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What I Wish I Had Known at The Beginning of The Semester

The beginning of a semester can be an uneasy time. There are students trying to crash and add courses in order to fill out their schedule and graduate on time, students trying to figure out if the classes they are in are the right fit for them, and much more anxiety than necessary for college age kids. I remember the beginning of this semester was no different for me. I was not worried about having to crash or add any courses, but I was nervous that certain courses I was enrolled in would prove to be too difficult for me. With this being my last semester, that possibility frightened me to my core as it would mean I don't graduate on time. One of my courses that I was especially nervous about was BUS1 120G. I had ended up enrolling in this course because I needed another accounting elective, and due to the pandemic, the options were limited. Because of the limited options, I seemingly chose at random and decided on BUS1 120G. I was not even sure what the class was, all I was concerned with was that it would satisfy the elective requirement I needed. On the first day of class, I finally learned what the class I had enrolled in really was, Programming and Systems Development in AIS. I quickly learned that this was essentially an introductory course to programming, which I knew nothing about and never thought I would know anything about. I found myself filled with nerves that the course would be too difficult for me since it was such a foreign concept. Having now almost completed the semester, there are a few things I wish I could have told past me in order to help prepare for what's to come. First off, I would have tried to explain what the class is as opposed to going into it without knowing anything. I would have also tried to express how important it is to "eat your

vegetables". Lastly, I would have liked to tell myself about the effectiveness of the trial-and-error method when writing a program.

It is usually not a good idea to get involved with something before knowing exactly what it is you're getting involved with. The same rule applies to choosing what courses to take. At the time of choosing courses I was blinded by the light of graduation, and I did not bother to learn what the course was which I was signing up for. Because of this, the first couple class meetings were very intimidating. When I learned that the course was going to teach me how to program, I immediately was filled with nerves. I wish I could have told myself "Yes the course will teach you how to write programs, but it will do so at a manageable pace". I would have also said that the course is specifically for business students and it is likely that nobody else in the class has any prior programming knowledge either. I remember thinking what a grave mistake I had made picking BUS1 120G and how I felt like I did not belong in the class. I believe that knowing what the course was going to be, knowing I was not the only one without prior knowledge of programming, and understanding that the course was designed for students like me would have not only helped prepare me for the course, but would have also helped ease my nerves in those first few weeks. Another piece of advice I would like to have told myself at the beginning of the semester is the importance of "eating your vegetables". Professor Huerta does not make practice programs mandatory, instead she encourages the students to complete them for their own sake as opposed to for the sake of a grade. Huerta uses the analogy of eating your vegetables to explain the importance of doing the practice programs. People don't usually like to eat their vegetables, but it is very important to do so to ensure you're getting the nutrients you need. Doing the practice programs is very similar to that. Students often do not want to do extra work if it is not required but doing so is very important if you want to fully understand the material and pass the

course. I believe that had I fully understood this lesson, I would have completed more of the practice programs and would have a much better grade and understanding in the course than I do now. The last thing that I wish I could have told myself at the beginning of the semester is how effective the trial-and-error method is to writing and solving programs. During the first few weeks of programming, I felt like a fish on a bicycle, completely unsure about so many aspects of what I was trying to do. One of things I discovered later in the semester that helped me a lot with writing programs was how helpful trial-and-error was in getting a program to do what I wanted it to. This involved making small changes to programs and then attempting to run them and doing so over and over again until the desired output was consistently given.

Had I known these things at the beginning of the semester, I believe that I would have been much more successful in the class than I actually have been.