

## Meet and Get To Know Faculty

A faculty connection often makes the difference between an average education and a great one. However, students often avoid professors or TAs because they feel intimidated, inarticulate, or embarrassed. These feelings are common at first, but don't let them stand in the way of possibly the most rewarding aspect of your education. It is important to understand that most faculty truly enjoy meeting with students. Office hours are a great time to ask a question about the course material, discuss a challenging homework assignment, get help with a paper, or discuss your interests in the course topic. You will be laying the groundwork for future letters or reference for jobs or grad school, improving your grades, and maybe finding a mentor.

### How to Talk to Faculty

These guidelines appeared in a National On-Campus Report article called, "Helping New Students Make the Most of Meetings with Faculty", (1993).

#### **Step 1: Make an appointment.**

Review the syllabus for your instructor's office hours. Go to his or her office during those hours. If you are uncertain of the office hours, ask for them. If your schedule conflicts with the office hours, tell your instructor why you can't make the scheduled office hours. Then tell him or her about your specific concern. Set up a specific time to meet with your instructor. Be sure to indicate the amount of time you think you will need.

#### **Step 2: Establish rapport.**

Be on time for your appointment. When you arrive be pleasant, smile, introduce yourself again (include your name and class), and shake hands if appropriate.

#### **Step 3: Present your concern.**

Focus on the specific questions you have identified as problematic. Have your question(s) or problem(s) written out so that the instructor can see where your difficulties are.

#### **Step 4: Provide background information.**

Briefly tell your instructor about your high school background and preparation for the course – if relevant to solving the problem. Explain the study strategies you have used to understand the material.

#### **Step 5: Redirect for clarification.**

If the instructor's explanation isn't clear, redirect his/her attention to the specific point where you became confused. "Talk through" your problem so that the instructor hears your reasoning.

**Step 6: Summarize resolution of the problem.**

“I was missing this step in...I need to apply this formula...”

**Step 7: Thank your instructor.**

And ask to come back if necessary.