

Succeeding as a W. P. Carey Graduate Student

Tips for success as a W. P. Carey graduate student, written by current students for incoming students.

What have you done to manage the rigorous coursework in your program?

Sonya Robinson

Executive MBA

Class of 2024



I knew prior to starting the program that I would need to be intentional with my time, so from the beginning I created **blocks in my week** dedicated to study. I block out 2 hours each evening during the weekday and 4 hours Saturday and Sunday for 18 hours total time. Although this sort of discipline is helpful, the reality is I have a demanding job that requires out of state travel and long work hours, so sometimes my "well laid out plan" doesn't work and I have to readjust. If I am unable to study one evening due to travel or work obligations, I make sure I dedicate extra time another day. The point is, it's critical not to allow the work to pile up but to manage and complete assignments on time. **Time management is an imperative.**

Ray Eddy

Online MBA

Class of 2023



I think my biggest aid for managing the load was **developing a set schedule** for when I wanted to tackle my coursework and sticking to it. For me it was important to set those boundaries, signaling to those around me as well as myself, when it was time to work on school and when it was not. The not part here is incredibly important; you need to be able to **give your mind a break** and refresh, so be sure to respect that. This "turning off" – as I have coined it – can easily be overlooked but must not be. Giving my mind and body these breaks played a vital part in my time in the program.

Marissa Simone

Full-Time MBA

Class of 2023



First, I use Asana, an **online organizational tool**, to track all of my homework, team projects, and extra-curriculars. Using this for my to-do's keeps me organized, on task, and on schedule for school assignments. To manage the rigorous coursework, I prefer to work on assignments in-person with others, whether that be a team assignment or individual assignment, so I can ask friends questions or brainstorm together. I also studied a lot on weekends so I could take the time to study concepts I struggled with or did not understand. I also utilized the program teaching assistants or office hours often, especially around final exams.

What have you done to manage the rigorous coursework in your program? (continued)

Jordan Bishop

Online MBA

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Develop a routine and **dedicate time each day** towards school work, even if only for an hour. By setting aside and committing to time at the end of your work day, before you start work, or before you go to bed, you will develop a habit and a mindset towards school that becomes second nature. If there are days or weeks where the workload is lighter, take the set aside time to get ahead or catch up.

The only exception to this is during those few days between courses or semesters; in those cases, I firmly believe that you should 'reset' your brain by **taking the well-deserved time off** to enjoy some of those activities you are sacrificing while in school.

John Kynor

Executive MBA

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Completing the coursework and effectively keeping up with the program's demands is a combination of **time management and managing expectations**, not only my own, but also my family, friends, colleagues, and teammates within the program. Through time blocking, I have protected sacred time with my family, carved out time to remain current at work, reserved time to study and complete schoolwork, and ensure that I always have time to eat, sleep, and take some downtime. Specifically, at the beginning of each quarter, I map out the entire course schedule and syllabus on a **calendar** and include any other personal and professional responsibilities during the period. Every Sunday, I create a **detailed schedule** for the following week, which allows me to visualize what needs to be completed and identify any critical items. There are always deviations from the schedule, but this process has helped tremendously and has allowed me to retain a normal lifestyle.

What are the benefits of getting involved with student leadership opportunities and clubs/organizations?

Ola Kolawole
Full-Time MBA
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Student leadership/clubs give you the opportunity to contribute to W. P. Carey outside of the classroom walls. Several opportunities exist to join these clubs. Leading clubs will allow you see **experience a wholesome community**. You will forge great relationships with other members of the ASU community who aren't your classmates and you will learn incredible things. You also showcase your leadership skills and work with people from cross-cultural locations.

Ray Eddy
Online MBA
Class of 2023



Getting involved will be the easiest part of your time at W. P. Carey. Your inbox will be filled with specific program-level opportunities and general university-level ones as well. If something doesn't catch your eye or you want more, you can easily search MyASU for additional clubs and experiences to get involved with. As for why you should get involved, I could feed you all the reasons that seem cliché to you at this point. **Expand your network**, it looks good on your resume, and you'll feel more connected to W. P. Carey. Don't get me wrong because these are all true, but the number one reason, for me anyway, is that you will meet people and have experiences that will **change your life**. In my time being involved I have been able to shape the future of W. P. Carey programs, collaborate to bring a first-of-its-kind event together and meet people who will be in my life long after I walk across the stage at graduation. You'll never regret getting involved, so what are you waiting for?

Shale Brenner
Full-Time MBA
Class of 2024



If you don't take advantage of the amazing clubs/extracurriculars available to you, you aren't effectively utilizing your business school experience. ASU is an amazing school with **countless opportunities** to get involved, make a difference, and gain leadership experience. I strongly encourage running for club leadership positions and finding a group that feels like your niche. You never know what interest or talent you may discover and where your skills can come in handy.

What advice do you have for working in teams?

Rishabh Kakkar

Full-Time MBA
Class of 2023



Personally, I believe that having an **open mindset** is extremely important to succeed when working in teams. The W. P. Carey graduate student population is made up of extremely talented people from diverse backgrounds. Everybody brings something unique to the table, and these **diverse perspectives** combine to create some truly special solutions to business problems. Hear everyone out, even you share a different opinion from them. You never know, maybe you will learn something new!

Maxine Falasco

Full-Time MBA
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I was part of a close-knit and pretty successful team during my first semester of my first year. The key takeaways from that academic team was to play to the strengths of each of the members, allow for developmental opportunities, and to **set clear expectations** and deadlines. Conflicts were addressed right away, and not allowed to fester. Despite the packed schedule, we also prioritized team building and mental health.

Ray Eddy

Online MBA
Class of 2023



I know the thought of teamwork-based projects and grading is incredibly scary to lots of us. It was honestly my number one worry coming into my program; being held to the performance of a team versus just my own was terrifying. But I say this with no hyperbole, you will get as much, if not more, out of the interactions and learnings from your team members as the curriculum you are studying.

One tip I have to succeed in your teams is getting to know one another, professionally and personally. It may be tempting to get right down to business and your assignments but take time, do a round robin and **get to know each other**. In this way you can gauge strengths, leverage each other's experiences and have perspective of what others in your team may be going through. Keep this going throughout each meeting and set aside 10-15 minutes to talk to one another – you will build a stronger bond leading to better outcomes. Another tip would be to challenge each other. It may seem counterintuitive to invite conflict into your team, but engaging and speaking up when needed will produce conversations that will allow your team to grow. You will have diverse perspectives and it will be natural for storming to occur. **Rather than shying away from these conflicts, embrace them** to take your team to the next level.

What are some resources and opportunities that all W. P. Carey graduate students should take advantage of?

John Kynor
Executive MBA
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Know that **it is okay to ask for help** – with anything, and I mean ANYTHING. The faculty cares and will help you in any way they can. Attend office hours, but know that you can ask for **one-on-one time** with your professor. If you're having difficulty grasping a concept, do not wait to ask for help. Each module is a building block and failing to understand one will put you at a disadvantage for each subsequent module. Proactively set a schedule with one of the W. P. Carey **tutors** in any subject you are not confident about. Get comfortable asking for help; your future self will thank you, and you will get so much more from the program by tapping into all the resources that are available to you.

Shale Brenner
Full-Time MBA
Class of 2024



I highly recommend connecting and asking questions to second year students and to look into all the different types of resources that ASU offers to students in general. Some fun opportunities include **joining clubs** and attending **ASU games** and events (especially during **welcome week**). I also encourage looking into general opportunities available in the Phoenix area as events come up throughout the year.

How have you balanced your time between coursework, student organizations, and other activities?

Marissa Simone

Full-Time MBA

Class of 2023



Because my leadership opportunities are part of my graduate assistantship, I try to **treat it like another class** and block out time in my calendar to do MBA Association and graduate assistantship duties. I treat my MBA Association to-do's like homework assignments, which makes it easier to break up to-do's and plan ahead, but I do **always put school first**. I plan my extracurricular events and activities during times I know will not be busy academically, i.e., no events around midterms or final exams.

Ray Eddy

Online MBA

Class of 2023



I think my biggest assistance in this area was treating my leadership opportunities and clubs/extracurriculars **as if they were classes** and assignments. I gave them the same priority and thus afforded the appropriate amount of time for them. I think in the past I would get in trouble because I would focus more on studies and put my extracurriculars on the back burner. So, when it came time for deliverables with extracurriculars, I didn't have the time or capacity for them. Changing this cycle allowed for me to give the proper weight to my extracurriculars and allowed me to balance both my studies and passions outside the classroom.

Shale Brenner

Full-Time MBA

Class of 2024



I have found the best way to manage my time is by effectively using my **calendar** to keep track of classes, homework, exams, team meetings, and extracurricular activities. I try to **look ahead and anticipate** when I am going to be busier so that I can work ahead and plan accordingly.

How did you adjust to living in Arizona and Metro Phoenix?

Maxine Falasco

Full-Time MBA
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Before starting the program, I had been living in Arizona for almost 3 years, having moved from the Philippines prior. To build connections, **reach out** to local affinity and religious groups to grow a local network. **Join clubs** that are aligned with your professional goals and personal hobbies! In terms of self-care, make sure to **apply sunscreen** daily, familiarize yourself with public transit using the **Valley Metro app**, and eat lots of amazing **Mexican food**.

Ola Kolawole

Full-Time MBA
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Step out of your comfort zone and meet people. Start with getting to know your classmates and attend **social events**. Attending social events with your classmates will have you learning about the city within a trusted circle. Adjusting to life in Arizona means understanding a lot of things (the weather, the people, the events happening in the city). Go out, **join a club** in school that can help you facilitate these adjustments. I joined the International Students Club, where several trips to great locations within Arizona are organized for ASU students at highly discounted prices. I also joined the ASU Scuba Diving Club where you can learn how to scuba dive. There's so much you can do.

Marissa Simone

Full-Time MBA
Class of 2023



I am not from here, but have loved living here! It really helps having school in person so I get to be on campus almost every day and **explore Tempe** by having coffee or lunch with friends, mentors, or career coaches. I think Discord has been a fantastic way to facilitate community. I also am very grateful for the W. P. Carey **tailgates** and the opportunity they give us to get together before games, which I have really enjoyed attending as a new Arizona resident.

What is something unexpected that you have learned during your studies?

Rishabh Kakkar

Full-Time MBA

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In my mind, I always felt that MBA programs are extremely competitive. While I knew that the Full-Time MBA program at W. P. Carey was different, I did not expect it to be such a **collaborative learning experience**. Students applying for the same job prepare together instead of competing against each other, here at W. P. Carey. To me, that was amazing! I was never a competitive person and I felt that I wouldn't have been able to succeed in such an environment. The **culture of collaboration and excellence** at W. P. Carey really helped me thrive!

Sonya Robinson

Executive MBA

Class of 2024



This is an amazing program. I have learned so much in just the first few quarters that **my confidence** in speaking the language of finance has increased tremendously. Because of the pace of such a rigorous program, my learning curve has been fast and I have been able to implement lessons in my daily professional life.

Shale Brenner

Full-Time MBA

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I have learned a lot about **the importance of networking**. I have met some amazing people through recruiting events, classes, and other events that are now a part of my network. I can reach out to them in the future and have people to talk to in different industries and at different levels within organizations for times when I need a reference, connection, or company information.

How can students contribute to building the culture of collaboration and excellence at W. P. Carey?

Jordan Bishop

Online MBA
Class of 2024



Whenever possible, take advantage of the **extracurricular activities or events**. For online students specifically, it is challenging to get the "full MBA experience" online, since a lot of benefits lie in networking. Do not be afraid to put yourself out there to get to know other students, either virtually or in-person. Similarly, do not hesitate to **reach out to faculty** and instructors for input on a challenge you are facing; they are here to help and I have found they quite enjoy providing this type of advice.

Sonya Robinson

Executive MBA
Class of 2024



Students should do their due diligence to dedicate the time needed to focus on the curriculum and truly **take in the learnings**. Take advantage of the diverse experiences of fellow students and the support that all of the highly-skilled professors offer. Although the program is far from easy, there are a wealth of programs available to support a student's success. Take advantage of the support available but also **be willing to share your knowledge** with the collective group to help lift the tide of learning.

Many thanks to our contributors:

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