

The Differences Between High School and College and the Importance of Student-Faculty Interaction for College Success

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The purpose of my presentation is to provide you with some advice about three things that can impact the collegiate success of your daughters and sons.

1. The differences between high school and college
2. The importance of the connections your son or daughter can make with our faculty and staff
3. A three-step strategy to facilitate those connections

A very important fact that beginning college students should be aware of is that . . .

. . . **their freshman year in college will NOT be 13th grade.**

The following slides provide
some crucial differences between
high school and college.

In High School . . .

Academic expectations are not always high, and good grades can often be obtained with minimum effort. This is especially true for bright students who have discovered they don't have to expend much effort to earn high grades. Unfortunately, part of being "cool" in high school often depends on the ability to project the appearance of not working hard.

In College . . .

Academic expectations are much higher, and minimum effort usually produces poor grades.

In High School . . .

Teacher-student contact is close and frequent with classes that usually meet 5 days a week. Teachers are usually very accessible.

In College . . .

Classes meet less often—sometimes only once a week—and faculty are usually only available during their office hours and by appointment to address student concerns.

In High School . . .

The teacher prepares a lesson plan and uses it to tell students how to prepare for the next class period (e.g., “Be sure to read Chapter 3 in your textbook.” or “Don’t forget to study for tomorrow’s test.”)

In College . . .

The instructor prepares a syllabus, distributes and discusses it on the first day of the class, and expects students to follow the syllabus without having to be reminded about what will be done or what assignment is due during the next class period.

In High School . . .

Students are assigned daily homework, which teachers collect and check to insure that assigned work is being done. For example, a term paper will require many intermediate steps before the final paper is submitted.

In College . . .

Instructors assume students have learned how to “keep up” with their assignments in high school and can be trusted to do course work without being constantly reminded or assigned “busy work” homework.

In High School . . .

Parents, teachers, and counselors give advice to and often make decisions for students. Students must abide by their parents' boundaries and restrictions.

In College . . .

Students must learn to rely on themselves and begin to experience the results of their own good and bad decisions. It is their responsibility to seek advice when they need it and to set their own restrictions.

In High School . . .

Teachers often contact parents if problems occur. Parents are expected to help students in times of crisis.

In College . . .

Students have much more freedom, and must take responsibility for their own actions.

Parents may not be aware that a crisis has occurred because the Buckley Amendment protects their sons and daughters' privacy.

In High School . . .

There are distractions from school work, but these are at least partially controlled by rules at school and home (e.g., curfews, dress codes, and enforced study hours).

In College . . .

Many distractions exist. Time management and the ability to prioritize become absolutely essential survival skills for college students.

From my point of view (which has been developed over 33 years of teaching college freshmen), the major difference between high school and college is that college faculty assume their students are *responsible adult human beings.*

This conclusion leads me to believe that successful college freshmen are those who live up to faculty expectations by acting in a responsible and adult manner.

Important Points to Consider about Student Responsibility

In high school, it is the responsibility of teachers to make sure that students learn.

In college, it is the responsibility of faculty to provide students with an environment in which to learn, but it is the student's responsibility to take advantage of this environment.

This is a natural part of the healthy transition from
passive learner → *active learner*.

Likewise . . .

In high school, it is the responsibility of teachers to get to know their students.

In college, it is the responsibility of students to help their teachers to get to know them.

This is a natural part of the transition from

childhood → adulthood

and from

high school → college → to the world of work.

Years of research in higher education support the fact that student-faculty interaction is positively correlated with the following aspects of student success.

- college satisfaction
- persistence (not dropping out)
- academic performance (GPA)
- graduation
- graduation with honors
- enrollment in graduate or professional school

At this point, I would like to offer a three-stage strategy you can share with your sons and daughters that will help them act responsibly and make valuable connections with IUPUI faculty and staff.

Stage #1

Get Noticed.

The best way to help a college instructor to notice you in a positive manner is to help that instructor form the impression that you are an active, interested, responsible, and motivated student.

Some of my students have told me that the “good” students in their high schools were the ones who simply didn’t engage in “bad” behaviors.

In college, simply not being
“bad” doesn’t make you “good.”
Being a “good” student in college
means understanding what is
expected and doing what is
expected in an accurate, correct,
courteous, and timely manner.

Here are some ways to get noticed as a “good” college student.

- Read and understand the class syllabus.
- Come to class.
- Come to class on time.
- Come to class prepared.
- Participate actively in class.
- Ask questions about unclear material.
- Take advantage of your professors’ office hours.
- Utilize the services and expertise of your TAs.

Here are some ways to get noticed as a “not-so-good” college student.

- Carry on side conversations with your fellow students while your instructor is trying to lecture.
- Let your cell phone ring in class or—worse yet—take a call and carry on a conversation in class.
- Sit in the back of the classroom when there are empty chairs in front.
- Behave as if you are bored by what your teacher is trying to teach.
- Pack up your books noisily before class is over.

Stage #2

Perform Well.

Performing well means earning high scores on tests, producing written work that is professional in both content and appearance, and speaking in a clear and articulate manner.

The ability to perform well is dependent upon a willingness to . . .

- **Be savvy** → Don't be perceived as **clueless**.
 - know what your teachers expect you to do and then actually following through and do it
 - seek help when you need it
- **Work hard** → Don't be perceived as a **slacker**.
 - don't just do the minimum required to pass the class
 - make it a point to work harder than your classmates
- **Assume an active role in the learning process.**
 - don't just sit back and passively expect to be taught
 - become actively involved in the teaching-learning process

Stage #3

Just Do It!

Here are some ways for students to “get involved” with faculty.

- Serve as a Teaching Assistant
- Serve as a Research Assistant
- Serve as Mentor
- Serve as a Tutor
- Serve as a Peer Advisor
- Serve as a Club or Organization Officer
- Serve as a Work-Study Student
- Serve as an OTEAM Member

Here are some examples of faculty and staff who freshmen will find to be particularly approachable.

- Learning Community faculty members
- Faculty members in “gateway” classes
- Academic advisors
- Club or organization advisors
- Members of academic support services such as
 - the Math Assistance Center
 - the Writing Center
 - the Bepko Learning Center
 - the Career Center
 - Adaptive Education Services

It is also a good idea for freshmen to seek the advice of upperclassmen about particularly approachable faculty members.

A Parental Heads-Up

Some bright students get through high school quite successfully by simply showing up. However, they often reach a point where just showing up stops working, and they actually have to put forth serious effort to perform well. If they have never had to study before, they may not know how. If you suspect this might be the case for your son or daughter, then my suggestion is that you gently—but persuasively—suggest that he or she should become familiar with the many support services that IUPUI has to offer and use these support services if and when the need arises.

Other hints for parents to help their daughters and sons to succeed in college . . .

- If they must work, see if it is possible for them to work on campus.
- Tell them to take orientation and their learning community class very seriously.
- Help them see the relevance of what they are doing in school so they don't take classes just to "get them out of the way."

Hints continued . . .

- ✓ Encourage them to make friends with the other students in their classes and to form study groups with them.
- ✓ Suggest that they get involved in at least one student club or activity.
- ✓ Tell them to take advantage of service learning and internships.
- ✓ Encourage them to seek the advice of successful upperclassmen.

Hints continued . . .

- Suggest that they get to know the librarian in their learning community.
- Give them any help you can that will enable them to learn how to manage their time (e.g., tell them parking will be a challenge if they wait until the last minute to drive to class).
- Encourage them not to be PCP (Parking Lot → Classroom → Parking Lot) students. The time they spend time on campus will be a sound investment in their academic success.

I have two suggestions
for a little light summer
reading for parents of
first-year college
students.

Letting Go

by Karen Coburn & Madge Treeger

Cost = \$11 new or \$6 used + shipping

Order from www.amazon.com

Helping Your First-Year College Student Succeed: A Guide for Parents

by Richard Hullendore & Cathie Hatch

Cost = \$3.00 + \$1.50 shipping

Order by calling 803-777-6229

I'd like to end my presentation
by reading a quotation from the
editorial page of the
Indianapolis Star that does a
wonderful job of illustrating
many of the points I have tried
to make today.

“As a student at IUPUI, I need to know that my diploma will mean something. I want rigorous, difficult coursework that will help me develop the skills that employers and graduate schools require. I need employers and graduate admissions committees to know that I had to work hard for my GPA. I do not want to simply exchange money for my diploma.”

Troy Payne
Indianapolis Star
May 31, 2004

Troy is a young man who has successfully lived out the following three quotations that I use to help my students understand how to achieve success in college and in life.

Over 2000 years ago, the Greek philosopher Socrates said . . .

*“Know
thyself.”*

Many centuries later, Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* in which Polonius told Laertes . . .

***“To thine own
self be true.”***

Centuries later, Nike (the Greek goddess of victory)—speaking through her 21st century commercial namesake—says . . .

“Just do it.”