Welcome to Academic Life at Puget Sound!

We launch the academic components of your orientation with Prelude which invites you into the heart of student-faculty interaction that characterizes the Puget Sound educational experience. If we as faculty members, staff members, and student leaders do our job well over the coming week, you will have moments when you feel both certain and uncertain, confident and challenged. You might hear another student read a paragraph during a Prelude exercise and wonder, “Wow, I didn’t think of anything that complex. Does everyone here write as well as he does?” Or you might watch other members of your Ideas Brunch group on Wednesday or Friday offer up an insightful question to the presenting faculty member and wonder, “Will I be expected to interact that boldly in the classroom?”

While Puget Sound is an academically challenging place, you were accepted here because we are confident that you can succeed and thrive academically—each and every one of you. The slate is clean today as you start anew as a student. Importantly, we give you significant responsibility for your learning and achievements from this point forward, though you do not travel these new pathways alone. While college education requires independent learning, there are also many resources here to support your academic journey—if you reach out for them. College life at Puget Sound also allows you the challenge and responsibility to find and develop peer interactions on academic topics of interest to you. That’s part of being a scholar on this campus and Prelude gives you an important “jumpstart” on entering into the ongoing academic conversation here at Puget Sound.

We hope that these Advice to New Students readings provoke reflection, discussion, agreement and disagreement, questions, and resolutions. These pieces have been written by members of the Puget Sound campus community to give perspective and advice about what a liberal arts college is like, what norms of academic discourse you might find here, and how you might make best use of your classroom and out-of-classroom experiences. None of these authors offers the answer for your success at Puget Sound—that path will be yours to determine—but they do offer some insights that may challenge your thinking, foster your connection with the campus, and enhance your sense of welcome into this community. We hope the readings also prompt you to consider what kind of academic community you will help to create in your life here.

With best wishes,

Dean Kris Bartanen
ADVICE FROM FACULTY

On Professional Distance and Intellectual Independence

by Denise Despres, professor, English, honors, and humanities

Sooner or later, most of my students tell me about how they developed an interest in a particular discipline. Often they attribute their love of a subject, as well as their skill in writing or research, to an effective high school teacher. Naturally, those of us who had an early mentor in the field will continue to seek this guidance and approval; I did as an undergraduate, and I treasure the lifelong friendships I have with my students at the University of Puget Sound, whose senior theses I have directed, with whom I conducted independent studies or helped with a research proposal. However, such “collegial” relationships, even in a small liberal arts college, tend to develop slowly for a number of pedagogical (teacherly) and ethical reasons.

I deeply admired my own British literature professor, who happened to be a woman (like most of my favorite high school teachers) and whose academic direction steered me through college, into graduate school, and even through the publication of my first book. However, I was disappointed in my sophomore year that, despite her demonstrable sense of me as an adult and a promising student, she always seemed a little distant. Her interests clearly lay in my intellectual development, rather than my feelings or problems, unless she could address those professionally to help me work more effectively. Despite her pleasant demeanor, she did not encourage conversation that went outside of our shared interests in arts, literature, history, and religion, or campus cultural events.

I know now that she was helping me to become intellectually independent by insisting upon a distance that enabled me to listen and question respectfully, yet make my own choices without the personal sense of obligation or even fear of parental disappointment or failure that we sometimes impose upon those people we most admire. She wanted me to be exposed, as an undergraduate, to a wide range of professors and disciplines before I committed myself to British literary history, and she wanted me to write not to please her but to explore and develop my own style and voice. A young woman, she was dynamic and sometimes impose upon those people we most admire. She wanted me to be exposed, as an undergraduate, to a wide range of professors and disciplines before I committed myself to British literary history, and she wanted me to write not to please her but to explore and develop my own style and voice. A young woman, she was dynamic and more accessible than many of my other professors, and I suspect that students often turned to her for confidence building. Her job, however, was to build student confidence through excellent teaching, thereby cultivating the genuine intellectual independence that made her a lively teacher and reputable scholar. When I had that confidence, when I could take classes with her because of the subject matter, because of her teaching methods, because she let me pursue my own interests and take scholarly risks—we became colleagues and then friends.

Some Things You Should Know About a University (That We Sometimes Forget to Tell You)

by Mott Greene, professor emeritus, science, technology, and society

You have been welcomed to the university many times already. This too is a welcome, though perhaps of a different sort. It is an introduction to two fundamental peculiarities of universities in general, and of this university in particular. Knowing these peculiarities may save you a lot of trouble.

The first peculiarity is that even though it exists within the boundaries of a democratic society, a university is not a democracy. It is, rather, the last of the medieval guilds, and constitutes a hierarchy (of professors, associate professors, assistant professors, and instructors) based on learning, length of experience, and other criteria, which determine the rights and privileges of its members.

At the bottom of this hierarchical pyramid are the students, ranked in turn by seniority in years. Although you currently reside at the base of the academic ladder, you will be pleased to find that far from rubbing your noses in this undemocratic fact, the faculty will rarely mention it, and will instead solicit your opinions on a host of matters (not the least of which is your evaluation of their teaching abilities, which bears on their own appointment, promotion, and tenure). This is for two reasons. First, most faculty (those who don’t either go crazy or eventually leave) have a genuine affection for students. Second, the faculty works for you since your tuition pays at least part of their salaries. The faculty are not your employees, but they work for you in the sense that government employees work for taxpayers.

The medieval aspect prevails, however. Just as it was a thousand years ago, the guild masters (the professors) prescribe a course of study, teach the students what they must know to enter the guild, evaluate their performance in their studies, and eventually, if the professors are satisfied, vote to admit the students to the guild as “bachelors of arts” or “bachelors of science.”

You have not, therefore, entered into a fee-for-services contract which in four years will automatically produce a job certificate. You have applied for admission to a guild. You have been admitted as a probationary member. You volunteered for this. We are glad you are here, and in many cases we asked you to come, but we did not make you come here, and we cannot make you stay here. We would be sorry if you decided to leave, but you may leave whenever you want. The door is open, and we are powerless to stop you if you wish to go. Indeed, unless you are a unique class, some percentage of you will seek the door before the end of this academic year. Another percentage of you will perform in such a fashion that we will actually show you the location of the door.

Try to remember this when it seems like your entire life is composed of difficult and even bewildering tasks, when
your midterms come all on the same day, or when there
isn’t enough time in the week for the week’s work, and
you feel oppressed, tired, bossed around, and unable to
remember why you are here. You are here because you
asked to come here.

There is something else that you ought to know about, a
second peculiarity of universities—the faculty. I want to
tell you what it is, exactly, that faculty members do. The
obvious answer is, of course, they teach, and this is true.
They teach, and they superintend labs and studios, and they
give assignments and grade assignments, and they give
tests and mark tests, and they write letters of evaluation
and recommendation. They also advise students on all sorts
of matters both academic and personal. They coach sports
and serve as sponsors of clubs. They have these activities
in common with all teachers—preschool, primary, and high
school teachers, community college teachers, and other
four-year college teachers.

But this is a university faculty, not a school or college faculty.
The difference is that at a university, even a small one, the
faculty are scholars—they are people who do research. Most
undergraduates do not know what this means, but they
should know, since it affects their lives in a dramatic way.

Research is the creation of new knowledge—the invention
and discovery of things not known before. It comes from
experimentation, from research in documents and other
recorded evidence, and from creative thought and action.
So while we are teachers—people who pass on what is
already known to the next generation (we had better: we’ll
all be dead in about 50 years, and you’ll still be alive and
running the world, and if we don’t pass things on they will
perish)—we are also scholars, constantly inventing and
discovering new things and adding them to the general fund
of knowledge.

This is a function which the institution values every bit as
much as our teaching. It is a condition of our employment,
promotion, and tenure, and is reviewed for its quantity
and quality all of our professional lives, until we retire. We
must do it, but I can tell you that almost all the compulsion
is internal. We do it because we are that group in society
which devotes its life to knowing things, to being interested
in things, and to finding things out. For some of us it
is a duty, for others a labor of love, for some others a
consuming passion, and for still others a yearning which
borders on insanity.

This part of our lives and work is invisible to you. You see us
being teachers—in class, in studio and lab, in our offices.
But you will rarely see us as researchers and scholars, at
least not until late in your undergraduate career when you
will take upper-level electives closer to our special branches
of knowledge. You see us in our medieval academic robes at
graduation, but you don’t see the great dispersal of the next
week when we begin our annual mad dash—home to the
study, or across the country and the world to libraries and
conferences and seminars, or to our laboratories, or to field
research—to our work.

Out of this part of our work come books and articles which
we publish, addresses to conferences of other scholars,
inventions and devices, ideas and techniques, plans and
proposals. We are, in short, exactly the kind of people who
wrote all the things we have made you read and will make
you read. You may not be aware that we are those people,
because you never see us engaged in that activity. But we
are.

I am always amused (almost always) when I hear people
say that they would like to be university professors because
professors have so much free time—they only teach 10
hours a week, and they have their summers off to do
whatever they want. So the story goes. But I’ll tell you
a secret. University professors have no free time, or so
little that it might as well be none. The ordinary assistant
professor works somewhere between 50 and 90 hours
a week. That counts the hours of giving lectures, writing
lectures, and reading books to write lectures, the hours of
research and writing and laboratory and studio work, the
hours of writing letters of inquiry, of application for funds,
of recommendations for students, of recommendations for
colleagues, the hours of serving on the endless numbers of
committees that run a university’s daily and long-term life. It
does not count the hours in which these people are mothers
and fathers, wives and husbands, in which they serve on
school boards or are otherwise active politically and socially
on a local or national scale. It does not include the fact
that they have friends, enjoy sports, go to movies and plays and
concerts, watch TV, eat, and sleep. In short, when you see
us as teachers, you see only the tip of the iceberg of our
professional lives and duties.

So when you find that a professor that you wish to talk to
only has three office hours a week, and that otherwise he
is “never in his office”; when you go to see a professor
and find that after she has answered your questions, she
glances at the clock and fidgets in her seat, and doesn’t
seem interested in the weather or a football game you just
saw, the reason for all this is not that the professors don’t
like you—it means that they have other things to do, things
not directly connected with teaching, and they need to do
these things.

This does not mean that you should not go see professors
when you want to. Professors owe you some time. But the
time they owe you is connected with teaching and learning
and the work they do with you. You must realize that every
faculty member is ⅓ teacher, ⅔ scholar, and ⅓ administrator
and committee member. You may notice that this comes out
to ⅔, which is a way of saying that we always have more to
do than we have time for, and that if we are really doing our
jobs, we are always on the run.

You can see that this picture differs in many respects from
the burlesqued portrait of the professor as a leisurely sort of
being who spends a lot of time curled up in a comfortable
chair with a good book and a glass of wine. You will get
to know a good deal more about us during your stay here, but it
seemed important to tell you these things first.
What Are the Liberal Arts, Anyway?

by Alisa Kessel and Seth Weinberger, associate professors, politics and government

Welcome to the University of Puget Sound! We are very excited that you’re here! You’ve chosen to join us for many reasons—the location, perhaps?—but hopefully one of them is that you wanted to benefit from a liberal arts education. What does that mean to you? Maybe it meant that you wanted small classes or a lot of one-on-one time with your professors. You will surely get both of those things in your time here. You might not have known when you chose to attend this particular liberal arts college, however, that a “liberal arts education” is a centuries-old tradition with a very specific purpose: to educate students to become free citizens. The University of Puget Sound’s mission statement talks about “preparing the university’s graduates to meet the highest tests of democratic citizenship” and of liberating “each person’s fullest intellectual and human potential to assist in the unfolding of creative and useful lives.” In fact, the very term “liberal arts” comes from the Latin “artes liberales,” meaning the skills worthy of a free person.

So what are the liberal arts, anyway?

As we see it, a liberal arts education, in essence, is less about your major or your specific classes and more about becoming educated in two ways. First, a liberal arts education should help you integrate different and often contradictory arguments into your own understanding of an issue. Second, it should prepare you for the responsibilities of democratic citizenship by giving you the tools to make informed decisions through critical reflection. Let’s examine these both in turn.

If you’ve read the excellent essay by Professor Hans Ostrom elsewhere in this collection, you may have noticed a quote from F. Scott Fitzgerald: “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.” This is what we mean by integration. The ability to sympathetic with two (or more!) opposing arguments is an essential tool. Integrating competing ideas into our own forces us to set aside absolute certainty and dogmatism and allows us to think critically about what is and what is not good or just. It leads us to question our own deeply held assumptions about truth. Many of the terrible things done in the world were done by people who believed that they knew what was good. The slaughter of hundreds of millions of people by 20th century communist regimes was perpetrated in pursuit of utopian societies that sought to liberate humans from the chains of capitalism. Looking closer to home, the gruesome Tuskegee experiments, in which black men in Alabama with syphilis were purposefully left untreated and deceived about their conditions, were carried out by the U.S. government in an effort to understand the progression of a disfiguring and deadly disease. Perhaps if the people who perpetrated these acts had been a little less convinced of the truth (or even righteousness) of their own causes, perhaps if they had questioned their own beliefs by holding—or even just entertaining—a contradictory idea, history might have been different.

But here’s another contradictory thought: even though we want to be able to think critically about every view we hold or encounter without becoming dogmatists, we also have to be able to identify good and bad in the world or we will be powerless to make the world better. We must be able to say that Cambodian genocide of the 1970s was unquestionably wrong. We must be able to say that prolonging human suffering as part of a medical experiment was unquestionably wrong. We can say these things are wrong because at the root of a liberal arts education is a fundamental belief that human beings deserve both autonomy and dignity.

But here is why we need to be able to integrate contradictory ideas. At the same time that we believe that there is truth, we must remain vigilantly skeptical that we will ever know, absolutely, what it is. While we must be able to criticize capitalism or even defend communism as a political ideal, we must also be able to criticize those who pursue political change through systematic murder. While the advancement of medical science is a noble aim, we must be willing to reject that aim if its achievement depends upon the continued oppression of politically, socially, or economically disadvantaged people. In short, we must search for truth, but never conclude that we’ve found it. We must interrogate our own beliefs and seriously consider those of others. We must seek out diverse perspectives and see how we might integrate them in to our own. And we must do this, relentlessly, for the rest of our lives.

Which leads us to the second purpose of a liberal arts education: to prepare us to meet the highest tests of democratic citizenship. You may have noticed that one part of your liberal arts education at Puget Sound will include course requirements in many disciplines across the campus, and not just in the one or two things that you’re most interested in studying. There’s a good reason that we require you, as a student, to develop both breadth across the many academic disciplines at the university and depth in your own chosen field: most human problems are just too complicated to be understood through only one disciplinary lens. To be able to understand complicated problems and to make informed decisions about them, a free citizen has to be (at least modestly) conversant in the various ways one might approach them. And once you’re conversant in these various approaches, you have to be able to apply what you have learned in order to make a sound judgment about the problem. This requires critical reflection, a hallmark of any liberal arts education.

Take a wicked problem like global warming. It cannot be fully understood through any single disciplinary lens, but someone who has benefited from a liberal arts education should be able to assess the issue from many sides and perspectives. Perhaps that biology course you take will help you to understand how animal habitats change as a consequence of anthropogenic global warming. Or a course in economics may help you to assess how limits on carbon dioxide emissions can impact economic growth for a particular industry, and whether that cost is justified. A course on the philosophy of science may encourage you to think critically about the scientific method you used in the biology course; that course in art or film history will help you to think critically about Banksy’s latest anti-global
ADVICE TO NEW STUDENTS

Diversity, You, and Your First-Rate Intelligence

by Hans Ostrom, professor, African American studies and English

I’ve been invited to write a few words about diversity at the University of Puget Sound. At the risk of being just another person telling you what you already know, I will start by observing that the student body at the university you chose to attend is about 80 percent white. Maybe 75%. The University of Puget Sound, then, is less ethnically diverse than some liberal arts colleges but roughly as diverse as most of them. It is far less diverse, ethnically and racially, than many public universities, many high schools from which our students come, and the society at large.

But what does this statistic really mean? Welcome to college, where statistics are never allowed to speak for themselves, where interpretation never ceases, and where questions pile up faster than answers can dispatch them.

The novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald, influenced in part by poet John Keats’ idea of Negative Capability (a capacity to thrive amidst uncertainties), wrote, “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposing ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.” Let’s be kind to ourselves for a moment and place the statistic to a concept known as “white privilege,” which does not mean because people are white, their lives are easier but does mean that in many circumstances, white people may enjoy privileges, get to make assumptions, and feel at ease chiefly because they happen to be white.

“White privilege” isn’t a notion of which I think you’ll be persuaded, especially if you haven’t encountered it before, because you may need more information about it and you may have some questions. What I do hope, however, is that you think about the ethnic, socio-economic, and cultural makeup of this place, our university. I hope so, not because I think it’s a chore we all must do but because the makeup of the place is one of its great sources of knowledge and because how we are made up changes with the times and the participants. And how do you fit in with how we’re made up? That’s a question you’ll probably ponder as long as you’re here, and you’ll have different answers for different situations, perhaps.

Whenever people combine terms like “white” and “privilege,” they should expect a figurative chemical reaction to occur. Indeed, if you haven’t encountered the concept before, you might react to it with surprise, perplexity, disagreement, or alarm. Welcome to college, where a vast wilderness of concepts awaits your intrepid exploration.

“White privilege” isn’t really a radical notion, however. Basically, it means that, in the United States and other nations, history unfolded so as to create a category, “white,” and to give white citizens, regardless of their economic status, certain privileges, of which they might not even be aware.

But wait: what if you’re white and your family came up the hard way, struggling against poverty and other hardships? It may be difficult to believe, but you may enjoy certain privileges that come with being white. Hence the need for negative capability to see through the apparent contradiction. You may still resist the concept, “white privilege,” and want to see more proof. Good for you. Your mind is skeptical but still open, a good attitude to carry into college.

Whether you consider yourself white or not, if the college seems unsettlingly homogenous, give yourself some time. There will be struggles, but you’ll probably find a niche or carve one for yourself.
If you think you’ve heard quite enough about diversity already, that’s understandable. Like most institutions in the U.S., and like the U.S. itself, anxiety about diversity and questions connected to it lead to a lot of discourse, much discussion and debate. After all, in our lifetimes, U.S. voters elected the first African American president; the country and individual states are dealing with—or refusing to deal with—immense immigration issues; the nation continues to sort out all kinds of issues related to its diversity of ethnic and religious backgrounds as well as questions related to gender, sexuality, and socioeconomics. If you feel you need to take a break, perhaps five minutes, from all this diversity-talk, go for it. But we’ll need you back soon. We’ll need you to offer your analysis about a diversity-related question that arises in a class you’re taking, and outside the classroom we’ll need your energy and experience, your knowledge and vision. If you feel you can’t take a break from diversity-talk because of your background and experience, that’s understandable, but don’t take the burdens of the country or even the campus on your shoulders alone. If you get tired and frustrated, do reach out for allies, and you may be able to serve as an ally for someone else.

American poet Langston Hughes captured this sense of weariness and frustration in the poem, “Impasse”:

I could tell you,  
If I wanted to,  
What makes me  
What I am.  

But I don’t  
Really want to—  
And you don’t  
Give a damn.

When we enter a new situation, such as starting college, occasionally we don’t even want to make the effort to let some people know what or who we are because we get the impression they don’t care. Often, however, a way around or through impasse appears, others’ attitudes toward us change, and so does our attitude about sharing some of what makes us who we are. Hughes also captured the pleasure of getting to know new things and people—the flip-side of an impasse. Here is his poem, “Motto.”

I play it cool  
And dig all jive.  
That’s the reason  
I stay alive.  

My motto  
As I live and learn,  
is  
Dig and be Dug  
In Return.

As you live and learn in this place this year and in years following, you’ll encounter tension, paradoxes, and perplexities, not to mention Old School hipster language like “dig” and “be dug.” By joining our ranks, you automatically add to the identity of Puget Sound, the diversity. You’ve already changed us. Will Puget Sound change you? If so, how? What apparent contradictions will your intelligence need to negotiate? These are great questions to ponder as your first days here become weeks, which will turn into semesters and years. Welcome.

Immerse Yourself: Richard Light’s Advice to College Students

by Jacalyn Royce, professor emerita, theatre arts

College. Collegiality. Colleague. College: a place where colleagues work together collegially. A university community promotes two types of learning: academic and interpersonal. There is a great deal of crossover as to when and where these types of learning happen—from classrooms, libraries, and conferences with professors, to coffee houses, student clubs, rehearsals, and kitchen tables. What are the choices that you can make to fully benefit from college both academically and personally?

Although I would love to take credit for the information you are about to read, I have based it almost entirely on other people’s ideas. Over the course of a few years, a large number of college students working with Richard Light, a statistician and professor at Harvard, asked thousands of recent college graduates from across the country for information and advice about college. Researchers asked alumni about studying, college life, campus diversity, choosing classes, outside activities, what they wished they had known when they started school, and advice they would give to incoming students. In 2001, Light published the alumni’s observations, as well as the statistical data to lend credence to their suggestions, in Making the Most of College. (Light, Richard J. Making the Most of College. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001.)

The suggestions from the alumni interviewed by Light and his cadre of student researchers are fairly simple. All of the suggestions arise from three overarching ideas: immerse yourself in the experience, get to know as many people as possible, and take advantage of the myriad opportunities available.

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Assume good will.
The primary suggestion made by the students is to offer and expect good will. Treat each person you meet as a potential friend and always assume that all other students, faculty, staff, and administrators are acting with good will. Be willing to be reflective about your own mistakes and forgiving of the mistakes of others. Assuming good will enables us to build a vital and diverse community. Several alumni suggested making a “personal goal [of] learning to understand other people … how they think … [and] how they think about themselves” (204).

Take advantage of diversity.
“It is natural on a college campus to discuss and examine ideas. And who better to do it with than people who are different from you in some way” (164)?

A university community is made up of many different kinds of people who disagree about a lot of things, but we all do
agree about the value of living in a vibrant atmosphere of learning and creating. Eager open-mindedness will enable you to get to know people with different experiences and viewpoints. One alumna called college a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience … a new set of people with new ideas that may challenge [your] own … a special chance to meet, work with, and get to know others who are unlike [you]” (196). Another wrote, “boundaries are permeable, and it is worth making the effort to cross them” (205).

Get to know one faculty member reasonably well each semester.
When you and a faculty member get to know each other, both of you win. Sure, faculty members are busy and we can’t usually just hang out with you, but we chose this job partly because we like college students. If you take the initiative to get to know professors, the benefits to you include learning a lot outside of class, finding a good mentor, having someone whose advice you trust, and finding someone to support an independent study project (or suggest one!). You’ll also have professors who know you well enough to write letters of recommendation and act as references for graduate schools, internships, fellowships, and jobs.

Spending time with faculty outside of class and maintaining these relationships takes some effort and planning. Puget Sound makes it easier—the Dean of Students Office will pay for you to take your professor to lunch (or just coffee). Simply go to Wheelock 208 and ask for the Take a Professor to Lunch Card. Free food and fascinating conversation—what more could you ask?

Make good use of your advisor.
This person should be one of the faculty members whom you get to know well. Don’t just get signatures from this person. Talk about classes, life, art, careers, research and internship possibilities, writing, and big ideas. These conversations will affect your perspective on what you are doing and why, as well as “how what [you] study fits into a bigger picture of [your life] and what new ideas might be worth considering” (89).

ACADEMICS
Select courses that seem interesting and rewarding to YOU.
Don’t spend your first and second years taking only required classes. Yes, you need to take Core courses, but also take classes that interest you. Almost without exception, students who are struggling or dissatisfied with school are limiting themselves to getting their requirements out of the way. You need to find out what excites you, what ideas you find engaging, in order to find the field in which you wish to concentrate. Even if you think you know what you want to major in, you need to look for inspiration to help you clarify what you want to do and how you want to use your particular skills, talents, and interests.

Lead an interdisciplinary academic life. You’ll learn to use both sides of your brain, find inspiration in unexpected places, and meet lots of different people. Take advantage of attending a liberal arts university.
Take language courses. Ninety-four percent of the alumni surveyed recommended that students take as many language courses as possible. They reported studying literature in other languages and learning more than one language as rewarding, inspirational, and useful for life. Also, try to spend time in a country where the language you are learning is spoken.

Try to take at least a couple of small seminar classes. These are great ways to engage with ideas, faculty, and other students.

Try to do at least one independent study. Indulge your passion and curiosity. Design your own project and course of study, and work closely with a faculty mentor.

Look into internships, summer grants for independent research, and other special research opportunities, especially those that help you to connect with individual faculty members.

Go to class.
Just do it. Even if you’re not prepared. Even if you’re tired. Even if you think you need to use the time to finish a paper or study for a test in another class. That last-minute extra hour of writing or studying won’t save you, and the price is too high. There is no surer way to get behind than to miss class, and the best notes borrowed from another student can’t compare to your own participation in the class.

Critical thinking takes time.
Expect 2–3 hours studying for every hour in class, more when writing papers. You’re in class 12–15 hours a week, plus labs. If you really study 24–30 hours a week, you’ll do well and you won’t get behind.

Effective studying and writing cannot happen in short bursts of 20–30 minutes. You need to dig in and engage with ideas in depth in order to learn and apply what you learn, synthesize arguments, extend theories into new situations, write with clarity, and read closely. Also, articles, chapters, short stories, and plays usually make more sense when you read them in one sitting.

Study and write when you’re alert.
Arrange your life so that you don’t have to study when you are already tired. Every hour of studying or writing when you should be sleeping is worth about 15 minutes—and the value drops as you become more tired. I call this “The Law of Diminishing Returns.” Brain activity requires rest and nourishment, so sleep and eat. Hint: when you can’t get enough sleep, eat more.

Don’t always study alone.
Small study groups working cooperatively really help! Try meeting after you’ve done the assignment, so you can focus on unanswered questions and challenges that came up for each of you. Also, try reading aloud together and following your reading with discussion.

Writing is power; take time to do it well.
All of the alumni interviewed spoke about the importance of writing, taking time, and getting feedback. They recognize that effective style is what makes it possible for ideas and arguments to come across with force and clarity. Here are many suggestions:
You don’t really know what you think about something until you write about it. When you try to write a paper in one sitting, your ideas don’t have time to coalesce. Give yourself more time.
Get your ideas down first, then figure out how to organize the paper. Try starting in the middle, writing the parts in which you know what you want to say, then organizing the paper and rewriting it.

Always write at least two drafts. Better yet, give yourself at least a day off after you finish the second draft, then revise the paper again.

Concentrate on your ideas in the first draft. Use the second draft to focus on clarity and style. When you worry about perfect sentences from the beginning, you don’t give your ideas enough uninterrupted time to flow.

Remember, you’ll always need to revise the beginning after you’ve finished writing the paper, because only then do you really know what you need to introduce.

Always get feedback on your writing. Try forming a group of students who read each other’s work and offer feedback on clarity of ideas and organization. Share early drafts, not just what you hope is final. Also, always get someone else to proofread your final draft. When you proofread your own work, you miss many of your mistakes because you see what you meant to write instead of your typos.

Ask your professors if they will read early drafts of assignments and offer feedback.

Ask your professors for writing conferences to discuss the feedback you receive on your papers. Ask specific questions. Ask for examples of problems in your work and for specific strategies for revision. In particular, if you frequently get the same written comment, ask for clarification and strategies to improve your writing and avoid recurrent problems.

Take advantage of Puget Sound’s Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching in Howarth 109. The faculty and peer writing advisors help students from every academic discipline with all stages of writing, from overcoming writer’s block, to approach and organization, to suggestions about revising your work to make it ready for publication. The Center also offers workshops and for-credit classes in improving reading speed and comprehension as part of its mission to help students use writing as a tool for thinking and learning.

**Get help.**

Don’t keep academic problems a secret. Ask your professors for help. Study with friends. Ask your advisor for advice—that’s her or his job. Ask reference librarians—they love it. Talk to the folks in the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching, Media Services, computer labs, Academic Advising, etc.

Don’t keep other problems a secret, either. Please.

**Manage your time.**

Think of time as a resource that you need to manage. When you write up your class schedule and see that you will be in class less than 20 hours per week, all those apparently empty hours can be misleading. Many students say that they wish they had learned to organize their time and work better much earlier. Here are some suggestions:

Try dividing the day into three—morning, afternoon, evening—and set aside one part to accomplish uninterrupted work.

How do you use the time between scheduled obligations?

**CHOOSE.** Even an hour between classes is more valuable when you decide how to use it rather than let it disappear. Decide to eat lunch, or have coffee with a faculty member, or check out a book from the library, or even lie in the grass.

Of course you need time off. Schedule time off as well as time to study.

Keep a personal time and energy log, half-hour by half-hour for two weeks. Then, examine it and think about how you are using (and/or wasting) this valuable resource. Try asking your advisor for advice. When you implement the changes you want to make, you’ll probably find that you have MORE time for outside activities and conversations with friends.

**Do something besides go to class and study.**

If all you do is study, you’ll spend too much time alone—and you’ll miss out on a lot of other opportunities for both academic and interpersonal learning. The happiest and most successful students take full advantage of the university community.

**OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES**

**Outside activities won’t hurt your grades.**

That’s right, according to Light’s statistics, “a substantial commitment of as much as 20 hours per week has little or no relationship to grades” but a “strong relationship to overall satisfaction” (26). There is, of course, one exception. Students involved in intercollegiate athletics often have slightly lower grades. The trade-off is that alumni who were involved in sports reported that they were really happy with their college experiences. If you play sports, manage your time effectively, and you’ll enjoy yourself while beating the statistics.

You have the time to participate in a job, the arts, clubs, sports, volunteering, internships, and discussion groups, and still do quite well academically. In fact, outside activities often improve and focus your course of study. Do be careful not to overwhelm yourself with responsibilities, but have fun!

**Get involved in at least one activity.**

Get to know other people while doing something you enjoy, from volunteering in local schools, to singing, to watching the sun rise over the lake from your boat as you practice with the crew.

Join campus organizations for social and personal support, fun, and sharing ideas.

Get involved in the arts. Alumni reported that participating in the arts—and in performing arts in particular—“more than any other specific activity, … enabled them to benefit from, and learn from, their extraordinarily diverse and talented fellow students” (34). The alumni also felt that working in the performing arts taught them more about themselves than anything else they did while at college. The arts combine interdisciplinary academic interests and pleasure. Theatre arts, for example, draws connections between history, literature, sociology, politics, philosophy, and psychology, while working together with friends. Performing in plays and concerts teaches interpersonal skills, time management,
and confidence. Most students who participate in campus performing arts as musicians, singers, actors, dancers, designers, directors, writers, and technicians are not arts majors. Join them.

**Find activities that help you to make connections between your academic and personal interests.**

Got a feeling that you might want to attend law school or medical school, but don’t really know what you want to accomplish? Internships, volunteering, and research may lead you to public policy, environmental science, public health, pediatrics, or any of a number of specialized fields. Dancers often find themselves interested in physical therapy or orthopedic surgery. Most incoming theatre arts students have no idea how many different kinds of jobs exist on the stage or in film and television. Love literature, history, languages, computers, math, or any of the other subjects that seem to entice people to ask you. “What can you do with a degree in that?” Experiment, expose yourself to many different kinds of opportunities and, chances are, you’ll find many answers.

Extracurricular activities can help you to gain perspectives about your life and dreams that enable you to plan your coursework to achieve your goals. Internships and special research opportunities, in particular, can help you turn vague ideas into clear life goals that use your particular interests and skills.

Pablo Picasso once said, “I am always doing that which I cannot do in order that I may learn how to do it.” Immerse yourself in this community, get to know as many people as possible, take advantage of the myriad opportunities available. And, assume good will.

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The following is from a handout given by one Puget Sound professor to his new freshman advisees. Though some references are specific to his department (politics and government), the advice and information is applicable to all.

### Everything You Didn’t Know About This Place and Were Afraid to Ask

by Don Share, professor, politics and government

Like everyone else, I’d like to welcome you to the University of Puget Sound. I have prepared this document because there are some things that you probably don’t know about this place (and college in general). I certainly didn’t know most of these things until it was too late to use the knowledge! You can ignore what I have to say below (these are, after all, my opinions), but you might find that reading through this document saves you lots of trouble and embarrassment!

**HI, I’M YOUR ADVISOR!**

First, let me try to describe my role as advisor. If you are my frosh advisee and are enrolled in my PG 102A, Introduction to Comparative Politics, you have already figured out that in addition to being an advisor, I am a professor. Therefore I usually teach six courses per year, or three per semester. I also am an administrator, serving on university and departmental committees. In addition, I engage in some research activities (I have published two books on Spanish politics, and a text that you will use in PG 102). Oh yes, I also have a family and outside interests! In short, you should be aware that advisors at Puget Sound are very much “part-time” advisors. Indeed Puget Sound is a bit unique in this regard. At most other universities, there is a full-time advising staff that does nothing else but advise students.

Every advisor defines her or his role somewhat differently. First, on the most superficial level, all advisors do the “basics.” We are expected to sign registration forms, write letters of recommendation, etc. You will be irritated to discover that every semester you cannot register without getting a registration code from me, and that you are supposed to come to my office during my office hours to get the code. I find this bureaucratic aspect of the advising role somewhat tedious, and I suspect that you will as well.

Such requirements are supposed to encourage the second major aspect of advising. In theory, I am supposed to discuss your course selection with you, helping where possible, to steer you in the “right direction.” For some students, this involves lengthy discussions about a whole variety of issues (What do you want to do when you grow up? What really interests you? Can you really handle all these courses?). For others, it may be a matter of issuing warnings (You should really have your cores out of the way by now. You are not going to graduate unless you take x number of units!). Many students do not desire or need such guidance and simply want me to take a quick look over their schedules and sign their forms. In short, my level of guidance and intervention depend on your needs.

The third major aspect of advising involves crises and emergencies. If you need somebody to confide in, if you need special help, if something has happened to you, don’t hesitate to come see me or call me. Let me know that it is an emergency. I can’t always help, but I can usually find somebody trustworthy who can. In medical and other emergencies, I can help make sure that the appropriate people are notified about your absence. Don’t be embarrassed or ashamed to tell me anything; I am not easily shocked! If you experience harassment of any kind, you should tell me immediately.

It is probably important to make clear that I am NOT your parent! I am required to “approve” your schedule of courses, but after I state any objections and give any advice I will always do so. I cannot and do not want to force you to do anything! I firmly believe that university students are adults and should be treated accordingly. I will not make decisions for you: they are yours to make. I will not track you down if you do poorly in your coursework (it is your responsibility to seek help), but I strongly encourage you to come see me if you are having academic or other problems.

How long will I be your advisor? That depends on several factors. Most first-year advisees stay with me for the first year or two, until they select a major. Once a major is declared, it is best to find an advisor in that department. You will ask somebody you studied with (and liked/trusted) to become your advisor. You can either give me a change...
of advisor form to sign (available at the academic advising office), or make the request online via myPugetSound, and you will take your advising file to your new advisor. I will not be the least bit disturbed, since this is the natural course of things. If you remain a politics and government major, you still might want to change advisors. You might get along better with another departmental colleague. You might want an advisor whose areas of interest are closer to your own (this could help when applying to graduate school, for example).

There are some common courtesies that I expect from my advisees:

1) Always try to see me during my office hours. This is time that I set aside for students and advisees. I can meet other times, but prefer to meet during my office hours. My office hours for each semester are posted on my Web site at projects.pugetsound.edu/share/.

2) If you make an appointment with me, please show up! If you can’t show up, call me (you can always leave a message on my voice mail at x3175, or my e-mail, share@pugetsound.edu).

3) Do your homework before coming to see me so you don’t waste my time. Nothing is more frustrating than having students spend time in my office leafing through the catalog for the first time!

4) Learn to understand university requirements and keep tabs on your progress. Meeting the requirements is ultimately your responsibility, so don’t expect me to bail you out, although I will try to catch your mistakes.

HOW YOU CAN CONTACT ME

1) Office Hours (Wyatt 220): The best way to make an appointment is to e-mail me.

2) Phone: x3175, 24 hours a day. I check my voice mail regularly from on and off campus. Voice mail automatically records the time and date of your call, and you can leave detailed messages.

3) E-mail: share@pugetsound.edu (just type “share” from on campus). I am an avid e-mail user, and I check my mail regularly. This is a very efficient way to reach me. I can often answer your questions electronically, saving both of us time.

WHAT IT WOULD TAKE YOU FOUR YEARS TO FIGURE OUT!

As a political scientist, I am trained to look at the structure of power in any institution. If you understand the hierarchy at the University of Puget Sound, you will have a better understanding of where your professors, staff, and fellow students are coming from. Let’s run down the hierarchy.

Trustees: These people run the university and select their own members. They make the ultimate decisions about most important matters, but they do not run the university on a day-to-day basis. The president of the university is ultimately responsible to them. They are not chosen by students or faculty. In short, we are not talking about a democracy here!

Professors (also known as “full” professors): Senior professors, like yours truly, who have obtained the highest promotion for a tenured professor. Ideally, one would be promoted to this rank after 14 years of teaching. At Puget Sound full professors are evaluated every five years, and poor performance can get one fired (although it is extremely rare). Students should remember that full professors are more experienced but not necessarily better than less senior faculty. A few full professors have what are called “endowed chairs,” or positions that have been paid for by donors (often in memory or honor of someone). The recipients are usually distinguished researchers or teachers and the holders of these positions usually earn more and teach less than other full professors.

Associate professors: The middle rank of professor, usually (but not always) with tenure. Associate professors are evaluated every three years until they are promoted to professor. This promotion to full professor is not guaranteed, and associate professors are expected to maintain satisfactory levels of teaching, research, and service to the university.

Assistant professors: Some new faculty members are hired out of graduate school. After finishing their undergraduate education, they typically completed between four and eight years of graduate school, earning a master’s and Ph.D. degree. In addition to their coursework they had to pass grueling examinations and write a dissertation (a long thesis). While they were graduate students they probably worked as teaching assistants and may have taught their own classes.

Assistant professors are hired at the lowest level, and they enter the university with the rank of professor, without tenure. Tenure is the university’s commitment to lifetime employment (sort of a guarantee against being fired). Tenure is given to professors after a long evaluation process in which their teaching, research, advising, and service record are reviewed by their peers. Assistant professors usually come up for tenure in their sixth year.

During their first six years then, assistant professors are essentially “on probation,” and they are under enormous pressure to perform well. If they are denied tenure, professors are allowed to teach only one more year at the university while they look for a job elsewhere. If granted tenure, most professors get a sabbatical leave that lasts between one half year and a whole year. During that time they work on various research or teaching projects. Assistant professors are under multiple pressures. They may be starting a family. Some assistant professors are hired without a completed doctoral degree, and must work on their dissertations while teaching. They may be teaching some courses for the first time. Students should try to be aware of and sensitive to these pressures.

Instructors: Some full-time members of the faculty are on a “tenure track,” but are nonetheless a part of the ongoing teaching faculty. These instructors often have many years’ teaching experience and significant research accomplishments and have proven their ability to teach as well or better than tenured faculty.

Adjunct or visiting faculty: Usually people who are hired to help fill gaps and replace people on sabbatical leaves. These individuals are not on a “tenure track” and also usually do not have the opportunity to gain permanent employment at the university. Like instructors, such professors can often be as
good as or better than permanent faculty, and they certainly demand the same respect.

**Staff:** There are a great number of important people that you will deal with during your college career who are not faculty members. These include the administrative, professional, and support staff, and you will quickly learn that they are vital to the functioning of the university. They help you get registered, coordinate advising, make food, maintain the university, photocopy and type, answer the phones, assure you receive your care packages from home, etc.

**Students:** You will immediately notice that there is a definite hierarchy among students. Students more senior than you have already registered and have gobbled up seats in many classes. Don’t worry. You will gradually improve your registration priority as you gain seniority.

**HOW TO AVOID THINGS THAT MOST PROFESSORS DON’T LIKE**

You are new to this place, and it will take some time to know the ropes. But here are some things that might help you to avoid embarrassment.

**Names:** I never knew what to call my college professors, and I always felt uncomfortable about it. When in doubt, it is safest to use the term “professor.” If your professor asks to be called in a given fashion, you should try to respect the wish. I insist that my students call me “Don,” because I dislike the formality and distance implied by titles. Others insist on such titles. You will hear “Dr.,” “Mr.,” and other forms of address, but stick with “professor” unless told otherwise.

**Meetings:** Professors are swamped and overwhelmed, but you should never be scared to go talk to a professor: you have chosen this university because of its commitment to undergraduate teaching, and you have the right to see your professor for help when needed. Every professor is required to offer regular office hours (usually about three hours per week) during which the professor must be in her or his office. These hours should be posted on the professor’s door, and printed in the course syllabus. This is the best time to go see a professor. You don’t have to feel guilty about disturbing your professor during those hours. You might have to wait for a while (this is quite normal), so bring some reading to do while you wait. Since office hours are often busy, you should have all necessary materials, and you should write down your questions.

You can’t always make office hours, so you will often need to set up an appointment. Sometimes you can talk to a professor after class is over or before it begins, but professors are usually busy getting ready, or are on their way to their next class. You can always e-mail a professor or leave a voice mail. It is usually possible to set up a time to meet, and you should be persistent. Once you schedule an appointment, don’t miss it. Professors get awfully angry when students don’t show up for an appointment, especially if they don’t call beforehand to say that they can’t make it.

If you are trying to track down a professor follow these steps: go to his or her office during office hours; if you can’t wait for office hours, e-mail the professor to request a meeting. You can also leave a note in the professor’s mailbox. Never go knocking on the doors of other professors to inquire about the whereabouts of a professor.

What is guaranteed to boil the blood of professor? Students who do poorly on an assignment or exam and then wait until just before the next assignment or exam to go see their instructor. Not only is it usually too late by then to avoid another bad performance, but office hours are always crammed full of students when papers are due or an exam is imminent.

**Saying foolish things to professors:** Professors regularly hear foolish things from their students, but are usually too nice to say what is really on their mind. Here are a few foolish things students say, and the reactions that most professors have.

1) “I’m really busy right now. Sorry my work is late.”
Professors hear this repeatedly, in part because all students are busy. For that matter, all professors are busy. In fact, the whole adult world is busy. Professors teach three courses, conduct research, serve on faculty committees, tend to advisees, take care of their families, and like to party just as much as you do. Asking a professor for an extension because you are busy would be as welcome as a professor turning in grades late because she or he was busy.

2. “Sorry I missed the exam, but I couldn’t get hold of you…”
Professors never believe this one. You would have to convince them that it was impossible to send an e-mail, leave a message with a secretary or on voice mail, or deliver a note via another student in the class. Since students who have experienced life-threatening emergencies often manage to get a professor a message before an exam, most students who use this excuse are on thin ice.

3. “I’d like to get into your class even though it’s closed. It fits perfectly into my schedule. What is the title of your course anyway?”
You should realize that all things being equal, your professor would rather teach a smart, motivated, and really interested student rather than one who selects your course because it “fits.” Since many courses are often officially closed, professors have no obligation to let you add into the course. To convince them to do so, you need to do a bit better in the persuasion department.

4. “I haven’t been to the library yet, but do you have any books on ...?”
This is my personal favorite for the most irritating. Professors are willing to help students with materials for a paper or project, but only after they have done the initial leg work. That includes a trip to the library, discussions with the librarians, and use of the many (and underutilized) research tools available to students. Asking a professor for materials before having done preliminary work is asking a professor to do your work for you. A related pitfall is the use of Google (or other Web-based search engines) instead of the Puget Sound databases to which you have access, and which tend to produce better results.

**Rudeness:** Students often forget that their professors are people. Professors get offended by rude behavior in class. People who have private conversations, sleep, pass notes, regularly come in late, forget to turn their cell phones off,
etc. are not only asking to be “dinged” come grade time but are being very inconsiderate of their professor. As for other forms of behavior, it just depends. I don’t care if my students eat food during class, put their feet up on desks, or leave to use the bathroom, but I know other professors who don’t like such behavior. When in doubt, ask!

**Missed work:** Professors get especially angry when students miss class and then assume that it is the professor’s responsibility to get the student caught up. When you miss a class, ask two or three students for their notes (that way you cover all bases: people have widely divergent note-taking styles). Photocopy the notes quickly and return them or you will never be able to borrow notes again. Read over the notes carefully. Then if you have problems or questions, go see your professor. Don’t go see the professor unless you have done your work first.

**Grades:** Questioning a grade can be particularly difficult for students. There is no standard way to do so, but I suggest the following. Type up a statement that details the points you dispute (anything from the computation of the score to the professor’s interpretation of a passage), attach it to the exam, and drop it in the professor’s box. Include your name and e-mail address. Most professors would rather read your points and consider the matter in private rather than have to respond to a student on the spot. A written request is less likely to embarrass the professor or put him or her on the defensive. Raise questions about grades immediately, not weeks after the work is returned. If you are comparing your work with another work done in the class (a strategy I discourage), make sure that you provide that work along with your own for the professor to consider. If your written appeal fails, then go speak with the professor during office hours.

**Cheating:** Cheating is an incredibly dumb thing to do. It is dumb because cheaters don’t learn what they have paid to learn. It is also dumb because people regularly get caught. In my department, we have caught at least one cheater per year since I have been here. Professors read zillions of papers and grade zillions of exams. They are amazingly good at picking out plagiarized or copied work. Professors are increasingly submitting your work to services that can detect the type of plagiarism you are likely to be able to produce. If you are smart enough to fool your professor, you are probably smart enough to ace her or his course without cheating. Each professor handles cheating differently, but I take a hard line: automatic “F” for the course; banning from any of my courses in the future; reporting to the academic standards committee.

**“Electronic” mistakes:** Much interaction between professors and students takes place electronically these days. Don’t assume that you can simply dash off an e-mail to your professor without thinking about how the e-mail will be interpreted. Your professor judges you in part on how you communicated, and e-mail correspondence is part of that. Make sure that everything you write to your professor via e-mail is something you would feel comfortable communicating in person. Be aware that professors know when you sent your e-mail message! You also need to get in the habit of checking your Puget Sound e-mail account every day during the semester so you won’t miss critical updates regarding your courses. If you want to use your non-Puget Sound account, learn how to access your Puget Sound mail from that account.

**Letters of recommendation:** You will likely have to get letters of recommendation from your professors during your career at Puget Sound. You should seek letters from professors for whom you did quality work and with whom you have a good rapport. Even then, it is often hard for professors to find much to say in a letter. When asking for a letter you should always give the professor a photocopy of your transcript, and a list of activities or other relevant information that you would like the professor to mention in the letter. Provide and sign all appropriate forms. Provide an addressed and stamped envelope out of courtesy. And most important: give the professor plenty of time to meet the deadline (several weeks at the very least). If you are not sure whether a professor will write a good letter for you, ask. You might say, “Do you feel like you can write a strong letter of recommendation for me?” I have provided a list of what I need from you to write a good letter. You can find it on my website at projects.pugetsound.edu/share/recommendations.htm.

**What to do if you are unhappy with a professor:** During your undergraduate career you are likely to be unhappy with a grade you receive from your professor, and you certainly have right to contest an evaluation. However, keep in mind that your success in contesting a grade depends in part on your approach. Here are some basic tips. Make sure you have read through your exam and that you have read all the professor’s comments before you do anything. If you still feel that the evaluation was unfair, type up a request to your professor in which you state exactly why the evaluation was not fair. You should be respectful in tone, and specific in your claims. This approach gives the professor some time to consider your request, and does not put her or him on the defensive.

Professors generally want to hear criticism about their courses. If you are unhappy about a course, you should meet with the professor during office hours and try to give constructive criticism about how the course would be better for you. Try to be specific about what could improve. If other students share your feelings, you might go as a group to discuss the problems. Try not to put the professor on the defensive. You can always write or e-mail the professor a note if you feel uncomfortable talking to him or her.

You also should make sure to do a thorough and fair job on the course evaluations given out near the end of class. Remember that professors depend on such evaluations for their promotion at the university. If you don’t give good criticism, with plenty of specific examples, professors will never improve.

If you experience a more serious problem (e.g., a professor does not show up regularly for class, comes to class late frequently, fails to grade material in a timely fashion, engages in sexual harassment), see the chair of the professor’s department and/or your advisor. Don’t wait until the course is over to complain.
ADVICE FROM STUDENTS

If I Had Known Then What I Know Now...

Do the Things That You Enjoy!
Zoe Fromer
Class of 2010

You’re in college now. While the extra-long bed sheets and late-night trips to the Cellar for half-bowls with your roommate may make this seem immediately obvious, it’s worth remembering that you’re not in high school anymore. Even if you’re from Washington State, Seattle, or the North End of Tacoma, you have the opportunity to reinvent yourself in college apart from the person you thought you were in high school. This is your chance to be who you want to be.

While living on your own for the first time may seem overwhelming, don’t panic! Keep in mind that you are starting college with a clean slate. I know that a big problem for a lot of new students is a combination of homesickness and a feeling of not quite belonging. A solution? Take any opportunity that comes to do something you like that is interesting, unusual, and out of the ordinary. Throw yourself into orientation with reckless abandonment. Wear something interesting, unusual, and out of the ordinary. Throw yourself open many unexpected doors.

The first year begins your transition from teenager into adulthood, and with it comes a lot of independence. Remember that the decisions that you make and the actions you take during this first year of college will have a major impact on the rest of your college experience. Take classes, join clubs, and volunteer not just because these will look good on transcripts or resumes, but because you enjoy doing them. Most importantly, remember that this is not high school. Feel free to present yourself however you want to without the baggage of your former life. It can be quite liberating!

All You Have to Do Is Ask
Greta Lindquist
Class of 2010

I wouldn’t have worried so much. I hate to break it to you, but you’re not always going to get good grades, even if you did in high school. You’re going to forget assignments, fall asleep in class, and end up with all your finals scheduled for the same day. You might end up studying abroad in a foreign city where you don’t know anyone and are definitely not fluent in the language. Furthermore, I can tell you already that sometimes you’re going to go out when you should stay in and study, go to sleep when you should keep working, and get stuck pulling the closing shift when you have a paper due in the morning. You will spend class periods with absolutely no idea what is going on, or how everyone else seems to understand it so easily. Plan all you want, but this is just academic fate.

Now that you know all that, take a deep breath. As dire as these problems may seem when you eventually run into them, you’ll survive, and so will your career as a college student. Because when it comes down to it, UPS is a place of learning – and that learning isn’t just confined to classrooms. Talking to a research librarian will help you find all nine sources required for your final History paper. CHWS offers flu shots every winter so that you can avoid sick days even when the rest of your dorm is dying of the plague. The Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching will help you craft a solid thesis for an essay. Career and Employment Services has drop-in hours to look over your resume or cover letter before you apply for jobs. Your professors have office hours specifically to help with any burning questions you have after lecture. There’s an entire flotilla of TAs, advisors, tutors, and fellow students ready and willing to provide whatever help you need to get through whatever problem you’re facing.

There’s even me, looking back over my four years at this school, trying to figure out what advice I can offer you, knowing what my current senior self knows now. And the result is this: stop, breathe, and take a look around. Puget Sound has been welcoming new students since 1888, which means this campus has more than 120 years of experience with the troubles and triumphs facing you as soon as you and your suitcases arrive. All you have to do is ask.

Be Selective (but not Picky)
Andrew Fink
Class of 2010

What I struggled with the most as an underclassman was trying to decide which classes to take. It’s difficult, because most of the other students get to choose classes before you can even look at them, and it can seem like all of the “cool” classes get snatched up just to spite you. Many students in this situation become picky.

If you are a picky person, then you are going to feel constricted by your lack of options. You might see a class that you want to take desperately, but there is already a waitlist of ten people who want to take that class desperately, too. Maybe, if you hang in there, the professor will have to let you in. Don’t fall into this trap. First, most upper division courses are taught on a two or three year cycle, which means you will have another chance to take them as an upperclassman. Second, while these classes
Choosing the Best Time to Study

Hannah Nicholes
Class of 2010

College: Late night parties, late night runs to the Cellar for pizza, and frequent late-all night study sessions.

If only I had known coming into college what I know now: when it comes to studying, I don’t do late nights. If I’d known then, what I know now, I would not have started my homework at 10:30 at night throughout my Freshmen and Sophomore year, but rather, I would have gone to bed at 10:30, woken up at 6:30, and started my homework then. Just as everyone learns differently, everyone functions better and more efficiently at different times of day.

For instance, while I stop functioning around 6 p.m., my friend Joe does not start functioning until 9 p.m. Conversely, while I read and absorb information better early in the morning, Joe can barely function at 8 a.m., and when he tries to, it resembles me trying to study late at night – not much gets done.

Rather than struggle to do homework at night, falling asleep and spacing out – essentially retaining nothing from that which I was reading – I wish I would have known sooner that not everyone is suited for late night studying. I wish I had acted on the fact that I am a morning person (something I have always known), and had become a morning studier much earlier in my college career.

The important thing is to figure out what works best for you, what time of day, which environment and so forth allows you to get things done to the best of your abilities. Figure that out, and you’ll find your homework becomes that much more manageable. What is your perfect time of day to get things done?

Active Reading

Jenny Barron
Class of 2011

I always read with a pencil in hand. I picked up this habit during the second semester of my first year, when a few scribbles in a class text saved me from the chagrin of an uneasy silence in class. My (beloved) professor asked a question, and nobody responded. She addressed one of my classmates, asking to hear his thoughts about the reading. He shrugged. She then asked if he had done the reading. “Yeah,” he mumbled, “but I don’t remember it.”

“Well, what’s the point of that?” she justly responded. I silently agreed with her but terrifyingly reflected that I could not remember much of the reading either. Whether the pressure of the moment froze my memory, or whether all the reading I had done for other classes pushed it out of my mind, I could not recall it. I flipped through Utopia, our text, and noticed a passage that I had circled in pencil. Within a moment, I was reminded of a particular point that I found compelling and also of ideas in the reading as a whole. I responded to my professor’s question and was able to engage in a level of discussion that a moment before had escaped me.

Reading with a pencil in hand has greatly contributed to my success as a student. Annotations jog my memory in class and remind me of what I found most interesting in texts when the time comes to write about them. More importantly, though, reading with a pencil in hand deepens my level of critical engagement with a text. Marking what is key to the argument, what seems off, what complements or contrasts with ideas from other course texts, what is revealing about the agenda of the author—these critical judgments enhance my engagement with the text, which greatly increases my understanding and memory of it.

Because marking texts is closely linked to processing texts, the manner in which a student does it will vary, and it should. I prefer pencil because it allows me great flexibility. Sometimes I underline a sentence; sometimes I circle a word or phrase. Often I write short comments or responses in the margins. To note longer passages, I draw a line along side of it in the margin, or, if it is very striking, I circle it. I can vary the darkness of the line, and the grey color of pencil does not distract me from the actual text, like a highlighter does.

I made my method of marking texts gradually, by doing it. I prefer this approach because it lets me sleep in. In my experience, classes I picked this way were usually the classes I didn’t enjoy, and from which I learned the least.

So don’t be picky, but be selective. Keep a goal in mind, and look for classes which will help fulfill that goal. You probably won’t end up with your ideal schedule, but it might be one which inspires you and prepares you for the next three years, when you can be pickier.

Active Reading

Jenny Barron
Class of 2011

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I made my method of marking texts gradually, by doing it. What will you do to be an active reader?
Passionate Engagement

Jordan Carelli
Class of 2011

I love college. I love the life of the mind, being able to devote myself (or at least a big part of myself) to learning and understanding. I love living with or close to my friends, classmates, and those who I’ll refer to as “enrichers” (those whose antics surprise and entertain me, or those whose passionate dedication to their discipline inspire me). I love pushing my limits, be they physical with the crew team, intellectual in the library, classroom, or over coffee, or social in every corner of university life.

Your life now, here at this University, can and will be exactly what you want—you get to make it that way. This means that you get to choose what to do, when to do it, and how to approach it. Want to go backpacking this weekend? Find some dorm-mates who want to go and go! Or if you need help with gear, transportation, backcountry skill, or just some like-minded friends, head out with Puget Sound Outdoors (PSO). The same applies for just about anything you can think of, if you have an interest or a passion, chances are you can find a way to pursue it, probably with some friends.

The same freedom of choice applies to your academic life: instead of having a set course of study, you now get to choose what to study, when to study, and how involved you want to be in your studies. For me, my choice to study the subjects I’m passionate about (the sciences, particularly chemistry, and literature) means that I’m personally invested in my work. The choice to passionately pursue an academic discipline means a huge time investment, but as the subjects are what I want to study, long hours in the library are generally engaging and pleasantly challenging. The reward of passionate engagement in whatever you do is a set of keys to all sorts of future opportunity; those coming from successes, impressive finished products, and especially a self-awareness which you’ll find happily transferable across disciplines. The passionate can often realize unique opportunity in internships, international travel, conference attendance, and extended learning with professors.

Don’t worry about passionately pursuing a single, specific discipline just yet—you probably haven’t had the exposure necessary to know if you really do like something. I came to Puget Sound planning to study “big” biology, imagining myself working outside, examining plants and animals around the world. After taking the introductory survey courses for biology and chemistry, I found that I engaged with the smaller details of the natural world more than the big. Now after wandering through cells and proteins, I’ve refined my focus to straight chemistry, many orders of magnitude from where I began. Aside from the sciences, I’ve greatly enjoyed the breadth of primary-literature-based courses. Learning how to read and write well unexpectedly directed the course of my college career toward reading literature nearly every semester and opened a job opportunity as a writing tutor in the Center for Writing, Learning, and Teaching. When you’re taking your first year of survey courses in any disciple, keep an open mind to follow what you feel is most interesting and engaging.

So in offering advice, I’ll say what I do not regret. I’ve never felt an ounce of regret for working “too hard” on anything. Regardless of the assignment or project, I’ve always found satisfaction putting more of myself into it, engaging more, going beyond the necessary into the passionate. I don’t regret following my interests honestly, which means I’ve strayed, without regret, from the path I thought I was setting out on in the fall of my first year.

In parting I’ll offer one final bit of advice. Keep a journal, especially in your first few weeks here. Don’t worry about daily entries, but write when you feel strong emotions, or when something important in your life happens. It will help keep your thoughts in order, help elucidate your passions, and you’ll have an invaluable record of your college experience and the paths you’ve chosen to take.

Recipe for Success:
How to find the balance between school, friends, and self

Shani Cohen
Class of 2013

By the end of my freshman year at Puget Sound, I knew that I had found my passions: music and psychology. I loved the classes I had in both subjects, and was active in a wealth of clubs and activities. I was president of the musical theatre club, in the women’s a cappella group, singing in the Dorian women’s choir, part if the Resident Student Association, and active in Hillel (then the Jewish Student Organization), to name a few. I have always loved to be busy, but the freedom of college was an opportunity to truly immerse myself in every hobby and interest I had. I won’t lie; my passionate involvement seemed a bit out of hand. Yet I somehow managed to make the most out of my four years not only academically but socially, forming some unforgettable experiences and friendships that have defined my college experience.

As graduation looms around the corner, I would offer this advice to freshmen: know yourself and your limits. We are each unique and need our own set of boundaries. Spend the first few weeks of college exploring these limits. Are you a morning person or a night person? Do you work best in the quiet focus of the library or the bustling noise of the café? How much time do you need to get that French assignment done? What about the 10-page research paper? The better you know yourself, the better equipped you can be to handle a busy schedule. And that includes socializing and having fun! College is about learning, of course, but also about making memories. If you spend all your time studying alone in your room, you’ll wake up one day to find that college has passed you by and you’ve missed out on all the fun experiences that you wanted. Relish each moment, realizing that sometimes you have to buckle up and work hard, harder than you may have ever worked before.

Once you know your own needs and limits, find your passion. Whether it takes you one day or two years to find it, fight for what you love! Don’t let others deter you by saying
that it’s not possible or it’s too hard. Nothing is impossible if you are willing to put in the work. As a freshman, I knew that I wanted to double degree in psychology and music. Once my mind was set, I utilized a variety of campus resources to make it happen: I scheduled numerous meetings with my advisors (in both majors), drafting every possible four-year plan for my course registration, met with the registrar to figure out summer course credits, worked one-on-one with the study abroad office to make a summer abroad possible with my schedule, attended professor office hours, used library resources, and more. It took planning, focus, and resourcefulness, but I don’t regret a minute of it. I urge everyone to use your precious time and resources in college to explore your own interests, find what motivates you to learn, and leave some time to have fun and build personal connections that will last a lifetime. It’s not easy, but it’s well worth the challenge, I promise. Good luck!

Make Tacoma Your City

Jasmine Kaneshiro
Class of 2014

As you settle into your classes, dorm, and college life in general, remember that there is an entire city—one that is lively, generous, and beautiful—outside the walls of Puget Sound’s buildings and beyond the campus limits. Unlike many other areas surrounding universities, Tacoma, nicknamed the City of Destiny, is not truly a “college” town. Life here doesn’t revolve entirely around our university, and I think that makes our experiences, both at Puget Sound and in Tacoma, all the richer.

I would challenge you to make Tacoma your city during your four years in college, and perhaps even after, should you choose to stay in this corner of the Pacific Northwest. On Friday nights, when you and your friends are looking for a place to eat and relax after a stressful week, go on Yelp and look for an interesting restaurant you haven’t tried before. Browse newspapers such as Tacoma Weekly, Tacoma News Tribune, and The Trail (Puget Sound’s own student newspaper) for concerts, shows, festivals, and other community events. If you don’t have a car, learn to navigate Pierce Transit’s bus system or bike to new places. Study at Metronome Coffee, Café Brousseau, Mad Hat Tea, or even a nearby Starbucks when you’re tired of the library. Take a friend or two with you to the Proctor Farmer’s Market each Saturday morning to enjoy local fruits and live music. Join a book club at King’s Books in downtown, or take a class at a local yoga studio. On warm days, go down to the waterfront and soak up the sunlight, or run, bike, or walk the five-mile loop at Point Defiance. Whether you do one of these activities, all of them, or even some not mentioned here, you will likely meet new people, have fun, learn new things, and feel more comfortable in this new environment.

Another way you can make Tacoma feel more like home is through community service, which has been very important to me, especially since the beginning of my college years. Because I’ve dealt with a number of nonprofit and community organizations, I am struck over and over again by how much the people of Tacoma care about this city. Join your fellow Tacomans and get involved with a local food bank, a mentoring program, or other organization. Evaluate your skills—whether they including writing, working with construction tools, working with kids, organizing events, or a host of others—and find places where you can help. The office of Spirituality, Service, and Social Justice (SSSJ) and the Community Involvement and Action Center (CIAC) are great resources if you’d like to volunteer.

I think that getting involved both on and off campus is valuable and can be a hugely joyful and enriching part of your time in Tacoma. Being connected to your peers, your professors, as well as your city is great for staving off loneliness and the potential worry that you shouldn’t be here, or don’t belong. Adventure—and joy, and growth, and learning, and wonder—is out there, and your destiny awaits.