

MESA Creators have what it takes to succeed, but success becomes easier to achieve when you begin with a strong start to each semester. Follow these steps “before the semester begins” and during “week 1” to give yourself the best opportunity for success. Enjoy the experience. *That’s what MESA Creators do!*

## Before the semester begins

- **Syllabus** – send an email to your professors to request the syllabus for each of your classes. This will help you to know what to expect for the semester & which books to purchase, know what will be required, and begin preparing for Day 1. *Tip:* For Spring classes, you can meet with your professors before the end of the Fall semester to request a syllabus for Spring. You can also take this opportunity to learn more about what to expect for the class. *Note:* Emails can be sent to professors by clicking on their NAME in the online class schedule.
- **Begin BPR** (Bullet Point Reading) – with the syllabus as a guide, begin your BPR for the first sections to be covered in class. Ideally, you want to have your BPR completed for the first 2 weeks of the semester by Day 1. *Legend #1:* MESA Creator Jonny Orozco completes a pre-BPR using Microsoft OneNote for his classes, which includes an outline of Chapter titles, Section titles and Sub-Section titles. He then adds details to his pre-BPR as he moves through the semester. *Legend #2:* Knowing he was registered for a very challenging Spring class, MESA Creator Rick Tenorio used the winter break to complete his BPR for the class for the entire semester!
- **Weekly time management plan** – regardless of what time management system you use, you **MUST** create a weekly plan to manage your time effectively to meet academic, work and personal demands. MESA offers a weekly time planner in EXCEL (found on the MESA website on the Listing of MESA Handouts page). Use the planner to schedule time for classes, work, BPR (on weekends!), RLN after classes, Homework, Professor Office Hours, Study Groups, meals, commuting, etc. With EXCEL, time blocks can be easily color coded. Follow your time plan daily beginning Week 1, and make necessary adjustments from week to week. *Tip:* Schedule CEO-time (Chief Executive Officer – you are the CEO of your own corporation!) every Friday, and use this time to review your progress for the week & plans for the next week, then make any necessary adjustments to your weekly time plan. *Note:* A weekly time plan can work only if you have a true balance between academics, work and personal commitments, e.g. full-time work and full-time school is a plan for failure. Carefully choose your priorities to give yourself the best opportunity for success.
- **Lecture videos and online resources**– search online for quality videos and other resources for your classes, including MIT Open Courseware, Khan Academy, Just Math Tutorials, Gooru, Quizlet, etc. For a listing of online resources, see the Learning Strategies page under the Foundation for Learning link on the right navigation bar on the MESA website. *Tip:* If available, improve the quality of your learning by viewing lecture videos before beginning your BPR. This will aid your understanding of the Big Picture for any topic.
- **Networking** – do you know any MESA Creators who have already taken the classes that you plan to take? Did they have the same professors? Past students can be your best resource! What lessons learned and key strategies, especially about books and other resources, can you learn from them? Make it a priority to connect with them. See the MESA Channel Videos on the Listing of MESA Handouts page on the MESA website for any Path to Earning an “A” videos for your classes. *Tip:* Speak with the Corner Man for possible referrals to past students.

## Semester Kickoff: Steps to Success (continued)

### Week 1

- Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_** (Professor Office Hours) – building relationships with professors is a key strategy for protecting your GPA (see “10-Point Success Plan for MESA Creators after Transfer”). Begin establishing your relationship with professors by introducing yourself during Week 1. If possible, meet with your professors during their first office hour. Share with them your major, and add that you are in the MESA Program. Then have a brief conversation with them about the class. For more tips, see the Interaction with Faculty: *Hello my name is ...* handout on the Listing of MESA Handouts page on the MESA website. Interact with your professors early and often to create your own success!
- Plan of Attack** – the Plan of Attack is your plan for success in each class. Begin by understanding what each class requires, i.e. what is the number of exams, and when are they scheduled? Then start with the 1<sup>st</sup> exam, what chapters and sections will be covered on the exam? Once you know what will be covered, it is very easy to write a Plan of Attack for Exam 1, including the date of the exam with a listing of the chapters and sections to be covered (MESA Law #1: If you don’t write it down, it didn’t happen!). Your challenge is to PLACE THE PLAN WHERE YOU CAN SEE IT EVERY DAY and use it to stay in control of your learning, stay focused, track your progress and work to achieve excellence! Continue this strategy for each exam until the end of the semester. For a sample plan and other tips, see the Plan of Attack handout on the Listing of MESA Handouts page on the MESA website.
- Study Groups** – there are many benefits to study groups, but the most important benefit is that study groups are a key strategy for success. Begin building your study group (2-6 max) and deciding your meeting schedule starting on Day 1. See the Common Classes display in the MESA Center for a list of other MESA Creators in your classes. Have a work plan for each group meeting, and support each other to stay focused on the Big Picture (Concept, S.A.M. & Variation). Expect all group members to work as a team, i.e. be committed to the group, come prepared, stay focused, actively participate, take turns in leading discussions, share & compare strategies, have mutual respect, and generally provide support & motivation to make learning rewarding and fun.
- Tutoring** – tutoring is NOT a magic solution for success in classes. All MESA Creators know that success begins with quality BPR, followed by quality learning in class, followed by quality review of lecture notes immediately after class, followed by quality work on homework using the Big Picture Approach to Problem Solving. Only when this “quality” effort is made, then tutoring can be an important resource. Visit the MESA Center and City College Tutorial Center during Week 1 for a semester schedule of tutors and related subjects.

### Other key strategies & available resources in the MESA Foundation for Learning

- Early Alert:** 1 – Recognize challenges immediately when they occur; 2 – Seek solutions; 3 – Implement change
- MESA Law:** 1 – Write; 2 – Simple; 3 – Smarter; 4 – Low quiz/exam score? *Speak with Corner Man immediately!*
- BPR** (Bullet Point Reading): Follow CSI:BPR method on weekends. *Success begins with quality BPR!*
- RLN** (Review Lecture Notes): Immediately after class
- Big Picture Approach to Problem Solving:** Concept, S.A.M. (i.e. steps) & Variation
- Section Summaries:** Capture the Big Picture. Reminder - *review these with your professors!*
- Test Taking Strategies:** 1 – Prepare; 2 – Work the test!; 3 – Correct the test
- Effort Tracker:** Week-by-week checkup
- Learning Styles:** 1 – Visual, 2 – Auditory; 3 – Tactile/Kinesthetic
- Emotional Intelligence:** Being aware of, understanding and managing your emotions
- Self-advocacy:** *Fight for yourself!*

MESA Creators use these and other strategies to **STAY IN CONTROL** of their learning!