Building Positive Relationships with Professors

Building positive relationships with professors is one of the cornerstones of a College experience. These relationships will not only help during a particular course, but they will carry into other parts of your academic and professional life. Like all relationships, building positive relationships with your professors takes time and effort, and the benefits are innumerable.

What are the benefits of having a positive relationship with professors? There are many academic, personal, and professional benefits to building positive relationships with your professors, including:

- Academic mentorship, advice, and support
- Professional mentorship, advice, and support
- Campus and community resources
- Networking and professional opportunities
- Scholarship application assistance and advice
- Recommendation letters and work references

Keys to Success
In order to help you build positive relationships with professors, follow these keys to success:

Show interest. Obviously, faculty members work to build relationships with their students, but given their multiple roles—professor, advisor, committee member—they cannot mentor all of the students they encounter. Instead, faculty members usually mentor those students who have demonstrated interest in their field of expertise and in the advice. If you’re looking to have a mentorship relationship with a faculty member, you need to show interest by participating in their courses, asking questions, attending events where they are featured, and coming to office hours.

Build trust and respect. Relationships are built on mutual trust and respect. Some examples are learn how your professor prefers to be addressed, proofread your emails before sending them, and read the syllabus to find out how to best contact them outside class. If you cannot show for an office appointment, make sure you cancel in advance. When you do these small gestures, you’re showing your faculty member that you respect them and their time, which will result in them sharing that respect with you.

Be purposeful and prepared. Faculty members enjoy spending time with students and answering their questions, but it’s important to know that they are also juggling other roles, such as advising, college service, and scholarship. When reaching out to a faculty member, be purposeful in your engagement: know what you want to accomplish during your time together and come prepared with specific questions or concerns.

Be honest. Relationships are always built on honesty. While you did not have to get into the details of any situation with a faculty member, you should give them heads up that something is happening. Send an email before missing a class or leave a voicemail if you need to be away. This shows that you care about their time and the work they do as well as gives them an opportunity to support you.