# Transcript: IT Podcast - Ep 124 - Let's Get To Know the Student Success Center-Ellinoa Blake and Jessica Galterio

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Speaker #1 (Narrator):

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Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

Hello and welcome back to the IT Audio Series. I'm Jessica Galtario and I've been a program mentor with WGU since 2015. Today I have with me Ellinoa Blake from the Student Success Center who has been with WGU since 2020. Thanks for joining me today, Ellinoa.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Absolutely. I'm happy to be here. Thanks for having me, Jessica.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

All right. Let's jump right in. What can you tell me about the type of support services that the Student Success Center provides?

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

The Student Success Center offers support in a variety of areas, including test-taking skills, managing test anxiety, time-management, study skills, motivation, life balance, and really topics along that line. We also support with Office 365 products. If you need assistance with OneNote, Word, Excel, we can support with that, as well as APA formatting questions. We offer support through a number of different avenues, including a chat line and a helpline for quick questions. We've got lots of online resources that are available 24/7 to our students, live webinars that you can attend with other students and, of course, one-on-one thirty minute appointments with our wonderful team of instructors.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

Wow, that's fantastic. So really any type of area where a student is feeling like they're not adequate or a little vulnerable or maybe not adding up you guys can help with that?.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Absolutely. I always say we support in the areas that are going to support you in all of your courses. These are skills and techniques and strategies that you're going to be able to bring into any course into your next term. Ideally, this will help you build your academic confidence and your success at WGU.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

That's great. I know I sound like a corny poster, but I do feel like confidence is as important as competence here at WGU so that's fantastic.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

I completely agree. I love that. It's a great slogan.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

Thank you. Obviously, there's lots of ways that a student can benefit from meeting the Students Success Center. But do you have any specific examples?

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Yeah. I always think of some statements that if you're listening you might resonate with. Statements like, how do I balance work, family, life, taking care of myself, and WGU?. Maybe you know that you want to get your degree, but you just don't feel motivated. These are really the ways that we can help benefit you by being able to have these in-depth discussions about what does your life look like? How is WGU going to fit into it? What are the tools available to you that are going to make your term more efficient, more successful, and really learning about yourself as a student? I think that's a lot of what we do at the Student Success Center is being able to talk about who am I as a student and what are the practices that are going to work best for me? Honestly, I always say too, if you need a cheerleader, if you need someone in your quarter, our team of instructors is just incredibly supportive and motivating and can sometimes just be that extra voice of support for you at WGU.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

That's fantastic and that's really good to hear because obviously, like you said, everyone comes here with the goal to get a degree, but that day to day, like how we actually get it done, that can leave a lot of questions.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Absolutely. I always say one of the most amazing and toughest parts of being a student at WGU is that you have a lot of ownership. With that ownership comes a lot of figuring out what works best for me in terms of note-taking, in terms of test-taking, in terms of that pesky, formatting, in terms of working with new programs potentially, and really being able to not shy away from asking for help? Our team is really open to any questions. I always say I invite any questions that come our way for you to ask them.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

That's fantastic. I think it's important too. A lot of people are thinking about the student that they used to be in high-school.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Yes.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

Everything about life has probably changed for that person, so it is very applicable to take another look at yourself and how you learn now that you're an adult.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Definitely, I could not agree more. In fact, I think I said that in an appointment this morning, of when you are holding yourself to expectations of the student that you were potentially five years ago, 10 years ago, 20 years ago, most likely, there have been some big life changes since then. Maybe we did have two hours to spend uninterrupted on a Tuesday that we could just spend on schoolwork. That might not be the case now. There oftentimes is a lot of mindset shifts that we have to bring into play for us to meet ourselves where we're at now and be the student that we are now because we're always going to be influenced by everything else in our life as students.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

Right. That's great. How does a student navigate to the Success Center and set up an appointment to get some of this great advice?

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

I always say, just remember the word success. That's the name of the game here. The Student Success Center can be located right from the student portal on the success centers to have that's on the top ribbon of the page. If you are looking at your portal, you'll see that there's a success center button at the top. You'll drop that down and the Student Success Center is housed right there. If you select that website, that will bring you to our home page. Then our link to make an appointment is right on the homepage of our site. It's on the right-hand side of the page in a gray box that states make an appointment. You'll be able to select which college you're a part of, which instructor you'd like to work with if there's a specific instructor you've been working with or you can select any instructor. Then you'll be able to choose a time. We've got offering seven days a week, including evening hours because we know that you are busy, so we've got a lot of time availability open for you to make an appointment.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

That's fantastic. I didn't know that you could get such personalized service. That's really good to know.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

If you have, of course, any trouble making an appointment, you can always give us a call on our helpline and we can set up an appointment through there if needed as well. I always say don't let anything online be a barrier. Give us a call if you need any support.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

That's wonderful. That really is exactly what students need. I'm so glad to hear that we offer that. Now, Ellinoa. I know that you guys have some great time management strategies that you can offer students as well. Can you share some of those with me?

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Yeah, of course. That's a great question. I honestly always say that time management is one of those areas that we all can grow in, including myself. One key piece of time management I think is breaking things down. We tend to think of study time having to happen in large periods of time. If we don't have hours at a time to set aside for schoolwork, we often feel like we just don't have the time. But I really recommend shifting that mindset and starting to think of studying happening in shorter chunks of time, and this really follows something called the Pomodoro method, which is an awesome task management system where you work on a task for 25 minutes, and then you take a really intentional five-minute break to let our brain decompress and organize, and store the information. Honestly, I use this on work projects all the time. A lot of students have found the Pomodoro method helpful, and just that rethinking of studying being able to happen in those small chunks of time that we carve out throughout our day, and as long as we are intentional with a goal, we really can get a lot done in 25 minutes. I always say it's about breaking things down. If we plan out our study times, perhaps about three days at a time in 25-minute increments with small goals attached to those increments. It can be more manageable, less intimidating, and really more successful.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

I think that's such a great tip and I love that tip about a purposeful plan. Really saying what we're going to study over the next couple of days because we all know you're that much more likely to achieve it.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Right. Exactly. I think that the more that we can have a specific and realistic plan, the more likely we are going to accomplish our small goals, which all are a part of our big, exciting goals that we're working toward.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

I love that tip. Finally, do you have any recent success stories that you can share just to help inspire some of our students?

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Yeah, of course. I was thinking about that question, and one success story that comes to mind is a student that I had the pleasure of working with who is on their third attempt of an objective assessment. Maybe you found yourself in those shoes that I think it can be a frustrating place to be in. This student really struggled with test anxiety and shared that before the test, they felt like they had a complete handle on the material. They knew the material, but each time they started their OA, their mind went completely blank, and when they got to a question that they weren't sure of, their heart rate started to go up, they would get stuck on that question.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

Tough.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

It's so frustrating. When you know that you know the material, but you're not able to show it. They found themselves second guessing a bit. During our 30 minute appointment, we talked through test-taking strategies like starting with the questions they knew first, bookmarking, and leaving blank questions they were unsure of. We talked about some anxiety management strategies and disrupting negative thought patterns, building up that academic confidence using positive affirmations to our advantage. The students just had their third attempt last week and they reached out to let me know that they had passed.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

Yes.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

They stated that they had used these strategies and it really made the difference in being able to get over that competency line. That was really exciting. It's one of those examples where it's, they know the content and it's all about creating an environment and using strategies that are going to allow you to show what you know.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

That's wonderful. I'm so glad to hear that because that sounds like a student who may even been in the middle of their journey here. Sometimes you'll find that, okay, I managed to get this far with the strategies I was using, but now I need to change things up a little bit.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Yes. I feel like sometimes we will run into a course that just causes us little bit more trouble. It can be challenging because it's like I've tried something that worked and now it's not working. I always say when we are taking a second or third attempt of an OA, we want to change things up because if we try the same exact thing, most likely will yield the same result. But if we change things up, that's where we see a difference in results, and that's a lot of what we're here for. We are troubleshooters. We might meet with a student a couple of weeks in a row and see, let's see if this works and if it doesn't, that's okay. It's all about finding what's going to work best for you.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

I know that is what a lot of people need. Again, things may have worked in the past for you, but you might just need something different. You need somebody to take a look at what you are doing and make recommendations.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Exactly. I think that's it's always a conversation with students. Our appointments aren't a do this, do that. It's all about, what are you doing? How can we build on what's going well and how can we add to make this an even more successful term for you?

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

Wow, that is fantastic service. I'm so glad to hear that we offer that type of support. That's great.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Thank you so much. I'm always happy to share with more students that we are a resource for them.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

Perfect. Well, you heard it here first. Students who are feeling like they just need that little extra to help them clear the hurdles that they need to complete to graduate, the Student Success Center is for you. Ellinoa, thank you so much for spending time with us today. I really appreciate you sharing all this wonderful information.

Speaker #3 (Ellinoa Blake):

Absolutely. Thanks for having me, Jessica. We hope to have all the students listening. Visit us at the Student Success Center.

Speaker #2 (Jessica Galtario):

Perfect. This concludes this episode of the IT audio series. Stay tuned for more.

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

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