

Making the Connection: How and why students should interact with their professors

In this Issue

Making the Connection	1
Tips for Students	2
Off-Campus Moving Day	3
Key Dates	3
New Gordon Center	3
Career Corner	4
Did You Know?	4
Student Advantage Card	4
Social Media	4
Memorial Union Reinvestment	5
Move-In Event for Parents	5
Anti-Virus Software	5
Tuition 2012-13	5
Wisconsin Idea	6
Moped Parking System	6
First-Year Experience	7-8

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UW-Madison Parent Program

One of the ways new college students know they are not in high school anymore is that teachers are now called professors. Is it just semantics? Or is a professor a different sort of instructor? And is there a difference in how to interact with them?

While day-to-day contact with a high school teacher may be more frequent, college faculty members are both accessible and approachable. It may require some initiative by the student, but professors will respond positively to those who take advantage of opportunities that go beyond merely attending class.

"I definitely encourage students to talk with us, not to be afraid of us, not to be intimidated, and to be curious about the class and how it might connect to other things in their lives and to communicate that to us," says Greg Downey, director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Sometimes it takes a bit of an icebreaker. "I have this general statement of goodwill that I always say several times in the semester, which is that, 'No matter what you ask me, I'll never think you are stupid,'" says math professor Gloria Marí Beffa.

How and when to have this interaction can vary depending on the class and the student. Marí Beffa encourages students with questions to meet her during her regularly scheduled office hours. She discourages the use of e-mail, which she finds unwieldy with a class of three-hundred-some students.

Other faculty members encourage other avenues of communication. "E-mail is like the bane of our existence in some ways . . . but the student e-mails are the kind of neat ones; they're the ones we're going to pay attention to and push other things aside in order to respond to," Downey says. He adds that an e-mail discussion can also be a "peg" for him to remember students who may ask for a job or an internship recommendation later.

E-mail can be counterproductive if used to vent inappropriately. "The anonymity of e-mail allows students to say things that they wouldn't say in person," warns Aaron Brower, vice provost for teaching and learning and a social work professor, who says he has received



some outrageously disrespectful messages. "Don't just hit 'send' blindly," he advises. "Think about what you wrote, have a friend read it — or a parent, particularly if you're frustrated about something."

Erica Halverson, an assistant professor of curriculum and instruction, who uses Facebook groups and gives her students a twenty-four-hour e-mail response guarantee, has colleagues who use an e-mail hybrid they call "online office hours."

"So if you contact [them] during that time, [they] will get back to you right away, and you can have kind of an extended conversation," she says.

Simply going up to the professor before or after class may open the door to a longer conversation, although this type of interaction can be limited by long lines of students and everyone's busy schedules, says history teaching assistant Wyl Schuth. But it can be a good time to set up an appointment for later.

Faculty members say they like to hear from students who are excelling in class as well as those who are struggling. "You don't have to have a big crisis or a big problem," Brower says. "The best thing you want to do as a student is to give your professor and TAs early warning for any kind of negotiation you need to do about timing of assignments or quizzes or tests or whatever. Don't go at the last minute."

"Students don't seem to be shy about talking to us when they have a specific question about the course — 'I'm going to be out of town the day of the exam' . . . or 'I have a question about this assignment, a question



Making the Connection *(continued)*

about what you said in the lecture,' " Downey says. "I would encourage them to ask us about other things going on in their college lives, [such as] 'How does your course connect to other courses I'm taking? What would be a good course that could build upon this one?' and follow it up."

Halverson believes student-faculty contacts should come naturally. "Not every student is going to have the passion for that particular topic. I would say it's important to find one faculty member during your four years with which you develop an extended relationship," she says. "And I think it's most productive when it's genuinely based on your interest for the material, for the topic, for the work that you're doing together."

Marí Beffa tells of well-meaning students who try to make a good first impression. "It's very funny because their parents tell them, 'You should introduce yourself to the professor, it's important.' So they come up and say, 'Hi, I'm so and so.' I say, 'Hi, nice to meet you.' " That's a good start, but, Beffa adds, "it's more of a sustained interaction that we want to have, not just a one-time hello."

Each professor will have his or her own style of interacting, and students need to be sensitive to that. "I think the most important thing is to really take care to read the situation," Halverson advises. "Figure out what kind of a person this is. Taking care to read all the social cues about how that interaction ought to happen is really important."

For another way to connect, Schuth would remind students not to overlook contacting their teaching assistants (TAs). He says TAs can act as a two-way communication conduit about what's clicking or not clicking in a course. For instance, they might glean from the number of students glazing over in a discussion group that something in the last lecture wasn't clear. "That will vary from person to person," he says, "but [the TA is] really the interface between the instruction side of the course and the learning side of the course. That's where the rubber meets the road."

How can parents play a constructive role in all of this? Stress to your students that it's to their advantage—and it's their right—to speak with their professors. Whenever they tell you about an issue, a problem, or even a success they are having in class, a helpful response would be, "Have you talked to your professor about it?"

While doing so is not an obligation, seeking those contacts provides a valuable opportunity for students.

"Can you get As without ever talking with someone?" asks Brower. "Yes. But talking about topics, expanding your thinking to make it relevant to your life, integrating information from one class to another—to me, that's where the fun of learning is. You could miss out on that if you never talk to anyone about it."

Bill Graf

Tips for Students

- Meet with your professors early in the semester. Whether it is through talking about a specific assignment or about the class in general, professors enjoy getting to know their students.
- If the professor's office hours do not work with your schedule, set up an appointment with the professor to meet at an alternate time. Be prompt for the appointment.
- Prepare for the meeting by thinking about specific questions or comments regarding lecture content or related materials.
- Talk to your professor about things in your life that may be affecting your academic performance.
- Find out how and when the professor prefers to be contacted, whether by e-mail, during office hours, on Facebook, etc.
- Treat professors with respect, both in and out of the classroom and thank them for their time and assistance.





Student Advantage Card Now Available

The Parent Program has recently partnered with the Student Advantage program, which offers access to the following ongoing discounts:

- Greyhound: 20 percent off tickets, 40 percent off shipping
- Amtrak: 15 percent off
- Choice Hotels: 15 percent off participating hotels
- AMC Theatres: up to 40 percent off prepaid tickets
- Armani Exchange: 15 percent off online
- More than 70 additional national partners

Madison students are eligible for a specially discounted rate on a Student Advantage card: four years of

savings for \$45, which is a \$5 off the retail price. You can also opt for three-, two-, or one-year cards for \$40, \$35, or \$20 respectively.

To enroll visit www.studentadvantage.com/UWM or call 1-877-347-7554 and mention code UWM01. If you have questions, contact the Parent Program.

Connect with us on Social Media

UW–Madison is one of the most active universities in the United States on social media. The university has hundreds of accounts specializing in nearly every facet of campus life, from engineering to scholarships to football. Every day, the university shares news, photos, and fun facts, and engages directly with students and parents.

Did you know?

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Shanghai Innovation Office, which will serve as a focal point for the university's growing engagement in China and across East Asia, officially opened in June. The office will help promote faculty collaborations, expand international academic opportunities for UW–Madison students, and work with the state of Wisconsin and businesses to advance the state's economic interest in the region. The Shanghai office is located near two of UW–Madison's key institutional partners in China, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and East China Normal University.

Career Corner: Student Jobs Can Enhance the College Experience

Working a part-time job often proves to be an important and beneficial part of student life by offering financial benefits and a chance to develop valuable time-management skills. In fact, studies have shown that students who have jobs while taking classes receive higher grades because they learn how to effectively budget their time.

Many campus positions can be scheduled around a student's class schedule and have a reasonable time commitment. In fact, University Housing has positions available in which students work as few as seven hours each week.

Whether working in a residence hall, food-service line, office setting, or a position related to an academic interest, student employment can enhance the college experience. Not only do part-time jobs and internships serve as an outlet for students to get involved, gain leadership skills, and prepare for future careers, they also provide a great way to meet new friends and create a social network.

In addition to the UW Student Job Center, Career Services is a helpful resource. Each school or college

has a Career Services office, which features resume workshops, career fair information, and individual career-counseling appointments. Regardless of a student's year in school, it is never too early to start preparing resumes, practice interviewing, and looking for jobs or internships.

For more information about student employment, and for a complete listing of on- and off-campus positions, visit the UW Student Job Center or the Student Employment Listings (jobcenter.wisc.edu). Encourage your student to connect with Career Services for jobs and internships within the Madison community.

FALL CAREER AND INTERNSHIP FAIR

Thursday, September 20, 2012
4:30–8 p.m.
Kohl Center

All UW–Madison students are invited to attend this fair. Your student can visit the Career Services website to register and find important tips.



For a good starting point, check out @UWMadison on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/UWMadison>) or Facebook (<http://facebook.com/UWMadison>) or the Parent Program (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/UW-Madison-Parent-Program/209202986138>).

A special account dedicated to new students is on Twitter at @UWNNewStudent (<http://twitter.com/UWNNewStudent>). The university is also using Pinterest (<http://pinterest.com/UWMadison>).

If you missed it, visit the #UWRightNow project, which showcased 24 hours in the life of the university, using social media (<http://uwrighnow.wisc.edu>).

Memorial Union Reinvestment: First Phase is Under Way

Memorial Union visitors will see construction fences and parking changes around the building as part of the first phase of the Memorial Union Reinvestment project.

The affected areas will include Lot 1 and the building's southwest corner, where Langdon Street and Park Street intersect.

In 2006, UW-Madison students voted two-to-one to pay to replace the outdated Union South, and upgrade and renovate Memorial Union to enable the building to flourish for another 100 years.

The renovation, which will be completed in phases, will restore the historic building, add modern technology, improve the infrastructure using the latest green standards that promote sustainability and energy efficiency, and improve accessibility for all.

The first phase of the project will focus on the building's west wing, with a projected completion date of June 2014. For more details about the project and how you can play a part, visit unionreinvestment.wisc.edu/.

Move-In Event for Parents

Moving your student to campus is an exciting time, but we know it can also be stressful. The Parent Program will help make the transition a smooth one. We will be handing out refreshments, answering questions, and hosting a raffle. Look for our booths in

both the Lakeshore and Southeast residential areas on August 29 and 30 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. We are eager to welcome you to campus!

Anti-Virus Software

Add this to your to-do list! While your student's laptop and devices are susceptible to viruses, you can help protect their machines by downloading the university's free anti-virus software at cio.wisc.edu/4security. If you have questions, contact Dolt: www.doit.wisc.edu.

Tuition Set for 2012-13

The University of Wisconsin Board of Regents increased resident tuition rates 5.5 percent for the 2012-13 academic year, in an effort to partially offset continuing decreases in state support. The increase affects resident students at UW-Madison and all 13 four-year campuses.

The increase means that UW-Madison tuition will rise by a total of \$681 for the coming academic year. That total includes a general tuition increase of \$431, plus the \$250 differential tuition increase for the Madison Initiative for Undergraduates (MIU). Nonresident tuition increased by a total of \$1,181. This includes a \$431 general tuition increase and \$750 for MIU.

"These are challenging times for our colleges and universities, as well as for our students and families," says UW System President Kevin Reilly. He described his proposal as "a modest, predictable tuition increase that provides some additional revenue for our campuses."

The increases will partially offset declines in state support. The state's 2011-13 biennial budget reduced funding to the UW System by \$250 million. An additional budget lapse approved in February 2012 withdrew an additional \$66 million in taxpayer support. In addition to these reductions in operating revenues, all UW employees are paying for a larger portion of their health and retirement benefits.

View the estimated Cost of Attendance for this academic year at finaid.wisc.edu/undergraduate-cost.htm.



New Moped Parking System Addresses Challenges

Increasing moped popularity on and around campus has created new challenges for safety, intra-campus travel, and enforcement. UW–Madison Transportation Services has established a new moped parking system to address these challenges. The purpose is to ensure the safety of both moped users and the campus community. The new system is effective September 1, 2012.

Changes to moped parking include designated parking lots for each permit, several all-access lots where any permit is valid during the day, and all lots being open and accessible with any valid permit after 4:30 p.m. each day. Having an assigned lot associated with a permit will allow moped users to avoid driving to different lots to find an open stall. It will also reduce motorized intra-campus travel during the day. mopeds — as with other motorized vehicles — should be used only for commuting to and from campus. All students are encouraged to walk, bike, or ride the campus bus while on campus.

The selection of assigned lots is on a first-come, first-served basis. Moped users who live on campus will have the first chance to select lots near their



residence halls. Beginning August 1, 2012, users can apply for the \$120 permit on the Transportation Services website, www.transportation.wisc.edu.

To view the new moped parking policy and lot map, visit www.transportation.wisc.edu/parking/Permit_Motorcycle.aspx. For parking-related questions, please contact Transportation Services Customer Service at customerservice@fpm.wisc.edu or 608-263-6667.

Wisconsin Idea: Go Big Read Turns Three

Go Big Read, UW–Madison's common-reading initiative, has thousands of people reading, talking, and sharing their thoughts and opinions. This program — now in its third year — engages members of the campus community in a vibrant, academically driven experience.

This year's book choice is *Radioactive: A Tale of Love and Fallout* by Lauren Redniss. This highly visual book depicts the Curie's discovery of radioactive power and captures the complexity of the intersections between science, history, and biogra-

phy. You and your student — along with faculty, staff, and community members — are encouraged to participate by reading *Radioactive* and taking part in classroom discussions and campus events.

Redniss will discuss the book during a public presentation on October 15 at Varsity Hall in Union South. For more information about the program, visit www.gobigread.wisc.edu.



The First-Year Experience

Roommate Relationships: How to Encourage Success

The Division of University Housing welcomes more than 7,200 new students to the residence halls every year, and the staff understands that roommates are often a hot topic of conversation. Parents are a student's first sounding board regarding roommate relationships, so your thoughtful guidance can equip them to deal with one of the most exciting dynamics of starting college. The Assignment Office and Residence Life staff supports many students and families with establishing and maintaining successful roommate relationships.

Overall, we recommend five steps to help your student address nearly any roommate situation that may arise:

- 1) Listen.
- 2) Ask your student clarifying questions.
- 3) Practice communicating.
- 4) Allow him or her to address the situation.
- 5) Give him or her time to work through a solution.

Here are some commonly asked questions and suggestions for how families can best aid their students in navigating roommates.

Q: How can students connect with their roommates?

A: Each resident is provided with the roommate's name, e-mail, phone number, and home address. This information can be found when your student logs into the My UW Housing portal. Some students may also choose to learn about their roommates through social media. While this is one step in developing a new roommate relationship, we recommend also having your student contact his or her roommate directly through e-mail, phone, or video chat. Please encourage your student to remember that social media profiles are not always the most accurate representation of a whole individual. Initial concerns are often dispelled through direct contact between two students. Remind your student to be open-minded. Part of being a college student is meeting different types of people. Keep in mind, though, that during the summer some students have limited access to e-mail or may be away on vacation or for work. Your student should allow his or her roommate time to respond.

Q: What if a roommate is abroad and cannot talk on the phone?

A: Whether the new roommate is across the world or just across town, we recommend video chatting as a way to put a face with a name. Many free, easy-

to-use applications, such as Skype, GChat, and Facetime will make it possible for your student to get to know his or her new roommate.

Q: What if my student is unhappy with his or her roommate?

A: Please keep in mind that roommate pairs must be able to respect each other and the 'home' they will share; they are not required to formulate a mandatory best-friend relationship. Roommate pairs are successful when they have built a foundation of respect and consideration for one another. Before a student makes any rash judgments, we recommend that he or she reaches out to the new roommate for a phone or video conversation to get to know one another.

To best facilitate the harder questions, all residents in University Housing complete a roommate agreement once they arrive on campus. The roommate pair will sit down with the help of their House Fellow to talk through this agreement together. This may be the first time that many residents are sharing a room and have to communicate about their living needs, so the roommate agreement asks very specific questions about sleep, studying, cleanliness, guests, and personal belongings. This serves as a "living document" to be revisited throughout the year as the relationship grows and needs change.

Q: Who can assist if there is a conflict between roommates?

A: In all healthy relationships there may be some conflicts, and learning to communicate through them helps the relationship grow deeper. Upper-class House Fellows (RAs) are a great first resource for residents who need another student perspective or some extra guidance on how to approach a roommate with a concern. In addition, full-time professional staff who have master's degrees live in the halls and supervise the House Fellows, and they can help with especially intense conflict mediation.

Q: Do you allow roommate changes over the summer?

A: Students are not allowed to switch room assignments during the summer due to a potential conflict of interest with their new roommates. Remember that a lot of monumental changes are happening in your student's life right now. High school graduation and making the transition to the university with a new and diverse set of students can all seem to hap-

The First-Year Experience

pen quickly. Encourage your student to remember that relationships can take time to develop and there is no need to rush the process. The Assignment Office will begin maintaining an official waiting list for room changes on September 4, 2012. To join the waiting list, students should visit the Assignment Office in the lower level of Slichter Hall. Room changes are offered throughout the semester on a first-come, first-served basis as space becomes available.

Q: Can roommates choose to live together again?

A: Absolutely! Students have greater flexibility in choosing their rooms online if they are returning to

the University Residence Halls for their sophomore year. They can choose the same room together or two single rooms right next door to each other.

Q: Who can my student contact with more specific questions?

A: Students can call, e-mail, or stop by the University Housing Office. And the office is happy to provide talking points to parents, too. For Residence Life contact information, visit each hall's web page at www.housing.wisc.edu. To reach the Assignment Office team, e-mail assignme@housing.wisc.edu.

FY Briefs

Sending Your Student Mail and Packages

If your student lives in University Housing, sending a thoughtful letter or gift is a great way to give him or her a sense of home — and it's easy to do. Just format your student's address this way:

Name
Residence Hall
Floor, Room Number
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Mail will be delivered to the front desk of your student's residence hall, where it will be sorted and placed into your student's mailbox. Students can access their regular mailbox using their room keys. For packages, your student will receive an e-mail to his or her @wisc.edu account and can then pick up the package at the front desk with a valid student ID.

You can also send your student a complimentary e-postcard by visiting the Parent Program website. Gift baskets are also available through University Housing or the local Fresh Madison Market.

Web Chat for Parents of New Students

If you are the parent of a new student, you'll want to mark August 15 from noon to 1:30 p.m. CST on your calendar. The Parent Program and University Communications will be hosting a special web chat to help answer questions about your student's initial transition to campus life. If you need a refresher after completing your sessions at SOAR or other questions have

come to mind, this lunch-hour chat is for you. Topics will include housing move-in, homesickness, academics, health and safety, technology, and financial aid. To sign in to the chat, and for more information, visit the Parent Program website.

Wisconsin Welcome

During the time between moving in and starting classes, students can already begin their Wisconsin Experience. Wisconsin Welcome is designed to welcome new students and those who are returning to campus. Wisconsin Welcome is a great way for your student to become familiar with campus traditions, meet new people, and rekindle friendships made during SOAR. It's a time for students to find answers to questions, learn about academics, find their way around campus, learn about Wisconsin history and culture, and discover all that the university has to offer.

During the weeklong event, your student will attend the Chancellor's Convocation, academic orientations, a New Student Night at the Overture Center featuring local and national performing acts, a Student Organization Fair, a New Student Night at University Book Store, and many other activities.

Learn more about Wisconsin Welcome and view the ever-growing list of events at newstudent.wisc.edu/wiwelcome.

