Alexa Binckes is a senior majoring in Health Sciences and will continue her studies in the spring as a graduate student in Public Health with a concentration in Biological Statistics. Alexa exemplifies Grit in her ability to overcome challenges. She recently had a fourth knee surgery and wants to make the most of her last year on the softball team. “Not only do I want my knee to be completely better right this minute, but I want to be competing with my teammates. I have been able to overcome the frustrations and struggles of rehab and not (cont. on back)
ALEXA BINCKES EXEMPLIFIES GRIT

being cleared to play by ensuring I keep my focus on the bigger picture and why I am doing what I am doing. Realizing that rushing back will only harm me in the long run helps me focus on taking one day at a time. Additionally, celebrating the little achievements has helped me through this process. For example, getting my strength numbers up in rehab, being able to squat, and being able to throw again have all been some small, yet major accomplishments.” In addition to playing catcher for the softball team, Alexa is a marketing intern with Purdue Convocations. Her many roles on campus require her to have excellent time management skills. Alexa recommends, “creating a schedule for every day of the week and also another schedule for the month. Personally, I have a big calendar on one side of my wall that has important exam dates, game days, work days etc.; while the other side is a white board in which I write down everything due for that week. Finally, I have each day of the week mapped out by the hour on my mac. Using this technique has allowed me to see the grand scheme of things while also focusing on one week and one day at a time… and also not become too overwhelmed.”

ALEXA CREDITS HER PARENTS, BOYFRIEND, FRIENDS, AND ACADEMIC ADVISOR FOR BEING A LOVING AND UNDERSTANDING SUPPORT SYSTEM. SHE ALSO RELIES ON CAMPUS RESOURCES, INCLUDING THE DREW B caRES ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE CENTER. THE MISSION OF THE CENTER IS “DEVELOPING CHAMPIONS, DEVELOPING SCHOLARS, DEVELOPING CITIZENS” AND FOR ALEXA, IT HAS PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN DEVELOPING STUDY SKILLS AND PROVIDING TUTORIAL SERVICES. ABBY EDDY, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING FOR CONVOCATIONS, STATED, “I’VE BEEN AMAZED WITH ALEXA’S ABILITY TO QUICKLY LEARN NEW TASKS AND HER ‘CAN DO’ ATTITUDE. WHETHER IT’S WORK, SCHOOL, OR SOFTBALL- ALEXA TAKES PRIDE IN HER WORK AND IS A HUGE ASSET TO THE DEPARTMENT.”

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

The concept of grit has captured the attention of educators and researchers alike. A measure of a student’s ability to effortfully persist in the face of struggle, grit is proposed to be an important characteristic required for students to succeed academically. Some evidence suggests that grit has a positive relationship with a range of academic outcomes, and yet others argue that grit offers little in terms of predictive value for understanding academic outcomes. In addition, there is conflicting evidence about the presence of gender differences in grit, and very little research around the role of being the first member of the family to attend university in the development of grit. In order to address conflicting findings about the importance and correlates of grit, and to explore the role of engagement in the relationship between grit and academic outcomes, a cross sectional survey study was conducted. The current research measured grit, engagement and academic productivity among 395 Australian university students. Findings suggest that there is no difference in grit between genders, although this cannot be concluded with certainty due to a large imbalance of male to female participants. It also appeared that being the first in family to attend university was associated with an increased level of the grit factor 'effort'. There was a positive relationship between grit, engagement and academic productivity. Further analysis revealed that engagement mediated the relationship between grit and productivity, suggesting that a person with higher grit is more likely to have higher engagement, and that engagement leads to greater academic productivity. These findings highlight the relevance of grit as a desirable student characteristic, and the importance of engagement in the grit-productivity relationship.