What’s Your Motivation?

No, you’re not auditioning for a play and no, this isn’t an exercise you do for class. It is a very simple question that many of us ask ourselves, in some way, every single day. Have you ever taken the time to ask yourself “Why?” Maybe not out loud, but you may have subconsciously asked yourself one of the following questions: Why have I chosen this major? Why do I go to school? Why don’t I hit the snooze button on my alarm clock and get an extra 10 minutes of sleep? These, and many other similar questions, all revolve around the idea of motivation. Look it up in the dictionary and you may find some verbose definition similar to, “the process of providing an incentive or inducement to action.” In everyday terms, it is why we do the things we do!

How is an individual motivated? Motivation arises from many internal and external forces that may vary from person to person. For example, intrinsic sources of motivation include dreams, goals, wants, and needs, such as desiring to learn or mastering the material. Extrinsic motivators include family and friends, such as hearing parents’ praise or getting good grades.

Some people might say that family plays an important role in motivation. Perhaps you are the only one in your family to attend a university. Maybe, like myself, you have a relative who’s an alumni and you want to follow in their footsteps. Or, maybe you want to impress your children with a sense of accomplishment and model positive behavior. Whatever the reason may be, the support of family tends to be a huge factor in motivating the pursuit of higher education.

For some, the support of friends may also be a factor, in some cases, more than family. When family isn’t easily available, friends may fill in that empty void. Depending on many factors, being with friends can be the source of strength or not. Not to delve too much into the concept of peer pressure, but the type of friends that one hangs around with may influence an individual’s driving force. If one is surrounded with positive people who are motivated to do well in life, as well as in school, that sort of encouragement or reinforcement will transfer onto a given individual. On the other hand, hanging around with someone who might be characterized as a “slacker,” who may try to get someone else to party all the time, thereby neglecting schoolwork, can decrease motivation to succeed. Whether you know someone like that or not, these are just typical examples of external motivation that each of us encounter as students.

Motivation can be both positive and negative, but it is the responsibility of the “motivatee” to choose how they will be influenced. What are some ways that you can be positively motivated in a university setting? Below are just a few things that I have found that work for me:

· Ask yourself, “What do I want to be when I grow up and why?” Yes, it may seem juvenile, but by keeping track of your goals and dreams, you may be deterred from making bad choices, which is a good way to strengthen your efforts in doing the right thing for yourself.

· Talk with people, whether it is a family member, a friend, a teacher, or even a counselor. Ask them how they got started, how they overcame obstacles, what made them decide to do what they do, and many other “why” questions. Hearing “old war stories” may inspire you to be more determined and as focused as they are.
• Ask yourself, "Do I enjoy doing what I do?" You'd be surprised at how much easier and fulfilling a task can be if you like doing it. This can be said for many tasks such as classes, assignments, and future careers. If you can find at least one thing you enjoy about a class, you will be more inclined to attend and do well than if you completely dread the class. Eureka! So that's how I can get through macroeconomics!

• When you come to a point when you are faced with a problem or a decision that needs to be made, stop, take a deep breath, and ask yourself this question: How would the person I would like to be handle this situation? Reach for the best inside yourself.

• Surround yourself with positive people. It just works!