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Appendix A:

Details for the Online Exercise in Oreopoulos and Petronijevic (2016)

General Instructions

This exercise involves 2 parts:

- In Part 1, you will be asked to think about your future.
- In Part 2, you will be asked to think about your education.

In both cases you will be given an opportunity to consider strategies for helping you achieve your goals.

The exercise should take about 45 to 90 minutes to complete. It is meant to benefit YOU personally so please take your time and be thoughtful. If you need a few minutes to walk around and take a break, please feel free to do so.

WHITEBOARD VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/JNDmmaKVsuE>

You will be asked to write down your thoughts and feelings. This is meant only to help you focus and clarify. Please try your best to write for the amount of time specified and feel free to take longer if you need to. **Write in whatever language you feel most comfortable with.** At the end of the exercise, you will be emailed a copy of these notes to your account address, which you can use throughout the year to remind yourself of your goals and strategies.

Proceed through the exercise by clicking the Next button. You can go back to previous pages by clicking Previous. Each time you click Next or Previous, the data you have entered on that page will be saved. If you need to take a break or two to get up and walk around or help you think, please feel free to do so. Enjoy!

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Part 1: Imagining Your Ideal Future

Let's start with some short questions of imagination that will help you warm up to thinking about your future.

Keep in mind that when we perform tasks only for ourselves, we sometimes find it easier to think through our thoughts rather than write them down carefully and in detail. Try to fight this urge as you progress through the exercise, even if it means taking more time. Research clearly suggests that the more you write your thoughts down, the more you benefit from these kinds of activities.

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

1.1. Qualities You Admire Most About Yourself

Name at least one thing that you admire about yourself

[in soft reassuring colored text:]

Don't rush - this exercise is for your benefit.

[What do you admire about yourself? Why?]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 2

Do you think you could write more than 1 word?. You'll benefit more from the exercise if you express your thoughts in more detail.

End pop-up

1.2. Qualities You Admire Most in Others

People you admire have qualities that you would like to possess or imitate. Identifying those qualities can help you determine who it is that you want to be. Take a moment to think about the two or three people you most admire. Who are they? Which qualities do they possess that you wish you had or could improve?

[What are some qualities you admire in others? Why?

What qualities do you wish you had or could improve?]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10

You'll benefit more from the exercise if you express your thoughts using more than 10 words. Please take your time and write down more details about your true role models.

End pop-up

1.3. Your Future Self

If someone were writing a story about your future self, what would you like him or her to say about your character and values? In other words, what kind of person do you want to become? Take 1 to 3 minutes to consider what elements you see as most important.

[Describe what kind of person you want to become later on in life.]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 20 or time is less than 1 minutes

Can you describe yourself in the future in more than 20 words? You'll benefit from the exercise if you really use your imagination and take the time to think in more detail about the kind of person you'd like to be.

End pop-up

1.4. Your Future Self When Not Working

Take 2 to 3 minutes to consider the future activities you would like to pursue outside of work. What sorts of activities would provide you with a sense of purpose and satisfaction? How would you like to see yourself spending your time?

[Describe the sorts of future activities outside of work that would bring you a sense of purpose and satisfaction]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10 or time less than 1 minute

You did not write very much. Try to get into the exercise and really think about the details about your ideal life outside of work - there are so many things you could be doing - what kind of routine would you like? What hobbies, or activities, or events do you hope to be doing? Please take your time and write a little more. This exercise is meant for you to enjoy and for your benefit.

End pop-up

1.5. Your Future Self at Work

Much of what people find engaging in life is related to their careers. A good career provides security, status, interest, and the possibility of contributing to the community. Careers often unfold in unexpected ways and it's not possible to anticipate all the challenges or luck that may come your way. But take a moment to consider possibilities for your ideal career. Where might you want to be in the near and long-term? Why? What are you trying to accomplish?

Think and write for 1 to 3 minutes, then move on.

[Where might you want to end up in the near-term (e.g. 5 years)? Why?

Where might you want to end up in the long-term (e.g. 25 years)? Why?

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 20 or time is less than 1 minutes

It's important to take your time in this exercise. Use your imagination, and describe details about the jobs you'd like to pursue, the specific tasks you'd be doing on the job, the requirements needed to perform well, and the kinds of interactions or experiences you might have.

End pop-up

1.6 Your Ideal Future: Complete Summary

Now you have written briefly about your future, and have had some time to consider more specific issues. This last step of Part 1 gives you the chance to integrate all the things that you have just thought and wrote about.

Seriously think about your life journey and what kind of path you hope to follow. For example:

- Describe what you might do during a typical week - how does this change over time?
- Describe the people around you, including family, friends, maybe children.
- What might your career look like as you get older?
- What brings you happiness?
- What challenges might come about and how might you deal with them?
- How do you manage your time between wanting to relax with friends and family and wanting to make the world a better place?
- How do you try to stay focused on your goals and make the best use of your time?
-

Write in detail about the ideal future that you have just imagined for at least 10 minutes. Write continuously and try not to stop while you are writing. Don't worry about spelling or grammar.

Be ambitious and try to include vivid details, describing, for example, what your home or work environment will look like and where you will engage in social interactions. Imagine a life that you would regard as honourable, exciting, productive, creative and decent.

Remember, you are writing only for yourself. Really think about the life journey you want to take.

[in soft reassuring colored text:]

Don't rush - this exercise is for your benefit.

[What kind of person do you want to be?

[Who do you NOT want to be?

What do you want to accomplish?

Where do you want to end up?

Why do you want these things?

What is most important to you?

How can you enjoy the journey along the way?]

With these thoughts in mind, what would you say are your 2 most inspiring goals?

[GOAL1

GOAL2]

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Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 300

Really imagine the details of your future and try to write down all the details with more than 300 words. This is one of the most important parts of the exercise. For some ideas, imagine where exactly you will be working or living. What might a typical week in your future look like? How do you think your future will look like over time, when you're 25, 30, 35, or 40 years old? Who are the people in your life?

End pop-up

Pop-up on NEXT, if GOAL1 and GOAL2 not completed

Please don't forget to summarize 2 of your goals at the bottom of this page. Even a couple of words for each will help you remember them.

End pop-up

Part 2: Starting to Realize Your Future Today

“The best way to predict your future is to create it.” — Abraham Lincoln

Now that you have thought about your ideal future, connect it with how your time at UofT might relate to it. What actions could you take this year to get you closer to your long-term goals?

In this part of the exercise, you are going to be given some candid advice about university and ways to avoid trouble that many students often end up in. You will also be asked to reflect on this information while keeping your ideal future in mind, so that you can create a personalized plan for success.

WHITEBOARD VIDEO: https://youtu.be/LeQ6Lak2_Vg

When making plans, it is important to remember two things. First, while it is important to challenge yourself, try also to be realistic about your time and responsibilities. Second, the best laid plans can help you get and stay on track toward your ideal future, but they should also be open to change and adaptation along the way. You might need to make some adjustments to your goals as you learn more about your environment and about yourself.

It should take about 40 minutes to complete the rest of the exercise. If you need to, you can always save your work, take a break and return to it later. Remember, the exercise is meant to help you, so please take your time and reflect.

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2.1 How Can Being Part of the University of Toronto Get You Closer to Your Future?

It's good to take the time now and then to really connect your school with your future. Now's your chance. Write for at least 100 words (the more the better) about how U of T can help achieve your career and lifetime goals. What can you do to help make the most out of your time here? For some ideas, think about the details: For example, how will learning specific facts help with your career compared to learning more general skills like writing or time management? What types of courses do you think will be the most helpful and why? How will you engage with others around you and how can your participation in clubs and other events help shape your future? What sorts of challenges do you expect to encounter and how might overcoming those challenges help you in the future?

[in soft reassuring colored text:]

Don't rush - this exercise is for your benefit.

How will being part of the University of Toronto get you closer to your desired future?

What would you like to happen this year for you to consider it a successful outcome?

What kind of grades do you want to attain?

What kind of people do you want to meet and build relationships with?

Are there any specific skills you want develop?

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 100

It's good to take the time now and then to really connect your school with your future. Now's your chance. Write for more than 100 words to get the most out of this visualization. We think you will benefit more from the exercise the more you write and the more you become immersed in the exercise

End pop-up

2.2 Effective time-use

Most professors agree that students who regularly devote at least 3 hours of studying per 1 hour of lecture tend to perform really well on tests and assignments.

Think how this relates to the number of courses you are planning on taking this year, your other responsibilities, and the grades you would like to earn. How many hours of studying do you think you will need to devote to each of your courses in a typical per week?

Knowing when and where you are going to study makes it easier to stay on track. Think and write a rough schedule of *when* and *where* you will study each week. Be realistic. Let your mind imagine the vivid details of your environment. Are you working at home, in your room or the library? What time of day is it? Where are you sitting? What does the desk look like? What are you doing to help stay focused (e.g. turning your cell phone off, working in a clean environment, avoiding Netflix and YouTube surfing, blocking social-media...)? [link to <http://getcoldturkey.com/>]

Think and write about this for **3 to 7 minutes**, then move on.

[How many hours of studying do you aim to do for each of your courses in a typical week (before exams)?

How can you minimize distractions?

Where and when will you study? (the more detail the better)

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Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 100 or if time less than 3 minutes

Really think about and write down a rough study schedule and the details around it. Please write for at least 100 words. How exactly will your study schedule look like? Close to midterms? When will you find time to complete writing assignment? How can you help ensure you don't miss class? Past experience suggests that the more a student writes, the more they benefit from the exercise.

End pop-up

2.3 Effective learning

Success in the first-year of your studies depends on study strategy, which is in your direct control.. Here are some great tips from the book, "Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning" (by Peter Brown, Henry Roediger, and Mark McDaniel): [link to here: <http://www.vox.com/2014/6/24/5824192/study-smarter-learn-better-8-tips-from-memory-researchers>]

- **Ask yourself lots of questions:** "One good technique to use instead of just re-reading text is to quiz yourself, either using questions at the back of a textbook chapter, or making up your own questions. Retrieving that information is what actually produces more robust learning and memory".
- **Use flashcards or draw out the information in a visual form:** "Anything that creates active learning - generating understanding on your own - is very effective in retention. It basically means the learner needs to become more involved and more engaged, and less passive".
- **Don't cram - space out your studying:** "A lot of students cram - but research shows this isn't good for long term memory. It may allow you to do okay on that test the next day, but then on the final, you won't retain as much information, and then the next year, when you need the information for the next level course, it won't be there".
- **Rewrite your notes shortly after each lecture.** That way, you can fill in the gaps that you may have missed during lecture and make sure you have neat, organized notes.
- **Try teaching course material to another student, a family member, or to yourself.** If you can explain material in your own words, out loud or in writing, chances are you understand it very well.
- **And on writing well...**Reading your own work out loud or getting others to read your writing BEFORE you hand it in can help immensely. Trade assignments with a friend, get your TA or professor to take a look, or go to Student Services, with staff who want to help. Edit your work until you feel good about what you said and how you said it.
- **Be curious.** Learn not just for grades but also to expand your perspective on life. Seeking understanding can itself be an enjoyable experience. Even if the material being studied is not particularly interesting, the process of trying to understand it can develop more general skills helpful to your longer-term goals.

Now take **a few minutes** to plan for how you intend to study. Whether you want to follow any of the strategies above or not, try to outline specific times for when and how you will carry out your plan (for example, Tues afternoon: Review and rewrite economics notes - discuss class and notes verbally with a classmate). Again, try to vividly imagine where you are working and describe the details of your environment.

[What approaches to studying are likely to work for you?

- e.g. ask yourself lots of questions?
- use flashcards or visuals?
- rewrite and review lectures soon after class?
- explain course material out-loud or rewrite in your own words?
- get writing feedback from others?
- make learning fun?

)

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Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 100 or if time less than 3 minutes

There's a lot of good strategies mentioned above and you may have your own strategies that work best for you. Take more time to think about HOW you can best learn and write for more than 100 words and for at least 3 minutes. How exactly can you make the most out of your study time? Past experience suggests that the more a student writes, the more they benefit from the exercise.

End pop-up

2.4 Letting others help, and helping others

University is a wonderful place to meet and enjoy time with people who share similar interests and values to your own. You'll also meet people who don't always see things your way, but these are opportunities for learning and stimulating debate.

Building relationships with those around you is not only rewarding but can serve to help you once you're out of school and entering the labour market or planning for graduate school. When you apply for jobs or grad school, having good social skills and strong references from faculty can help you tremendously.

Today is the first day you can start building these skills and relationships. It starts with envisioning who you want to interact with during your time at U of T. Take some time to write freely about what kind of relationships you would like to have in your time here. **Here are some things you may want to reflect on:**

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

Being Together and Being Apart

Spending time together, at the gym, over lunch, or studying, can be a great way to learn, have fun, and feel connected. Other times we benefit from being apart and having space to focus. What balance of alone time and friend/peer time might work best for you?

Think and write your thoughts down here, then move on.

[Describe what balance between spending time with others and apart works best for you]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 5

Please take your time and write a little more. Surely you have more to say than 5 words. This exercise is meant for your benefit.

End pop-up

Student Services: There's Help for That!

Help is available outside the classroom for virtually every kind of challenge you might be going through. Sometimes, though, students feel too rushed or overwhelmed and end up not realizing the many services that could make a real difference. UTM's web site on student resources available for first years is a fantastic place to start:

<http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/transition/student-resources/academic-resources>

It links to old exam questions, weekly study groups, one-on-one skills development assistance, skills and writing workshops, study space advice, mental health services, and English language support. Bookmark this page and set aside time to try these services, which are set up to benefit you.

After taking a look at the Student Resources site, write for at least two minutes about:

[at least one student service that you might benefit from using

how you would actually find time and space in your busy schedule to try it out

When feeling rushed or overwhelmed, how might you remind yourself of the University's services that are designed to help students who are feeling rushed or overwhelmed?]

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Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 5

Please take your time and write for more than 5 words. You're almost at the end of the exercise - take it seriously to benefit the most from it. Let yourself really think about the details that will matter this year, then write them down to help you think things through.

End pop-up

Tutoring

Students often see a tremendous benefit from one-on-one or small-group tutoring. Regularly attending TA and professor office hours allows you to understand concepts early and keep building on that knowledge. Even if you can't attend, some TAs and instructors can try to help you over email. Many courses also offer additional tutoring services through drop-in hours or focus-study group classes. Consult with your syllabus or instructor to find out the details.

Accessing tutoring services or speaking with your professors is an important way to get clarification, stay on track, and learn more outside the classroom. Often professors offer direct tips and tricks for how to best study for upcoming exams, and going to office hours is a great way to feel more connected.

Some students feel intimidated or shy using these resources, but they should not - professors, TAs, and university staff want to help and often wish more students would speak with them.

Think and write your thoughts down here, then move on.

[How can you take more advantage: going to office hours regularly?

asking questions to your TA?

finding and using a tutor?

using drop-in sessions or study groups?

How can you plan on organizing your schedule to do these things?]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10

Please take your time and write for more than 10 words. You're almost at the end of the exercise - take it seriously to benefit the most from it. Let yourself really think about the details that will matter this year, then write them down to help you think things through.

End pop-up

Giving Back and Getting Involved

U of T is one of the largest universities in the world and presents opportunities to participate in just about any club, group, or program you can imagine [link to campus clubs]. Getting involved in activities that you enjoy provides a way to complement your classroom education and provide balance in your life. It's also a way to stand out when you graduate.

Think and write your thoughts down here, then move on.

[What club, activity, sport, or program might you be interested in?

How might you find time to get involved while not sacrificing your long-term academic goals?]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 5

Please take your time and write for more than 5 words. You're almost at the end of the exercise - take it seriously to benefit the most from it. Let yourself really think about the details that will matter this year, then write them down to help you think things through.

End pop-up

2.5 Anticipating Setbacks

“A CEO calls her staff into the conference room on the eve of the launch of a major new initiative. They file in and take their seats around the table. She calls the meeting to attention and begins: “I have bad news. The project has failed spectacularly. Tell me what went wrong?”

What?! But we haven’t even launched yet. That’s the point. The CEO is forcing an exercise in hindsight— in advance. She is using a technique designed by psychologist Gary Klein known as a premortem.”

-- Ryan Holiday. *The Obstacle Is the Way: The Timeless Art of Turning Trials into Triumph*

On your journey this year and beyond, you will certainly run into obstacles. If you reflect really well, it is likely that you will be able to foresee some of them coming. You can then do your best to prepare for and address them, so that they do not impede your progress. Some can even be eliminated altogether with careful planning and staying committed.

Think and write about:

[What obstacles do you think might prevent you from following through with your plans?

How might you try to avoid or get around these obstacles?

Is there a particular way you can structure your daily or weekly routine to help avoid setbacks?]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next>

Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 50

Please take your time and write for more than 50 words. Everyone has potential obstacles, what are yours? Other job or family commitments? Social pressure to focus on other things than school? Hard to get up in the morning? Facebook or Netflix? Concentration? It's important to recognize the things that might get in the way of your goals and think about what actions you can take to avoid missing out on the big picture. Write these thoughts down to help clarify the situation.

End pop-up

2.6 Dealing with setbacks and coping with stress

If setbacks do occur (and they will), try to see them as an opportunity to learn. We learn much more through setbacks than through success.

Research shows that the effort we put into something will determine our success. When people see setbacks or obstacles as temporary challenges that are overcome through patience and hard work (not signs of unavoidable failure), their performance in school improves dramatically. We should therefore not let our past failures or successes affect how we think about our ability to learn. Being proud of our effort and enjoying the journey along the way is what matters most.

Imagine that you unexpectedly get a low grade on an assignment. How might you think and act after that happens, so that your performance improves in the future?

[]

What kinds of negative thoughts or doubts might get in the way of such improvement?
What might you think or do to overcome the influence of those thoughts?

[]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> <Next (Save)>

Pop-up on NEXT, if word count is less than 10

It can be really helpful to think about how to deal positively with setbacks. Write for more than 10 words after really thinking about how you might recover and even thrive from an unexpected negative event in your life, like a poor grade.

End pop-up

Start: if last digit in student id is (X,Y)

2.7. Keep looking forward and enjoy the journey

You have now realized a vision of your ideal future, and how your time at U of T might help you get there. Take time to occasionally recall your goals and plans to help stay on track. When you try to implement your plans, even if not perfect, you will learn much from how well they go and be able to adjust and get even better as you move forward.

Click the "Finish" link below and we will send the notes you made to the email address you provided. You will then be done the exercise.

<Previous (Save)> <Save> < Finish>

End: if last digit in student id is (X,Y)

Start: if last digit in student id is (A,B,C)

2.7. One last thing...

You have now realized a vision of your ideal future, and how your time at U of T might help you get there. One last thing:

To help keep your goals top of mind and to motivate and inspire you during this school year, we would like to send you short weekly email and text messages during this school year. The program is called U@UofT. These messages are designed to help with your goals and provide you with extra support outside the classroom. You can respond to the messages with questions of your own and we'll do our best to answer.

Click on how often you'd like to receive messages this school year. Each one includes an option to respond back to ask for help or to unsubscribe.

1 time a week (e.g. Advice on making the most out of your year at U of T)

2-3 times a week (e.g. Advice plus Motivational and inspirational videos or quotes)

3 or more times a week (e.g. Advice, Motivation, plus Reminders)

[default set to 3 or more times]

Enter your cell phone number here to receive these messages by text:

[Enter cell phone number here (XXX-XXX-XXXX)]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> < Finish>

Pop-up on submit, if phone number is empty and at least one box clicked

We think you will find the messages more helpful if we send them by text. Most of the students we asked last year provided their mobile numbers and felt they benefited from the messages. You can even respond and use them to ask for help. Are you sure you don't want us to send any?

<OK, send them to me and I can decide to unsubscribe later>

<I'm sure I don't want any text follow-up tips and reminders sent to me>

End pop-up

End: if last digit in student id is (A,B,C)

Congratulations! You are finished.

Thank-you for taking the time to complete this exercise.

The notes you made have been emailed to your account address.

Keep looking forward and enjoy the journey.

Welcoming text message sent immediately after:

It's the You@UofT Support Team. We'll be sending you information and motivation to help you have a great year, so don't be surprised when we text again. Our messages will be short and sweet. You can reply anytime with questions of your own. We're looking forward to helping you succeed!

MESSAGE TO RANDOM UTM IN TREATED

2.7. One last thing...

You have now realized a vision of your ideal future, and how your time at U of T might help you get there. One last thing:

To help you during this school year, you have been matched to an upper-year student advisor, FIRSTNAME LASTNAME, whose job is to communicate with you regularly to help with your goals and provide extra support outside the classroom. The program is called You@UofT.

This is a pilot project and you have been selected by lottery as one of only 25 people to receive this assistance.

Your advisor is available to answer any of your questions by skype, phone, or in person. In addition, he/she **can send you regular messages of academic advice, motivation, and reminders.**

So that your advisor can contact you, please provide your mobile phone number below.

[Enter cell phone number here (XXX-XXX-XXXX)]

<Previous (Save)> <Save> < Finish>

Pop-up on submit, if phone number is empty and boxes are all unclicked

We think you would benefit from this additional support. Are you sure you don't want an advisor?

<OK, let me try it >

<I don't have a cell-phone>

<I'm sure I don't want an advisor>

End pop-up

NOTE: IF CLICKS ON DON'T HAVE A CELL PHONE, SAY THAT YOUR ADVISOR WILL CONTACT YOU BY EMAIL INSTEAD, THEN GO TO FINISH

IF YES, HAVE TEXT SENT TO ADVISOR RIGHT AWAY AND HAVE ADVISOR TO CALL DURING THE DAY, SUGGEST TO MEET RIGHT AFTER OR RIGHT BEFORE ECO CLASS, AND SEND TEXT IF NO RESPONSE AFTER A WEEK. WILL TRAIN ADVISORS TO SEND REGULAR MESSAGES/EMAILS AS WELL, INSTEAD OF REGULAR ONES WE SEND