WHAT IS PROCRASTINATION?
Procrastination is the self-destructive habit of delaying the completion of important tasks in lieu of focusing on unimportant/trivial tasks (things that either don’t need to be done at all or don’t need to be done at that time). Some procrastinators opt for more pleasurable activities (e.g., socializing instead of studying), but others avoid important tasks by doing things that aren’t more fun, such as cleaning the bathroom instead of studying for the exam. For these folks, it can be easy to rationalize the behavior, after all who would argue that you shouldn’t clean the toilet, right?

WHY DO PEOPLE PROCRASTINATE?
Procrastination is a common problem, and though procrastinators are generally aware of their behavior, they may not know why they do it. Often procrastination is mistaken for laziness, but this is almost never the case. Also, being a procrastinator does not necessarily mean that you have low self-esteem, doubt your own abilities, don’t have goals, or dislike achievement. There are many reasons for procrastination, including:

- Fear of failure/fear of success
- Perfectionism
- Over-confident in ability / underestimate the amount of time task will take
- Overwhelmed by the task / don’t know or can’t decide how to begin
- Lack the resources/skills necessary to complete the task
- Disorganization
- Task is unpleasant
- Resentment of task or person who wants you to complete the task

WAYS TO BEAT PROCRASTINATION
Procrastination can be devastating when it profoundly impacts your ability to achieve your goals. Because procrastination is habitual, it can be hard to overcome, but there are many useful approaches for you to try.

1. Recognize when you are procrastinating
2. Try to understand why it’s happening – this will help you select the best approach
3. Take steps to deal with it

**Get motivated**
- Think about / list the negative consequences of NOT completing the task.
- Reward yourself AFTER you accomplish the task, not before. Don’t bargain with yourself, “First I’ll go out with friends, then I’ll hit the books.” What do you enjoy? A good meal, a hot bath, a movie?
- Have a study partner / someone who will hold you accountable and won’t buy your excuses. Guilt and peer pressure work, as does support.

**Get organized**
- Organize your study space, so you don’t waste time getting ready.
- Make to-do lists or reverse to-do lists (make a list of what you actually accomplished).
- Set goals, develop a plan, and make a schedule.

**Get started**
- Break overwhelming projects into a series of more manageable tasks and focus on one at a time.
- Begin before you’re ready – don’t wait for the perfect time.
- Pick something small and just do it.
- Set a timer for 10 minutes and promise yourself you will work until the timer goes off.

**Get professional help**
- If you are unable to beat procrastination on your own, seek help before you dig too deep a hole.

**MSUCOM Office of Personal Counseling and Health Promotion:**

**Additional resources:**
Overcoming procrastination (with “Are You a Procrastinator?” self test):
http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newHTE_96.htm
Procrastination (excellent resource!): http://sas.calpoly.edu/asc/ssl/procrastination.html