Procrastination: The “Vicious Cycle”

Delilah has a major term paper due at the end of the term. It's now past midterm and she still hasn't started to work on her paper. She tells herself, “I should have started sooner.” However, Delilah continues to postpone starting her work on the paper and is now beginning to feel anxious and guilty about it. To relieve her growing anxiety and guilt, she starts doing other tasks instead, such as cleaning her room and returning e-mails to people who have written her. This makes Delilah feel a little better because these tasks keep her busy, take her mind off the term paper, and give her the feeling that at least she's getting something accomplished. Time continues to pass and the deadline for the paper now is dangerously close. Delilah now finds herself in a position of having lots of work to do and very little time to do it.

Reflection and Discussion Questions:
1) What do you predict Delilah will do at this point?
2) Why did you make this prediction?
3) What grade do you think Delilah will receive on her paper?
4) What do you think Delilah will do on the next term paper she's assigned?
5) Other than “starting sooner,” would you have any other recommendation for Delilah (and other procrastinators like her) to break this “cycle of procrastination” and prevent it from happening over and over again?

(Based on the procrastination research and counseling experiences of Jane Burka & Lenora Yuen, as reported in, Procrastination: Why You Do It, What to Do About It).