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Students: Professors, I WISH you would..

By Norman Eng, Ed.D.

What ONE THING do college students wish professors would just understand?

That's what I ask students the first day. Want to know their psychology? What they really care about? What frustrates the s*&t out of them? What they wished they could say but never could?

My teaching system is all about *knowing my target audience and understanding the learner experience*. How can you teach them if you don't know what they're going through?

Here are 15 of their most insightful comments. And yes, they are 100% real.

I wish all professors knew how much students dislike when they go over class time.

Some of us have other classes to get to and responsibilities, so they can't just always believe that we can stay longer than what we're there for. I've had this problem with one of my classes... and [the professor] would always keep us past our class time and she would threaten to take off points if we got up and left. So in case there are other professors like that I would like them to know that.

Do not be afraid to talk to us about things we will actually use in real life.

(for example: treating your enemies with respect, working hard at something you care about, being kind to the planet, being on time). I understand that what we're learning in class is important, but I feel like my most effective teachers taught us things that weren't in the curriculum, and have now been embedded in my heart and brain for years. Do not be afraid to be real with us. Teach us patience, discipline, and that there are no shortcuts in life, because by doing so, you are pouring into us and these are the skills will need to use as we grow.

I wish all professors knew how difficult it is for students to balance all the different classes.

I suggest that professors should give enough time to complete assignments so that students could balance their own work and school schedule. Instead of giving the assignment a few days before the deadline, they should give it well in advance so that students have more time to work on it. They should also maintain a friendly altitude so that students feel comfortable asking for help and support.

When a student doesn't participate, [it] is for a reason.

Some students are extremely shy and don't feel comfortable participating/sharing even if they know the answer. Everything depends on the student. Every situation is different, I personally like to me left alone, when they try to force me to speak up it doesn't work. Small classrooms help me feel more comfortable, less people.

One thing that I would like the professor to know is how hard it is for me to ask a question.

I don't want to ask the wrong question or even a dumb question. I know lots of professor say there is no such thing as a dumb question but sometime i really don't understand it. And it's really discouraging to see the professors face when my question seems like an easy one.

I wish all professors were a little more lenient with assignments and the amount of work that's due.

Everyone has things and obligations outside of school so I wish they understood that. There are lots of students that are parents and have jobs and while taking care of an older child isn't a big issue having a small child while going to school and working is very hard. I'd suggest at the beginning of the semester professors do a survey just to get some background on their students lives outside of school to better address certain issues, like handing in late assignments. I know some people might say that wouldn't be fair to those students that hand things in on time, but it's also not fair to students like me, who are single mothers, living alone, working and going to school full time while taking care of a 4-year-old, that try really hard to do well and hand things in on time.

I wish all professors knew how to teach and organize their material in a way that made it interesting and easy to remember.

The one big thing that I wish professors knew that encouragement on students progression is necessary. *Because when students have their moment of giving up, I believe it would be helpful to have professors to cheer us up and keep us going. The one big thing that I wish I was better at is continuously learn about new things that challenge me and not be afraid of speaking up even it means I could sound stupid.*

I wish professors knew in order to help students be enthusiastic about the class, they have to be too. A lot professors enter the classrooms expecting students to cram work into their brains, reading off their slides. If professors aren't passionate/willing to actively teach, students would be discouraged.

I wish professors understood that there are only 24 hours in a day. Although we sign up for school as adults we do have other priorities. *It is a challenge to have a full time job and be a full time student. When you are assigned long readings for every single class sometimes it becomes stressful trying to get everything done on time and actually understand and retain some of the information that was studied. Keeping homework readings to a minimum of what is important for understanding the class and being able to take away helpful knowledge for our career should be the focus. Some professors believe that we have the full 48 hours between the classes to only concentrate on their work and that is false.*

I would like professors to know that our time is as valuable as theirs and should be respected as such.

Some professors give strict, non-flexible deadlines for assignments and always shut down students when they claim that they have many classes as well as a job and it is difficult.

Professors then, state that if we are responsible for the work for every class and at times are even told that we need better time management.

All this is fine and well however, when students hand in assignments, most professors ask that we be patient and to take into consideration that they have many classes and papers to grade. So I feel that if we must be responsible to submit our work by the set up on deadline, then professors should do a better job in grading and returning assignments back to students.

I wish professors knew how hard it is for a wife, mother of four to take care of the family, and try to get a good grade in college.

Things I do everyday

1. Take kids to 2 different schools [by taking public] transportation

2. buy groceries.

3. Iron husband shirt, breakfast for husband

4. Go to college

5. cook

6. Pick up kids from [school]

I read my reading assignments (articles) on the train to save time

7. Help kids with their homework

8. Pick up kid from [school]

9. Go back to college

10. Get kids ready for the next day

11. Do my homework (if I need to write a paper need to do it overnight + not being able to sleep when kids are sick. My younger child was admitted to [the local hospital] for 3 days for pneumonia after I spent the previous night writing my final paper for a class.

One thing I wish all professors knew about is how overbearing it is for students at the end of the semester. *I never understood nor liked it when professor wait until the end of the semester to give students the biggest projects and assignments. On top of that we have to study for finals. I wish professors were more considerate when it came to the end of the semester. Yes, I understand that many college kids procrastinate, but that doesn't mean that you wait until the last month to give students big projects that is extremely time consuming. I wish professors realized how stressful it is for students at the end of the semester and it is very inconsiderate to pile everything up on us at once.*

One thing I wish all professors knew was about the fundamentals of each religion. *This may be asking for too much but I always feel weird or uncomfortable asking professors if I can leave the room for a few minutes to pray. I just wish they knew about that certain prayer times fall in between class times. Some strict professors may think I am lying which really insults me. Thankfully, there are professors who are very understanding, however, I wish all professors were like that.*

Firstly, time. *I wish all professors know that college students have too many things at once. Many of us make sacrifices. I understand that professors have a lot of work to do as well. The difference is that professors have their teaching as a job and the homework they get is from their job. However for college students they have job outside college, they make time to come to class and then some of them get too much homework. Secondly, some classes are not engaging.*

College is supposed to be engaging and hands on. The fact that some professors put up an invisible wall in front of them is disturbing. Many professors need to learn that it takes courage to raise a hand and give an opinion. The fact that some professors discourage participation in their class unless we are 100% sure about our answer. These professors only give lecture and don't like their students to give opinion. Trust me I have taken classes where professors are like this. In addition, I loved the fact that you [Prof. Eng] had an [overarching course] question "How do we develop children into successful adults?" This type of question gives purpose to the class. The fact that the question was short, concise and connected to real life experience was helpful and motivating. Professors should do that instead of [illegible] us with lots of question.

One thing I wish all professors knew was that just because we go to the same school, doesn't mean we live close to each other for group projects that have short deadlines. I completely understand the benefits of group projects but I wish professors would give the assignment as early as they can in the semester because I live so far from the school and most students that meeting up becomes a hassle when I already have prior arrangements like work.

Love their comments? Hate 'em? Just don't dismiss them. What do you think? Do share.