Academics and Faculty

ACADEMICS

The term “academic” refers to the people, programs, activities, and policies associated with the development and dissemination of knowledge in intellectual disciplines. The most important of those involved in these processes are the faculty.

The faculty of the university includes those persons who are appointed primarily to teach and do research. Faculty are appointed in academic departments. Faculty titles include:

- **Teaching Assistants (nonfaculty)** may teach some introductory survey courses. TA’s are usually graduate students who are in the latter part of their programs and who have been hired to assist the course instructor or to teach a course.

- **Instructors** usually hold at least a master’s degree, or its equivalent, and demonstrate competency related to the role assigned.

- **Assistant Professors** (tenure track appointments) usually have the terminal degree in their field and demonstrate ability in teaching, research, extension, or other qualifying work.

- **Associate Professors** usually have a terminal degree, or its equivalent, and are tenured. In addition to the qualifications for an assistant professor, associate professors have an established reputation in scholarship, teaching, and service, and/or have received recognition for professional success in the field of the appointment.

- **Professors** are the senior tenured faculty and are usually recognized scholars with established reputations as teachers and/or researchers.

INTERACTING WITH FACULTY

How students interact with faculty in and out of the classroom is a critical part of their educational experience. Students should accept their role as partners in the professor-student relationship. By accepting their responsibility, students can make their attitude work for them. They can get the most possible out of every course and form productive and rewarding relationships with the faculty if they follow a few simple basic guidelines on the etiquette of student-faculty relations.

- **Addressing your instructors.** Although most faculty have a doctorate degree, some don’t. The safest form of address is to call all instructors, “professor........”

- **Create interest.** We each create our own boredom or interest. Create interest by asking questions, then listen for answers. Also, link the content of classes to things you already know and encourage yourself to expand areas of interest.

- **Learn to listen.** Learn to listen and acknowledge the contributions of others. Effective listeners: work at listening, resist distractions, are flexible, listen for ideas, and sit front and center.

- **Recognize that professors have “bad hair days” too.** Show a little compassion. No one can be up every day. If your professor appears to be having a bad day, try to help him or her out. Be more attentive, ask good questions, nod, and smile.
Focus on the positive. It’s easy to complain to another student about a professor. The problem is that complaints won’t improve the quality of teaching or the learning that takes place. Resist the temptation to badmouth professors. Look for the good points.

Take advantage of office hours. The best time to visit with a professor is during his or her posted office hours. Be persistent. If a professor is not in the first time, come back until you connect.

Do your homework. There will be lots of it, and the best strategy is simply to keep up. Remember the rule, 1:2—two hours of study for each hour in class. It doesn’t guarantee an “A,” but doing that puts you well on the road.

Maintain your composure. Instead of getting angry when you disagree with a professor, learn to present your difference of opinion reasonably. Questions relating to exam scores should be addressed privately with your professor.

Inform your professors. Most professors are interested in the academic and personal well-being of their students. They understand that you may have problems arise that interfere with successful performance in class. Don’t be afraid to let your professor know when an event drastically alters your performance. If you are ill, tell them. Don’t just stop attending class. On the other hand, minor problems are your responsibility; car problems, babysitters, etc. are problems you can deal with. If necessary, borrow notes from someone in the class. In summary, if something is a big deal and you need to ask a favor of your professor—ask! If minor irritations have caused you some discomfort—you’ll live! Don’t dump these on your professor.

In summary, professors aren’t special people who require special handling. They are human beings who react to pressures, demands, problems, stresses, and all the other factors that complicate life. Most of them are interested in you and will try to help you in any way they can. It is your responsibility to interact appropriately with your professors, to accept the fact that they are only human, and to take responsibility for your own learning.