA grants have specific

eligibility and participation requirements that must be met. Applications and information for both are available in the EXCEL Office and on the EXCEL web page.



### Coming Events



Sept. 30 Spring & Summer '20 class schedules available online



- Oct. 7 Mid-term grades available for 16 week term
- Oct. 12 EXCEL Field Trip - SEMO Show-Me Day
- Oct. 16 Final grades available for 1st 8 week term
- Oct. 21 Registration for Spring 2020 Classes starts for Currently Enrolled Students with 30 or more credit hours earned
- Oct. 23 Registration for Spring 2020 Classes starts for Currently Enrolled Students
- Oct. 28 Spring 2020 Open Registration begins



- Nov. 9 EXCEL Field Trip - UMSL Day
- Nov. 11 Veterans Day - No Classes
- Nov. 12 Professional Development Day - Classes Cancelled
- Nov. 14 Mid-term grades available for second 8 week term
- Nov. 15 Last Day to Drop a class and Receive a “W” for 16 week term
- Nov. 28 - 29 Thanksgiving Break

# Learning Does Not Require Magic Rituals

By Rachel Neumeier

How do you learn Algebra? For that matter, how do you learn anything? **You learn via attentive practice and mindful repetition.**

Whether you are learning how to add fractions, how to add polynomials, or how to add matrices; whether you are learning to recognize fused sentences or comma splices, whether you are memorizing the parts of the cell, the details of the Three-Fifths Compromise, or Piaget's stages of cognitive development, you learn all these things by means of **attentive** practice and **mindful** repetition.

Practice means that you're doing the MyMathLab homework, completing a sheet of sentence exercises, or running through a set of flashcards. **Attentive** practice means you aren't just mindlessly repeating the same thing over and over. It means you are specifically getting out of your comfort zone and addressing the areas that give you trouble, until you can get that material right. It means you are *expecting to learn something*. If you don't immediately understand some of the material, you are planning to *figure it out*.

For example, if you're learning that  $x^2 x^4 = x^6$  but that  $(x^2)^4 = x^8$ , then you expect there to be a reason for the difference and you expect to *figure out the reason and learn to recognize the difference between the two situations*. Once you understand what is going on with exponents, you will never be baffled by this again, because you will *understand* what the rule is and why it works the way it does.

In the same way, filling out a sheet of sentence exercises is practice. But **attentive** practice means you *actually try to figure out why* "Esmeralda drove her motorcycle lke, her miniature pinscher, perched between the handle bars." is a fused sentence, whereas "Esmeralda drove her motorcycle while lke, her miniature pinscher, perched between the handle

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## Learning Center

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staff of the Academic Resource Center. That means extended hours and improved access to tutoring for students in many classes.

Dane Korenak and Erik Sopko continue to work with students in all the advanced math classes and all the physical sciences. Taking Trig, Calculus, Chemistry, or Physics? They can help you with that. Erik is the go-to tutor for Statistics. Dane is also more than happy to work with students in programming classes, such as Programming Logic or Javascript. If you're in a computer programming class and run into a topic that seems more challenging than you expected, contact Dane – he'll help you sort it out.



Nicole Culbertson has returned and can give you a hand with Spanish, American Sign Language, and General Biology.

Rachel Neumeier works with students in Quantitative Reasoning, Fundamentals of Algebra, PreCalculus Algebraic Reasoning, science classes including Biology, Botany, Zoology, and Earth Science, and social sciences such as Psychology. Rachel will also be glad to look over any paper for any non-English class. Keep in mind that every single paper you write will earn a higher grade if you take

See "Learning Center" on page 6

### EXCEL/SSS MISSION

To provide the support necessary for each EXCEL/SSS student to reach his/her own level of academic excellence and succeed in achieving a post-secondary education.

# Success in Your Classes: Studying Smart

By Rachel Neumeier

When you take a class, your goal is to pass it. That goes without saying, right?

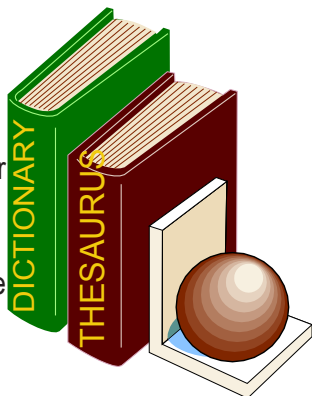
The fact is, the easiest way to do this is often to *learn the material*. Plus, if you expect to be able to pass your other classes – the ones that are coming up later, the ones that depend on your having learned stuff in the prerequisite classes, the ones you need to pass in order to actually earn a degree and graduate – then you will probably need to have actually *learned the material* in your earlier classes.

This is more true in some courses than others, of course. If you just barely make it through Fundamentals of Mathematics by the skin of your teeth, you should expect that you might have trouble in your next math class. Plus, you have to learn the material in English Comp I in order to do okay in English Comp II. There are many examples where one course leads into another.

There are several techniques you can use that will reliably lead to your learning the material in a class. Some of them you may be familiar with, some less so.

1. When you don't understand the material in a content class, such as Psychology or Anatomy or Economics, here is how you can figure it out:

Read the chapter, paying attention to the headings. Notice if the main headings are blue and the subheadings black. Chapter headings will outline the material for you if you pay attention. The powerpoint slides your instructor might be handing out are almost useless to study from. Instead, use the chapter headings to make your *own* outline of the material so that you can see how the information is organized. Write down your own brief (five word)



explanations of important words and concepts. If you don't understand a section, figure it out as well as you can and *write down what you think it means*. Then check with your instructor or a tutor to see if you were right. *Trying* to figure stuff out is how you *learn* to figure stuff out.

If you are spending hours and hours studying and still getting D's in your classes, then please come in and talk to Rachel Neumeier or Rodney Wilson

See "Success" on page 4

## Final Exam SCHEDULE

At the MyMAC login screen click on Final Exam schedule in Quick Links on your left.

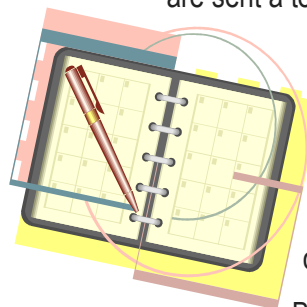
## EXCEL Appointments

By Rodney Wilson

It's vital that you either attend all of your appointments or that you let us know beforehand when you can't make an appointment.

To help with this, when an appointment is made in the EXCEL office, it is noted in the calendar of the EXCEL employee and in your own calendar that is associated with your MAC email address.

In addition, the morning of the appointment, you are sent a text (as long as you have given us permission to text you) reminding you of appointment time and the tutor you will be seeing. Included in that morning text is the EXCEL phone number, which you can call if you need to cancel that day's appointment.



Bottom line: Don't miss an EXCEL appointment; if you have to, let us know in advance.

# Success

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about how you can study more effectively. If you are using *effective* study techniques, then you should be able to do better in your classes with much less time wasted in ineffective study.

2. When you need to memorize a lot of information, as in Med Terms (and also all content classes), then there is just no substitute for repetition and recall of the information. Do not just look at the answers you wrote down earlier, or at definitions in the book. Just *looking* at information does not teach you to *recall* it. Instead, make copies of blank worksheets so you can fill them out several times, or make flashcards – anything that will let you actually practice recalling the information out of your own head.

If you are having trouble in a class that requires a lot of memorization, then please talk to Rachel or Rodney about techniques that you can use to practice recall.

3. When you do not understand how to do a math problem, there are ways to figure it out. You can find a similar example problem and work that problem out on paper. Or you can try the problem you don't understand three different ways, until you get it right. Or you can look at the solution and see how the problem should be done.

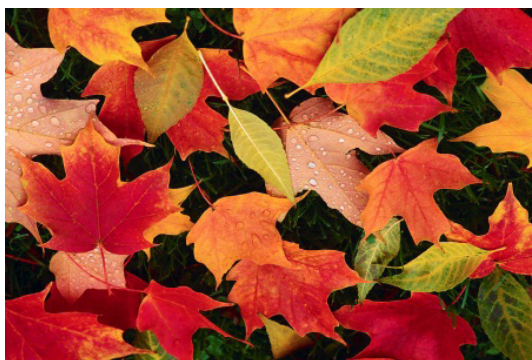
None of that will be enough. The idea is not to get this one particular problem done, it is to learn how to do this kind of problem. So –

- a) Work that exact same problem three times, until you see how it works and understand the “flow” of action it requires.
- b) Immediately do three more similar problems to make sure the technique now works for you. If MyMathLab is not a convenient place to find similar problems, find some in the book. There are extra textbooks in the EXCEL Office if you need to look at one.
- c) Do one more problem of that type several more times that day and the next day, to ensure that the technique is sticking with you and that you are

going to be able to recognize when to use it and how to use it in the future.

- d) This means that by the end of the chapter, you will accumulate a set of different kinds of problems you need to practice. Put these together into practice tests and do one practice test every day or so in order to practice both recognizing and doing the problems. You want to think of math as though you were learning to play the piano or lift weights: there is *no substitute for practice*, and *watching someone else practice won't help*.

*Consistent* success in the college classroom is all about learning the material – and that means finding study techniques that actually get the job done. Especially if you have a job or kids, then learning how to study effectively is crucial, so that you have time to meet your other commitments.



## EXCEL/SSS Web Page

From the Mineral Area College home page at [www.mineralarea.edu](http://www.mineralarea.edu). Point to Community then click on *EXCEL/Student Support Services*. Information included:

- **EXCEL/SSS Services**
- **How to Apply**
- **EXCEL/SSS Resources**
  - Advisory Services
  - Tutoring Services
  - Economic Literacy - Cash Course
  - First Generation Students
  - Newsletter
  - 2019 Student Support Services Grant Aid Application
- **EXCEL/SSS Memo to Faculty and Staff**



# Rituals

Continued from page 2

bars.” is correct. If you **pay attention** to the look and feel of your sentences while you identify and write fused and correct sentences, and then practice finding and correcting fused sentence in your own papers, you will never have to worry about making this kind of mistake again because it will just look wrong to you.

Practice always requires repetition. If you are using repetition, this means that you are using MyMathLab homework or flashcards or *something* to repeatedly go over the same material. **Mindful** repetition means that you are paying attention to your own level of mastery. Can you do the math problems or recall the parts of the cell without looking at your notes, looking at an example, or other prompting? If you can, great! If you can't – yet – then you are *not yet finished studying even if you have completed the homework*. If you can't tell whether you need your notes or not, you are not being **mindful**. You always need to pay attention to whether you actually understand the material or not.

Too often – *far, far* too often – instead of **mindful** practice and study, we see students tackle their homework as though they are performing a magic ritual. The magic ritual of MyMathLab! I will sit in this chair and make little green checkmarks appear! I will make a magic sacrifice of time and perform the right incantations and then I will pass my math class!

But there are many ways to make MyMathLab work against you. If you are not really figuring anything out – if you're just guessing and then using the “similar problem” button until you get a problem right – then you can get those little green checkmarks without learning much of anything. Then you will fail the tests. And because the tests count for a lot more than MyMathLab, you will most likely also go on to fail the class. *This happens all the time.*

Substituting magic tricks for learning makes every class less comprehensible, harder, and more stressful. The easiest way to pass your classes is to understand and memorize the material. Almost all students must sometimes take classes they find boring or confusing or difficult. But only some students fail the classes they dislike. Of course there are many reasons that contribute to success versus failure. Poor

academic preparation in grade school or high school, complicated personal lives; many things play a role. But the **single** most important difference between students who generally succeed academically and those who don't is this: students who *learn the material* succeed in their classes, whereas students who *look for magical rituals that will let them pass their classes even though they have not learned anything* often fail.

The single most important difference between “A” students and “D” students is that the former pay attention to their own understanding and ability to recall information. They expect to *figure out* the material and then *practice* doing math problems or recalling facts until they know they can do it on a test. Students who know how to learn find it works best to frequently test their ability to recall material and correctly work math problems with quick, closed-notes practice quizzes. “D” students do not test themselves with their notes closed and therefore do not know whether or not they can do the problems or recall the material. Generally, “D” students do fine on open-note homework but very poorly on closed-book tests. Often “D” students blame this on test anxiety. Much more often, the problem is that they have not understood or learned the material.



If you have not been succeeding in your classes, it may be time to ask yourself how you have been approaching your classes,

and whether you should try an approach that is not just a little bit different, but very different. It's hard to give up magic. But in the real world, attentive, mindful practice that leads to actually learning the material works much, much better.



# Learning Center

Continued from page 2

time to ask an experienced tutor to look it over before you hand it in to your instructor. Rachel would also be glad to help you improve your scores on the Math portion of the Accuplacer or other standardized tests.

Rodney Wilson is a great person to see if you're having trouble with your APS or history classes. He also works with students in a wide variety of social studies courses. As an advisor, Rodney can also help you sort out questions about which upcoming classes you should take and what degree choices are available to you.

EXCEL's Director, Matt Sopko, is also an advisor, so if you need to talk to someone about your degree plan or what classes you should take, he'd be glad to work with you and make sure you're taking exactly the classes you need.

Tutoring for many classes is also available in the Academic Resource Center.

Mary Brown, Chance Herman, Lydia Matheny, and Jodi Ralston can all give you a hand with your College Reading and Basic Writing assignments or your English Comp papers. Deb McCraw and Teresa Campbell work with students in Fundamentals of Math and Applications of College Math.

Dan Jaycox, Director of the Academic Resource Center, works with students in both English and math classes. He can also help you improve your scores in Reading or Writing for the Accuplacer or other standardized tests.

And in addition, extended tutoring hours are available on Thursday, with Korey Byers and Chance Herman present from 3:00 PM in the afternoon until 7:00 PM in the evening to work with students in English, math, or science classes. I'm sure many of you will find this helpful, as we have always had requests for evening tutoring, but we have never been able to offer that service. Now the Academic Resource Center can accommodate some of those requests!

The staff of both EXCEL and ARC hope and expect that the new space and extended services provided

by the Learning Center will prove inviting to all MAC students who could benefit from our services – which is, from time to time, every single student who attends MAC! Drop by and get acquainted whenever you like, and remember we're here if and when you could use a hand with advising or tutoring.

***“Voting is the only way to make change in a democracy.”***

-- Christina Todd Whitman

Source: [www.brainyquote.com](http://www.brainyquote.com)



Brooklyn Fink, Marina McKee,  
Christin Blackwell, Nathan Geisner  
Christopher Fetterhoff, Bridgette Berner,  
Kristi Gamble, Azora Hulsey



Kevin McClure, Lathonie Armstead,  
Victoria Cunningham, Danielle Morrison,  
Cassandra Gray, Amanda Rector,  
Sheryl Radford, Jacqueline Voigt,  
Michelle Young, Brandon Boyer,  
Tabitha Freeland, Adrienne Bequette



# CashCourse: Your Real-life Money Guide

Use your MAC email address to create a CashCourse account at [www.CashCourse.org](http://www.CashCourse.org) go to the *Student* section, click *Register for a free Account* and fill in the registration information. Use a password you will be able to remember. Then choose *Missouri* and *Mineral Area College* at the drop-down menus. Accept the privacy and terms of use policy and check the *I'm not a robot* box. Then click the Register button.

The CashCourse website has courses and quizzes with valuable financial information. There are several financial topics and tools to help you learn smart ways to plan your financial future at your own pace. Today, the featured tool is the Calculator: What Would my Loan Payments Be?

CashCourse homepage options include: *My Assignments, My Activity, Topics, Financial Tools, Financial Experts,* and *Contact Us.* *Dashboard* brings you back to the homepage from other areas.

The Topics toolbar includes: *Earn, Save & Invest, Protect, Spend, Borrow,* and *Pay for Education.*

Related articles by category include:

**EARN** - *3 Tips for Finding a Part-Time Job, Your Paper Trail: What to Keep and What to Toss,* and ***My Story: Learning to File Taxes as a Student.***

**SAVE & INVEST** - *Start Saving-Pay Yourself First, The Power of Compound Interest,* and *My Story: Rebuilding Financially After an Abusive Relationship.*

**PROTECT** - *Sharing the Rent: How to Deal with Roommates, Health Insurance Open Enrollment: You Have Options,* and ***How to Avoid Scams Targeting College Students.***

**SPEND** - *Living Paycheck to Paycheck: Cut Out Unnecessary Spending, Saving Money on Food, 5 Dangers of Overspending,* and *Four Things to do Before You Pay for an Online Order.*

**BORROW** - *The Bottom Line: True Costs of Borrowing Money, How to get and Keep a Good Credit*

*Score,* and *My Story: The Danger of Putting Friends' Purchases on Your Credit Card.*

**PAYING FOR EDUCATION** - *My Story: Transferring from a Community College to a University, The First Step in Financial Aid: Completing the FAFSA,* and ***Finding More Aid After a Change in Your Situation.***

**FINANCIAL TOOLS** - *Budget Wizard, Coursework, Featured Videos, Financial Calculators, Financial Glossary, Quizzes,* and *Worksheets.*

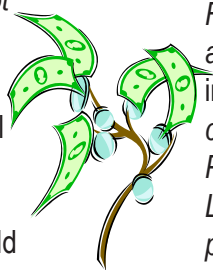
**COURSES** - *Be Credit Savvy, Budgeting Basics, Paying Back Student Loans, Getting Started with Saving and Investing, Career Planning, Saving and Goal Setting, Protect Yourself with Insurance, Fraud Protection, Prepare for Emergencies,* and *Funding Sources.* Spanish courses include: *Conviértete en un experto en crédito, La preparación de un presupuesto, Primeros pasos para ahorrar e invertir, Las prestaciones laborales,* and *Devolver préstamos estudiantiles (plus 7 more).*

**FEATURED VIDEOS** - *Finding Extra Money for School, How to be Credit Savvy, Paying Back Student Loans, Saving Made Easy.*

**FINANCIAL CALCULATORS** - *Will I Be Able to Pay Back My Student Loans? What is the Value of Reducing Expenses? What is the Impact of Making Extra Payments on a Loan? Should I Rent or Buy a Home? What Would My Loan Payments Be? When Should I Begin to Save for Retirement?*

**QUIZZES** - *Are You Ready for a Financial Emergency? Car Costs You Auto to Know. How Credit Savvy Are You? Know Your Work Perks. Save or Splurge? Test Your Student Loan IQ. What's Your Budgeting IQ? and What's Your Credit Score IQ?*

**WORKSHEETS** - *Monthly Budget, Apartment Features, 10 Steps to Balancing Your Checking Account, Budgeting for Life After College, Comparing Checking Accounts, Debt Recovery, Emergency Fund, Preparing for a Job Application, Moving Checklist, Cost of Owning a Pet, Savings Goal, Student Loan Comparison Chart, Insurance Plan, Home Inventory, Identity Fraud Crisis Checklist, Hold Yourself Accountable, Spending Detective, Cost of Training and Development, Mindful Spending, SMART Goals,* and *Auto Insurance.*



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