Motivation and Goal Setting

I. Lack of Motivation is common among students, even so-called “mature” students:
   a. sometimes it is temporary (generally a kind of very short-lived “burn out” occurs after a student has completed a semester with a very demanding course load or after a number of terms without a break). This is best remedied by a trip to Key West and a couple of weeks in the sun.
   b. sometimes it reoccurs (particularly for those, perhaps, who have a long personal history marked by variable motivation). This can be best addressed by working with an advisor or study skills counselor.
   c. Rarely is it chronic (e.g. in persons with severe clinical depression, bi-polar disorder, head trauma, and traumatic family histories)

II. Costs of Low Motivation (despite happy stock comic characters like frat rats, class clowns, and surfer dudes)
   a. Fatigue
   b. Apathy
   c. Procrastination
   d. Loss of self-respect
   e. Loss of respect of significant others

III. Academic Motivation in most cases can be rediscovered, rather than created brand new. Many persons were excellent students:
   a. in high school
   b. in the previous college from which they transferred
   c. earlier in their career at G.S.

IV. Motivation is not external:
   a. It can only rarely be perfected by the desire to fulfill outside wants such as an exotic vacation, new car, fancy clothes, trophy spouse, the approval of others.
   b. It cannot be delivered by a outside supplier, whether that person is a professor, advisor, counselor, tutor, etc.
   c. It cannot be obtained through $29.95 special offers, courtesy of taped cassettes or television infomercials.

V. Motivation is based on belief:
   a. belief in self
   b. belief in the dignity of labor
   c. belief in the value of intellectual work (with a small letter I)
   d. belief in the efficacy of action
   e. belief in personal reform

Ultimately the student who will find motivation goes through a kind a conversion experience.
VI. Factors which sap motivation:
   a. excessive anger directed at self
   b. fatalism
   c. perfectionism
   d. excessive anxiety about the future
   e. cynicism
   f. lack of planning
   g. status
   h. a contentment with a tragic sense of life
   i. academic dishonesty

VII. Factors which spur motivation
   a. moderate self-criticism
   b. determination to overcome as much as possible the slings and arrows.
   c. dedication to improvement of a moderate and sustained nature.
   d. a cautiously optimistic view of the future
   e. realism with a dash of idealism
   f. careful planning
   g. a commitment to action
   h. a decision to try to increase happiness
   i. academic integrity

VIII. A plan of Action:
   a. Try to adjust your attitude broadly. Concede the importance of motivation to yourself.
      1) Exhort yourself to change by posting signs with some energizing words on them in your bedroom or study. (“Seize the day,” “Tomorrow is the first day of the rest of your life,” “Be a doer not a talker,” “The Die is Cast,” “I will force Dean McGee to remove me from probation or put me on the Dean’s List,” or some other good “bon mot”). Remember, if you talk to yourself on occasion, why not write to yourself as well?
      2) You might want to make entries in a journal you will keep which will remind you daily of what you want to change in your life.
      3) You may visit with friends or an advisor who is trying to help to keep you on track and focused on the larger goal. This can be very helpful if you do this during sensitive times in the semester, such as the 4th and 8th weeks.

   b. Try to apply the general principle of motivation by deciding what taskd you want to do. Make a list of the things you have wanted to accomplish on one side of a sheet of paper. On the other side put down all the reasons you have delayed. Analyze the difficulties of the tasks and the factors that have delayed your
response. Try to note what may be common themes or threads in demand and lack of motivational supply.

c. Establish a priority of the things you have to do on your list, and decide to tackle them in some coherent order, balancing importance and efficiency in task accomplishment. As items begin to fall away, the success will be energizing. Your self motivation will increase.

d. State your goal. Make it behaviorally specific, stating what steps you will have to do to come up with a good result. Write all this down. Establish a time by which the task will be completed, make it moderately challenging, and have some way of measuring your progress and accomplishment.

e. Determine what obstacles might block your progress and seek out sources of help in overcoming these roadblocks.

f. If you find yourself faltering, review in your mind the positive aspects of accomplishment and the negative results of failure. Visualize both success and lack of the same.

g. Do however, allow yourself a little slack, and realize that form time to time there will be slight setbacks in the degree and timing of task accomplishment. The important thing is to make a renewed effort to make overall progress even if you occasionally falter a bit.

Motivation is a state of mind, a pattern, a way of living, a companion on a personal journey. If you believe in yourself and the importance of your own improvement, you can make journey with motivation and arrive at your personal destination, your own sense of success.