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HOW TO WORK WITH YOUR PROFESSORS SUCCESSFULLY

WHY DO I NEED TO WORK WITH MY PROFESSORS?

College is about learning from an expert in the field and also about becoming a productive citizen. Not only do you want to learn specific content and technical skills for your field of study, but you also should strive to learn HOW to learn and adapt your methods to different people's styles. Each professor will have a unique style and so do you. How can you learn to adapt and learn if a professor uses a teaching style that is different from your learning style? Creating a working relationship with your professors will help with things such as: enhancing your learning and understanding; promoting engagement in class; increasing accountability; developing professional experiences and references. Your professors provide mentoring and role modeling that will challenge and support you as you grow.

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE LEARNING PROCESS WITH MY PROFESSORS?

- Attend class and come prepared
- Be an engaged class participant
- Know your grades in your classes
- Take responsibility for your learning and hold yourself accountable
- Study 1-3 hours outside of class for every hour of class
- Make arrangements with professors if you must (rarely) miss class
- Follow syllabus all semester
- Keep up with work
- Directly reach out to your professors to create opportunities for one-on-one interaction and learning

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR PROFESSORS

You are responsible for creating some one-on-one opportunities for learning and interaction with your professors by visiting their office hours periodically. Professors expect you to reach out directly if you encounter difficulty and to get help. Seeking help is a skill that all people must learn. There are many resources available to you, and your professors are some of the most important.

Introduce Yourself

Go by office hours (listed on your syllabi) and introduce yourself to your professors. Let them know which class you are in and what you are interested in about the class. Identify something you have liked so far or are excited to learn. Don't wait for a problem to occur to talk to your professor for the first time. Ask them about expectations they have for students and for any advice they might share. Interact with your professors with professionalism.

Come Prepared

Bring your textbook, your notebook, a pen/pencil, and the syllabus. Think of some questions ahead of the times you go visit your professors during office hours. You might also email your professors with some questions. You might ask them about recommendations for the class and how to best prepare. Try asking them about any projects, activities, workshops, events, or professional organizations they might recommend. We recommend visiting all professors at least 2-3 times.

Make a Good Impression

Make participation in class and attendance a priority. Be courteous and express interest in the class and being a productive student. You might want to talk to them about your major and career goals. Be on time for appointments and class. Take notes and show that you are engaged. Ask them about their research, their education, and express sincere curiosity about the subject matter. Look up their bio online so you know something about them. Don't ask questions you can find the answer to in your syllabus. Don't have your parents contact them. Stay off your phone.

Discussing Your Grades

You are responsible for knowing your grade. Your professor is available to talk to you about this. Ask them for feedback for how you can do well and make progress. If you want to improve, take one of your exams or assignments to them and discuss it with them. Avoid acting entitled to a certain grade and express a genuine desire to perform well in class.

Final Tips

- If you must rarely miss class (no more than twice a semester usually), email the professor ahead of time, apologize for missing, give a brief explanation of why you are missing, ask for help with missed work and express your intention to stay on track. If you are sick, don't go to class contagious but do get a doctor's note to take to your professor.
- If you e-mail, identify your full name and ID number as well as the course name and number. Address your professors with their title: Professor, Dr., etc. Realize that they may need time to respond to e-mail but will respond as they can.