

# Remote Learning...Still?!

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## SPEAKERS

Emma Saturday, Ebonee Williams, Wyatt, Yvonne Knowle, Roberto Martinez

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### **Ebonee Williams** 00:02

Welcome everyone to Triton Tools and Tidbits. I am your host this week. My name is Dr. Ebonee Williams. I'm the Director of Virtual Experience and Peer Engagement Initiatives. This week our episode is talking about student success in this remote learning environment. I'm joined today by individuals from our Teaching and Learning Commons, which has multiple hubs that support students in this environment. They were working on this before we were in a pandemic, and I think they've learned a few things since we've been in the pandemic. So, I'm gonna let them introduce themselves. Let's start with Emma.

### **Emma Saturday** 00:41

Hi, everyone, my name is Emma Saturday and I'm the Tutor Coordinator in the Writing Hub. As tutor coordinator, I oversee our undergraduate consultant staff and provide their education and training so that they can support students in our writing tutoring services.

### **Ebonee Williams** 00:58

Thank you, Emma, can we go to Yvonne next?

### **Yvonne Knowle** 01:00

Hi, everyone. My name is Yvonne Knowle pronouns she/her/hers and I'm the Tutor Coordinator with the Academic Achievement Hub. I work very closely with our content tutors to develop their training, as well as being able to support students as well.

### **Ebonee Williams** 01:15

Wyatt, will you go next?

### **Wyatt** 01:18

Hi, everyone. My name is Wyatt, pronouns he/him, and I work at the Writing Hub with Emma. I'm an Undergraduate Peer Tutor, so I work with students in any discipline of writing, all the way from freshman to seniors. And I'm very happy to be here today.

**Ebonee Williams** 01:35

Thanks. Roberto?

**Roberto Martinez** 01:38

Alright, hello everyone. My name is Roberto Martinez. My pronouns are he/him/his, I am a fourth-year undergraduate student at UC San Diego majoring in chemistry, and I am an SI leader at the Academic Achievement Hub. My job is to prepare material for (specifically) general chemistry and organic chemistry lectures, to help students engage with the material. I also work closely with the tutors, as well, to ensure that the students are being engaged with the material.

**Ebonee Williams** 02:06

Excellent. Thank you all for being here. Thank you all for listening in. And now let's dive in. My first question today is - do you feel that students have completely adjusted, and are completely on-top of remote learning, and mastered it?

**Wyatt** 02:22

So, a lot of the students that we work with - a big part of that tutoring is talking about how things are going, and asking, are you struggling with this class? Or do you feel more confident? I think that, over the time we've been doing online tutoring, people have definitely gotten more adjusted to online classes, and asynchronous classes, and just all of the different challenges in the pandemic. I wouldn't say people have completely adjusted, but they've definitely gotten a bit better at it. But I think along with that, you can also misadjust. There's a unique set of challenges that come along with online classes. And there's a little bit less accountability than in-person classes, where you're really firmly in an in-person academic environment. If you don't show up to discussion, your TAs will recognize very easily that someone's not there. That accountability isn't quite as much there in the online environment. So, I think that it's its own set of challenges. But I think overall, students have gotten a lot better.

**Roberto Martinez** 03:32

Just listening to Wyatt's answer, I want to go ahead and continually withstand from my own personal experience as a student as well as the assigned leader. I feel that students have adapted as best as they could to the online education. But I know that a lot of students are very optimistic, and they have a positive mindset to this new shift, because everyone still wants to get the UC San Diego education that we all signed up for.

**Ebonee Williams** 04:02

Thank you both. What's so great about your answers is you really provide some context. People have adjusted, some have created some good habits, some have created some bad habits, and then there's a tradition - if you've been in school, since you were five, it's been at least 10-plus, sometimes 15 years of in-person learning. There's a curve to that. What are some of the biggest challenges that you feel that students are facing in this remote environment as it relates to learning?

**Emma Saturday** 04:37

I can jump in for this question. Something I've heard from a lot of students is that it's really challenging to stay engaged with lectures. Synchronous lectures that are happening on Zoom - you just become a faceless zoom box. I've heard a lot of students say it's a challenge, being the person to take yourself off

mute and ask a question when you can't really see any other people. A lot of folks have shared that - that's tough. But also with asynchronous lectures, I've heard students say that because they have so much control over when they can watch their lectures, they'll leave them until the last minute, and then it'll be [nearing] midterms, or towards the end of the quarter and they'll realize 'Oh, I'm behind on four or five lectures, and I need to go back and watch all of those lectures that have been recorded.' I've talked with a couple of students about that who are trying to find ways to increase their engagement in a - especially a synchronous, a live Zoom lecture setting. I know a lot of students have shared that. Even just putting a picture background as your Zoom tile. Even if your camera isn't on, at least there's a picture of your face that reminds you that you're there, and you're present, and that you should engage. That's been helpful. Other folks have shared that if it does feel really daunting to take yourself off mute and ask a question, you can always use the chat - you can chat your professor privately, or chat to everyone so that other students can see the question. I think that's one of the biggest challenges that I've heard a lot of students facing, but it does seem, like Wyatt and Roberto shared, there are ways I think that students are navigating that really well.

**Yvonne Knowle 06:36**

And I can add on to that a little bit as well. Like Emma was talking about time management - making sure that you actually put down time to manage all those asynchronous lectures. In addition to that, there's a lot of distractions. Depending on where you're at - if you're at home, you might have parents around your siblings around pets, or even noise outside can be distracting. So being really intentional about trying not to be distracted, and putting your phone away more than ever is so important.

**Wyatt 07:11**

Yeah, I can definitely agree with that. From the student perspective, it's tough to get that same sense of community and a group that can help you stay focused and stay engaged with the material. Distractions are a big factor too. You don't have that social pressure of "oh, I don't want the person in the row behind me to see that I'm on this website that has nothing to do with this lecture." There's none of that social element. So that can be tough. However, I think students are really creative with the ways that they can get Slack groups or different groups together through various social medias. This definitely wasn't something that happened in Spring quarter, our first quarter online. But since then, I think there's been a lot of adjustment. I think every class that I've had has had some sort of group method of discussing together and focusing on the class material. It's certainly not the same as you know, talking to the person next to you, but I think that students are creative, and they find ways to fill that gap online.

**Roberto Martinez 08:26**

So, I think there's two distinct factors in terms of big challenges. One of the huge factors is - like we were all discussing earlier - having to adjust to being at home around your families or around your roommates, because it might not be the most ideal situation. For me personally, for the most part, I live in San Diego with my roommates. Back before the pandemic happened, I would spend most of my day on campus doing my schoolwork or studying and then I wouldn't go back home until late at night, maybe around midnight. I prefer staying on campus because at my apartment it's very loud. And I didn't really find that environment very conducive to a learning space. So, having to shift to learning in that environment was very difficult for me at first because I had to communicate with my roommates a lot more. And some of them might not like what I'm asking them to do in terms of studying or work for me to do. Another huge challenge I think that we're facing is what Wyatt was touching on earlier - how

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there's so much of your bubble around you. I was thinking about this other day. I didn't really think about it - but how we all take for granted the people that we share space with in our everyday lives. For example, before the pandemic - just as simple as walking from class to class with 1000s of other students at the same time, or sitting in the large 400 lecture hall with your couple of friends in the class, and studying at Geisel Library or Galbraith Hall around so many other people who are as motivated as us. That was one thing I took for granted. And I didn't realize it took it for granted until having to adjust to learning completely by myself in my bedroom.

**Ebonee Williams 10:30**

Thank you all for sharing human nature, it's very easy to identify the challenges when we have change. What are some of the things that you can say are happening in the areas that you're working that support students in this remote learning environment?

**Yvonne Knowle 10:48**

In terms of being able to socialize, I think like Wyatt was saying - there's lots of opportunities to be put in groups. But it's asking you to put yourself out there and be willing to participate in that group and get to know people. There are so many places to engage. It's just that maybe instead of seeing it on library walk presented to you, being a little more intentional about staying on social media, following those specific groups, or hearing about it from friends, and actually joining those things.

**Ebonee Williams 11:19**

Yvonne, you're a part of one of the Hubs at the Commons, right?

**Yvonne Knowle 11:22**

Yep.

**Ebonee Williams 11:23**

What are some specific programs that you're doing to support remote learning?

**Yvonne Knowle 11:27**

So, we have supplemental instruction - and Robby can elaborate a little more on the supplemental instruction part - but in supplemental instruction, students are able to go into large group sessions. Usually around 15 to 20 students will be able to interact with each other and learn together. Your SI leaders going to be the ones who facilitate it but a lot of the learning is going to come from you. And you can really benefit from that. Another program that we have is content tutoring. Content tutoring, traditionally - you're able to drop in or schedule an appointment and work with a tutor. You might have another peer in there. But we've also expanded to do workshops that cover prior knowledge to review math, physics - and in those workshops, you'll also be able to interact with a large group of students. And the last resource we also have is with the Learning Strategies program. I know he mentioned things like time management, and finding space for yourself and focusing - they're able to help with all those things, talk about your personal situation, and offer strategies - not just how to set out the time to study, but what are you going to do in that time to be effective with your studying?

**Ebonee Williams 12:44**

Learning strategies are something that people who aced High School - which is like the majority of our students here - even if you got a B I'll say you aced high school to be here and selected to be at UC San Diego, right? Know that for college, most of our education is designed around you needing extra support. And accepting that needing extra support is not a failure is a huge piece. Going to learning strategies could be so effective, but really you should just be proactive. Successful people are proactive individuals. You go look for [tools and strategies] to support your education. A lot of us had tutors, or parents, and maybe even friends or people at school who advocated and shared with us great resources. Now students are having to do that for themselves in college. So, I really appreciate you sharing that. Are there any other resources we want to talk about that are available for just supporting students in this remote learning environment?

**Emma Saturday 13:47**

Yeah, I can talk about some of the services we have available at the Writing Hub. So, at the Writing Hub, all of our services are geared towards giving you any kind of support that you might be looking for, for your writing projects. And those can be both writing projects that you're working on in your courses, or things going on outside of the classroom. We can help with everything from classes for your college writing program - whether you're in the humanities sequence - all the way to helping you with scholarship essays, or statements for grad school, or really anything that that you have that's a written document. This quarter we have online real-time tutoring sessions. Student can have a real time video and audio conversation with a tutor, and have real time document sharing as well so that you can have your paper up on the screen and work on it with your tutor. And then we also offer asynchronous sessions. You'll upload a draft to your appointment forum when you request a session and a tutor will create a 7-to-10-minute audio screencast offering some feedback. So that's a really great option if you're in a different time zone, or maybe you're taking 22 units this quarter and you're thinking - you know, I don't have time to come to an online consultation, but I'd still like to get some support - [this is] a really good avenue for that. And then throughout the quarter, we're also offering lots of different writing focus workshops covering lots of different topics that will help you in your classes and also on other kinds of writing projects. And those are being recorded and posted on our website or on YouTube so that you can access them if you're not able to come when it's being hosted live.

**Ebonee Williams 15:38**

Thank you for sharing those resources. And I really appreciate the asynchronous [option.] We have - separate from our large international population that may not have been able to come to our campus or even be in our area - we have people are having to pick up jobs to support themselves while they're continuing their education. So, I really appreciate that. I want to see if we can pivot the conversation to - what have you observed - and maybe Wyatt you and Roberto can answer - that students are doing well? What are some strategies that seem to be very effective that you've observed or interacted with in this remote learning environment?

**Roberto Martinez 16:17**

It comes down to everyone's own personal preferences and their own personal habits. Me, personally, I find myself having to manage my time a little bit differently than I did back before the pandemic. Before the pandemic, what I would normally do - my daily routine would just be to wake up, get ready, go to campus, and then do most of my work on campus. But now that I have to deal with home, I find myself

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being a little bit more meticulous with my schedule in terms of setting aside certain time to watch these asynchronous lectures, or to work on a lab report, or to work on homework. And then I also think it's very important as well, to set the time every day - a couple of hours, at least - to give yourself your own me-time. Because it's very easy to get burned out. Especially doing everything from home, I feel like it's a lot easier to get burned out because there's a lot to do at home. So definitely give yourself some time, whether it be watching YouTube, or eating some unhealthy fast food with your roommates and watching a scary movie. That's one thing I like to do, is take breaks at the end of the day. And then also, like I mentioned earlier in the podcast - what I liked to do on campus was study between classes or at the end of the day in Geisel Library, or Galbraith, which is one of the lecture halls on campus, with my friends. I liked being around them to study because they were all very driven, and inspiring me to be driven as well. We can't really do that anymore, you know - studying in-person. So, what we like to do - this might sound a little bit corny - but what we like to do is we like to [schedule] at least one Zoom study session every week. I'm actually doing the same study session with him tonight, where we just have our cameras on, and we even have our microphones on to try and best stimulate that close proximal distance to each other. Even like those weird sounds, like hearing them drink water or something - it reminds me of sitting right next to them in those quiet study halls. So that's one thing I like to do to try and maintain my personal connections with my friends - to study.

**Ebonee Williams 18:46**

Thank you so much, Bobby, I love that you are leading into the last piece of what I wanted to discuss. But before I ask you the last question, I also want to share that depending on where our county and city are at the time and even the campus, sometimes there's availability to reserve study spaces at the Price Center. Some of the open tents that are on campus for you who live in San Diego are available. And I think some of the library spaces. So, check our websites! Sometimes Canvas banners announce them. But I really love the idea of study-Zoom even though it sounds cheesy. You don't stare at the camera, it's just being in community. So - how do you create that community and what works for you? The last question I like to ask you - I think you all have shared some great, great tips - is, what's the one tip that you'd want to give someone for being successful in their learning in the remote environment? Or coming to one of your consultation sessions? You can you can answer it either way you choose.

**Emma Saturday 19:54**

I think one tip I have - and this is something I tried to follow when I was an undergraduate student. I think it's something that was valuable for me as a student, so hopefully it's valuable for others - seek academic support services before you think you need them. Because I think if you wait, a lot of students will want to come in and get support around midterms and around finals. And that's the times when academic services are the most busy. Since they are appointment based, you don't want to be in a position where you're like "I really need support right now, but I can't get an appointment, or I can't get in." And I also think it's just really valuable to come in, even if you're not quite sure what your questions are, or what you're struggling with. Those are the kinds of things that all of our tutors at the common are trained to help you with. I think that the earlier you can come in - even before you've hit a critical point - the better.



**Yvonne Knowle 21:02**

Building off of Emma's response, don't be afraid to ask questions. I know that we say this all the time. Your instructors say it, your friends say it, we all say it. But it's really true that you should ask a question, even if it's something you're curious about, and doesn't have to do with exactly the material learning or what you're doing. It's always good to explore, and be creative, and get to have new ideas. But also, with asking questions, it's listening really actively to responses and what other people's thoughts and perspectives are too.

**Roberto Martinez 21:42**

Okay, so I think a couple things I would suggest are to - similar to what Yvonne and Emma were saying - don't be afraid to put yourself out there. Because you might not know whether you will be struggling with the subject until the night before an exam. So, you utilize all the resources your professors gave you, whether it be office hours, discussion sections, or Supplemental Instruction sections, tutoring - just put yourself out there, try all the resources, see what works best for you, and then put them into your schedule, and stick with it. Like we were all talking about earlier, one of the most difficult things that might be hard to manage during online education is setting up a schedule routine. So, once you figure out what works for you early on, then it's easy. It becomes easier to stick to it throughout the rest of the quarter. So that's one piece of advice I have. And another piece of advice I have, similar to putting yourself out there - just reach out to some of your classmates as well. Whether it be through the chat function in synchronous lectures asking if there's huge groups, a group chat on Facebook, or a Discord server, just that way you're building a community with other people in your class. You can talk about not only class material, but also about other miscellaneous stuff like a TV show that just came back on after a hiatus, just to try and best maintain that community that we all had before the pandemic in-person.

**Wyatt 23:25**

Yeah, I think everyone has had really fantastic advice. And so, I'm just going to quickly throw out one that has helped me that's a little bit more out-there. I'd like to recommend to make sure to move around a little bit - physically speaking. Because when you're sitting around all day - we were mentioning about walking from class to class -you lose that. Being able to take 10 or 15 minutes - we just got a basketball hoop in our house, and it's been a fantastic investment because between classes you can just go move around and not be in front of the screen for a little bit. More academically speaking, everyone has had super fantastic comments. I just wanted to throw that one in there.

**Ebonee Williams 24:07**

Well, I really appreciate all that you have shared today. I think some encouraging pieces are reaching out, being courageous, finding what works for you. I really appreciate you affirming that students aren't fully adjusted to remote learning, and it's still a process, so thank you for everything you're doing to support our students, and be students, and I hope you succeed in this remote learning. My name is Dr. Ebonee Williams. I appreciate Yvonne, Roberto, Wyatt, and Emma for joining us today on Triton Tools and Tidbits and we look forward to seeing you next week. Good luck.