Pearls of Wisdom: Practical Advice from Professors and Librarians for Academic Success in College

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People using the wrong title (unfortunately professors vary tremendously in their preferred mode of address, but “find out what people want to be called and call them that” is a good general life lesson). When in doubt, use “Dr.” as your default choice.
Students using text-speak in emails and not recognizing that different modes of speech are appropriate for different contexts, and that professional email (which student/professor email is) requires more formal discourse.
Get a "professional" email address (no "sweetthing245@gmail.com) for dealing with faculty.

Treat emails to faculty like formal correspondence; be respectful and think before sending.

Do visit the professor during office hours to seek for clarification or discuss ideas about assignments (to make sure you are on the right track.)
Consider what you want your online presence to look like when you meet new friends in college: what is your digital footprint?
Learn to negotiate and advocate for yourself - as an adult/near-adult, you need to stop letting your parents get between you and your teachers/employers/etc. Far too many professors find themselves getting e-mail from parents explaining why [name] didn't get a good grade or do the homework!
No one is born knowing how to do everything in college—ask for help (librarians are great for this!)
Ask for help/clarification if you don't have a clue what your assignment sheet says; FOLLOW directions (this one is becoming painful).
Librarians and Academic Success

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Do not spend more than 30 minutes searching for articles—find your librarian for help (usually they have an online chat you can use).
Librarians are usually available in every discipline/subject area and invite student contact; most have LibGuides or other pathfinders for every subject area.
Know that librarians have advanced degrees in information seeking and expertise in research. Utilize their expertise!
Perspective and Time Management

Take a moment to be considerate/see things from someone else’s perspective -- requesting help is a fantastic and much-welcomed idea, but requesting hours' worth of help at midnight is not.

Keep in mind that your professors, librarians, etc. want to help you but also have lots of other work to do.

You need to do your own legwork in advance if at all possible, keep your requests within reason, and ask early enough that it's actually possible for people to help you.
Let librarians help you understand the differences between research databases and search engines and when it is appropriate to use each.
Colleges hire librarians solely to help students find the information they need, whether for an assignment or personal curiosity. Librarians love to help!
Make friends with a librarian at your school your first semester, and you're good for the next four years!
Ask for help. Do not suffer in silence!
Visit the library f2f if you can and/or explore the library website if online.

Don’t be afraid to approach the reference desk in the library—you are not bothering anyone and librarians want to help.

Take advantage of library resources---human, print, electronic—and utilize them.
Do not write a paper and then right before it's due begin searching for "source" to add to it.

DON'T wait until the last minute before the library closes to get help with an assignment.

Know and schedule appointments or visit during the librarian’s and/or professor’s office hours.
Try to have 2-3 ideas for research topics and librarians can help you figure out which ones have more resources and will be more researchable.
A note for teachers in schools without a fully certified school librarian: Many freshman have little to no experience with databases/finding scholarly articles (especially in small and rural schools). Perhaps a few classes on this, with examples of school databases (if you have them, which some don't have), public library databases and college examples would be useful.
Go to class--even if everyone else you know is skipping.
Read and reread their syllabus. Look for answers to questions in the syllabus first.
Consider taking a course in Philosophy to broaden and deepen your thinking.

The ability to think differently and to write well is a most important skill.

The knowledge that one learns more from his/her mistakes than successes.
The days of reading and reporting are over. Add your own *voice* and *perspective*. A well founded and thoroughly thought out argument is the goal, not another book report.
You need to have an informed opinion and that requires reading. It is amazing how many political science papers I get that are just based on someone's voice and perspective. "Iran shouldn't have the bomb!" OK, why? "Because I believe it is so!" Gugh.
DO THESE OFTEN AND REPEAT.

- Listen
- Think
- Contribute
In college you should be ready to probe an idea and not be as concerned about the right answer. There's rarely a single right answer. You are free to take ideas and connect them in a way that no one has ever done before!
Question, question, question--who is doing the telling and why?
Take your learning to the streets. Visit a museum, take a side trip, check out an ethnic community different than yours. It's not all in books!
Before registering for classes, ask other students who they think are the most engaging professors and then try to get into those classes. Be discriminating in shaping your education.

Don’t let one bad grade defeat you; do not give up.

Don’t rely on one method of communication with instructors/classmates.

Become familiar with the course delivery platform (even when the class meets face to face, there may be an online Learning Management System).
Don't ask how long a paper should be. If the professor/instructor has expectations, he/she will share them. If you can answer the question or complete the assignment cogently in a five page paper, then do it.
TO: me
FROM: me
RE: life

be in the moment.

PS: just be. Don't hurry on to the next things. Be in the now.
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