

## Fundamentals of Virtual Learning

by Keren LeFranc, Mason Class of '21

As we all know, the past several months have been an unexpected roller coaster with dips and turns seemingly at any moment. As the class of 2024, including first year transfer students, arrive, it is important to know that Mason's staff and administration are still learning and adjusting themselves to this new way of learning. Although distance learning has always been offered, in the past, it was at the discretion of the student and it was not available for every course. Now that everything has been moved on line, some of us feel rather uncomfortable. I say this to let you know, **you are not alone**. It is okay to reach some bumps along the way, especially in the first weeks, as this is normal when entering college; keep in mind, though that you have likely completed your last month or so of high school learning virtually and you definitely have a leg up on those of us who are still getting used to the idea.

Patience and persistence are critical; constant, open communication with your professors will allow for this transition to be most successful. But, let's take a step back to the basics of online learning: **you will need a working digital device**, such as a laptop or computer (Blackboard or other tools your professors may use for instruction may not be smartphone-friendly). In a perfect world, having the right equipment would be all you need, but as we know, technology sometimes does not align with a perfect world and can cause all sorts of inconvenient problems. If your devices are ever not properly working with Blackboard or Patriot-Web, contact the ITS Support Center and inform your professors, ASAP. In the event of a technological issue, *ITS is available Monday-Thursdays between 8 am to 9 pm, Fridays 8am to 5pm, and Sunday 1pm to 9pm. The only day the ITS Support Center is closed is Saturdays.* Also, to be made aware of any campus-wide network issues as they occur, sign up for ITS Alerts at <https://its.gmu.edu/help-support/its-alerts/>.

Being provided the technological support during virtual life as a college student is indeed helpful, however not everyone learns the same; virtual learning may be a more difficult transition for some than others. GMU advises that students who have difficulty learning virtually or just want some tips on how to continue your academic success virtually, visit <https://learningservices.gmu.edu/keeplearning/>. On this link you will find helpful resources and tips to ensure academic success during this continued transition. Very importantly, you will want to make sure to **stay organized**. Virtual courses are different, in that class may not be held at a set time, but rather viewed at your discretion and time. Furthermore, it is very easy to fall behind and miss a due date or two if you do not closely follow the course schedule. Whether it's the notes in your phone, a daily planner, or sticky notes, be sure to write down important due dates and/or meeting times so you remember and stay on top of schedule.

Next, **communicating with your professors** early and often is a major key as you are trying to get your footing with this novel college experience. They understand how difficult this transition might be, so if you experience difficulties with your device and ITS hasn't gotten back to you or if you don't quite seem to understand the written instructions for an assignment, contact them. The more open communication you have about these things with your professors,

the more they will be in the loop with your situation, and the more likely they will understand to better assist you through your learning experience.

Now, that we have covered the basics of academia during virtual life, it is important that you also continue to take care of yourself in all aspects of your personal and mental space. There are a plethora of resources that are student-specific that allows access to virtual museums, workouts, national parks, and more. During these unprecedented times, college as we know it has changed, therefore the experience aspect has been less emphasized. However, the resources on the link below can allow for students to still make memories, learn, and enjoy the college experience virtually.

Be sure to look out for more posts here for tips to enhance your first year at George Mason! Email us at [univcp@gmu.edu](mailto:univcp@gmu.edu) if there is a particular topic you would like to know more about.

### **Noted Resources**

SelfCare: <https://www.brookdalecc.edu/student-life-activities/student-life-virtual-activities/>

IT Support - GMU: <https://its.gmu.edu/help-support/its-alerts/>

Learning Services - GMU: <https://learningservices.gmu.edu/keeplearning/>

### **About the Author:**

*Keren LeFranc* is a rising senior at Mason and a Community Health major with a concentration in Clinical Sciences with a double minor in African American Studies and Forensic Science. She is soon to begin her second year of being a UNIV Peer Advisor (PA). During COVID-19 quarantine, Keren has enjoyed hiking with her sisters on sunny days, as well as preparing different dishes she's never tried before.