# Transcript: IT podcast – ep 60 – Evolution of a First tERM sTUDENT – jOHN cHLADNy

*The following transcript is a verbatim account of the video or audio file accompanying this transcript.*

Speaker # (Narrator):

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Speaker #2 (John Chladny):

Hello. My name is John Chladny, and I'm a program mentor in the cloud computing program here. I'm going to do a recording on the evolution of a first-term student. If I could put a subtopic under that, it would be, How to be a WGU Student. Overall as a program mentor here, I love talking to my first term students and just watching them grow, adapt, evolve in that first term from when they first started to the end of the first term. So that's what I'm going to go over here today is the evolution of a first-term student. It's so neat to watch students essentially grow during their first term. I have a series of topics here. The first one is, I love watching students learn and adapt and change and evolve their study habits. Rule number 1, how do they study? Some students like reading, some students have gamifying options in the courses that they really enjoy that helps them out. Some students do interactive materials like quizzes and practice exams. Flashcards are very popular. It really depends on the type of course you're going into. For example, a certification will have different lessons involved, some students will go through the lessons in the book and then go back to the lessons, lesson 1 and maybe do the flashcards then, and do the interactiveness there. Some students will go through all that in the first lesson. It really depends on the student and what they like and what they decide works the best for them. So that's the reason we need to talk to them about them and see from one student to the next which study habits really work for them and help retention. Time into your studies. think time into your studies is the single biggest factor for a student to be successful here at GU. In my experience, students, if you can put 1-2 hours, at least a day, every single day, you're going to see that retention is going to be much, much better for you and ultimately that becomes better learning experience for you as well. Even if you have to put in 30, 45 minutes a day, I really highly recommend that to my students, and I love seeing my students who listen to me and then they come back and they say, "Yeah, that's actually helping me out with retention and learning at a much better clip there," versus the students that may do 3-4 hours on a Monday and then not reengage with the material till Friday and then say, "Oh, I have the weekends. I'm going to really put a lot towards the weekends," but in reality, we know lot of times they're not able to do that because life does happen. I always like to talk about time to their studies and talk about staying engaged daily if you can, with your studies there. Also, when to study is a big important factor as well. Some get up early in the morning, some have the opportunity to work during the day. Some work at nighttime due to maybe it's more quiet than daytime at home. Each person figures out what works for them, and that's when they study there. I really enjoy talking to the students about, I think I can work at this time, I think I can study at this time, and then a couple of months later they realize that doesn't work so they've changed their habits and they change a little of their pattern there of studying for the better there. Overall, I would say try to get a set schedule that will help you stay disciplined and engaged. Engagement is so crucial for studying, and like I said, for retention and ultimately passing your courses each and every term. The second topic I wanted to discuss in the evolution of a first-term student is how to approach the objective versus performance-based courses. As you know, we have pre-assessments in our objective-based courses there. One thing I want to tell my students and they often think of is that, "Oh, I take the pre-assessment and I pass it and then I go take the final." That's just not true, and a lot of students are realizing that. The pre-assessment is just a gauge for what the final is like. It's not necessarily that tell all as I say, for if you're ready to take the final there. A lot of students will need to interact with and engage in some other resources to help them prepare for the final. A lot of students learn that the pre-assessment is a nice tool we have to help the students out, but they realize that they want to utilize more and more resources and tools to help them not to prepare for the final there. Versus performance-based courses, many students think it's like writing a term paper or doing some thesis statement or something, then in reality, it's not. I can't tell you how many of my students will get down with us say, Introduction to communication performance and talk to me and say, "Man, I could have had that done a lot faster had I really just engaged with it, I really over thought that." They could have got that done a lot quicker. So keep it simple. They realized that keep that simple, there's performance-based ones, stick to the requirements and you can get through those relatively fast. Finally, taking an exam. A lot of students do have test anxiety or whatnot. Students often think they're taking their time in reality, they're going way too fast. I talk to students all the time, especially in the first two or three courses, and we'll go through that final objective and I say, "Hey, you took 22 minutes to get 70 questions done, " and that's a little fast. They'll tell me, "Oh, I thought I was going a lot slower." It's always nice to see students the next time they take an objective, maybe they've doubled that time. I personally am a one-to-one type of mentor there. If there's 60 questions, I would love to see you take that for 60 minutes. Take your time with that. Students really are learning to take their time with the objective-based courses just to be a better test taker there, and that's a great segue to utilizing the resources, you've heard me say that a few times. We have more resources than just the material here, the main book. I think one of the biggest misnomers about WGU and sitting down is, "Okay, I'm going to open up my course and I'm going to go right to my learning resource." We have other resources such as the course search which have a lot of extra resources embedded in there from the course instructors. They've done a lot of great work there. We have amazing cohorts to help our students out. I tell them if you can find a lot of value there, that's great. We have a lot of third party resources, especially for certifications to help you get past the finish line. Also, don't forget about our course instructors. They're there to help you out. Oftentimes I think students don't utilize the course instructors enough and then they realize, yeah, they're the experts and I'm going to utilize them. So that's always fun to see that happen as well. I also promote the course chatter there. There's just five resources right there off the tip of my tongue that I do talk to my students about in seeing them evolve as a first-term student, they're utilizing those extra resources to get them through the finish line. The last one is really short and sweet here. It's overall watching the students grow and understand what the competency-based model is about, how to approach your course with experience if you do versus you don't, knowing that you as a student do not have to go through the whole material. If you have experience in a given subject matter, you can prove you're competent in that and get you through that course much, much faster than normal versus maybe someone that doesn't. So that's always nice seeing students who utilize their experience and also understanding how to do that by maybe taking the pre-assessment, looking what they can get up to speed on for a couple of days, and then taking the final and passing that if you have the opportunity to do that. That's a pivotal thing for students who want to accelerate and get their degree is you have to understand what our competency-based model is all about. That's the, for my opinion, the evolution of a first-term student. I did actually asked some of my students too what they thought of themselves. When I asked, "Hey, how have you evolve as a student here?" I want to just read a couple of those here. One student said the ability to master the material changed his concept of what school is all about versus a traditional school. It's a more practical. So he realized, "Hey, this is not like a traditional school, this is a model that works for me and here's all I have to do to prove my mastery of the topic." Another person said a very powerful one, life happens, you can't control everything, but I've learned how to adapt to be successful here as a student at WGU. Another person said utilizing social media groups to help with encouragement helped her stay motivated. She found those social media groups outside of WGU, and that's helped her evolve with staying on pace and such. Being knocked down and picking yourself up is a very hard thing, much harder than he thought and life does not stop, it's going to continue to move on. He's learned in the first term how to get past that. Essentially saying, "Hey, I've failed, but WGU's helped me as a person to pick myself up and continue to move forward there."Understanding how to overcome personal challenges, how to handle work combined with school. That's a big one because life is going to happen, work is going to happen, and understanding how to overcome them. Just rewinding 5, 6 minutes ago, "Hey, if life is happening, work is happening, I got to change my schedule around. I got to get my study time in," so that's evolving as a student as well and adapting. Learning how to be a WGU student working on things he didn't know that speeds him up as a student there. He's basically saying, "Hey, I know this, I really don't need to focus on that. I'm going to focus on the things I don't know" and that's helped him evolve as a student as well. Another student mentioned about all the options that WGU has to optimize his studying and being able to pick and choose which options work the best for him. Another one said, realizing he has to be a better student, study habits wise, and knows what it takes weekly to be successful there. Finally, my best student here said writing down his goals on a spreadsheet for each course has motivated him, and then when he sees it in his degree plan turn green, that keeps him moving forward and staying motivated there. I just want to summarize that. I hope that makes sense for you there and the evolution of a student. You're going to see yourself changing with your study habits, how to be a WGU student, being a better student overall, knowing how to handle failure and picking yourself up, and moving forward there. I hope that this really helps you become a better WGU student and hopefully become a graduate one day. Thank you for your time, bye bye.

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

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