

When Slowing Down Helps You Move Forward

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There are times in the semester when everything feels like it's moving smoothly — you're caught up on assignments, keeping a steady rhythm, and managing to stay organized. Then without warning, life shifts. A new challenge appears, responsibilities change, or your focus just feels different. Suddenly, what once felt manageable begins to feel overwhelming.

As students, we tend to pressure ourselves to keep moving forward, fearing that slowing down signals a setback. Yet, life tends to slow us down in ways we never planned, creating space for change we didn't see coming.

When I first started my program, I took on a full course load because I thought that's what success was supposed to look like. It wasn't until I had a very challenging class that I stopped and really reflected on what was happening for me. That moment, which felt like a setback, became one of the most valuable learning experiences of my journey.

I realized that I needed to recreate a path that worked for me, and that it would require some help. When I began feeling overwhelmed and even considered dropping out of my program, I met with a Student Adviser to explore my options. They encouraged me to keep going and helped me understand what adjusting my course load could look like. Together, we created a "what-if" plan so I could make informed decisions about my next steps. Those meetings became turning points. With their support, I was able to rearrange my courses, stay eligible for full-time OSAP, and they even created a visual term plan showing which courses I'd need and which semesters they're offered, since not every course runs each term.

The Student Adviser's "what-if" plan was instrumental in helping me move forward with a reduced course load, which gave me the space to breathe. Over the next semesters, my grades improved, I had more time to take in my course readings, and I found myself connecting more deeply with what I was learning. Most importantly, I was able to balance my family responsibilities and my education, in a healthier way. What I once saw as failure was actually an opportunity for growth. It taught me that success doesn't have to follow one straight line, it can be flexible, compassionate, and uniquely ours. This message comes from experience and from seeing how much pressure we all carry. Life changes, plans shift, and sometimes the kindest thing we can do for ourselves is to slow down.

So, if you ever find yourself feeling stuck, behind, or unsure, remember this: it's okay to pivot. It's okay to make changes that honor your needs. Every step, even the ones that feel difficult,

can lead to a stronger and more balanced version of yourself. And remember, there are wonderful staff at Seneca who truly want to see you succeed; they'll take the time to listen and help you plan a path that works for you. The **Student Advising team** can support with your questions about your academic journey. If you are an International Student, be sure to connect with an **Immigration Specialist** to discuss the maintenance of your full-time status.

By Nancy Chicas, Student Ambassador, Mature and Students with Family Responsibilities, Student Support Group

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