

## **A WHOLE NEW WORLD**

Learning what each of your instructors or professors expect from you as a student is an essential task for any new student. College instructors will likely have more range in terms of how they grade, view attendance, and define their expectations from the students in their class than your high school teachers did. The secret most students learn after their first year of college is how different each professor is when it comes to what they want to see from their students. Some won't care about attendance, just how you do on the midterm and final. Some won't give midterms and finals and instead place a large percentage of the course grade on attendance, participation, and the completion of weekly homework and assignments. Taking the time to learn what each of your instructors wants is critical for success. The following are several tried and true areas to ensure you consider as you attend your first class.

**1** Take the time to read each syllabus you receive and use the following checklist to ensure you are asking the right questions about their expectations for the class.

- While regular attendance is always a good idea for a class, is it required for this class? How does the professor take attendance, and how should you ensure they check your name for each class?
- How are grades calculated? The syllabus should explain what percentage is placed on different aspects of the course. Major areas often include attendance, participation, midterms, finals, quizzes, and group projects. The syllabus for each course is your map to success.
- Listen for the professor to share their “pet peeves” during the first class. These may be about chewing gum, late assignments, extra credit, using a laptop or phone in class, raising hands (or not raising hands), writing style, the use of citations, and the use of AI in class.

**2** Introduce yourself to each of your professors. Keep introducing yourself even after you think they know your name. Your instructors will be more likely to be flexible in assignments and more gracious in grading papers when they can connect your name with a face.

**3** Look for any obstacles to doing well in the class. This could mean how any major grade drop occurs (e.g., “students who miss more than the allotted two classes lose one letter grade for each additional class missed”) and how assignments are weighted (e.g., “the final is worth 80% of your overall grade”). Likewise, some instructors have specific expectations around how and when to ask questions and their own pet peeves (e.g., chewing gum, wearing a hat, or not raising your hand). While smarts and completing assignments are important, try to be “emotionally intelligent” when it comes to engaging in your approach to class.

**4** Do your best work first. Instructors and professors are human and, like all humans, have biases and expectations about their students. If they know your name and see quality work from you at the start of the semester, they will likely see you as a good student who will continue to achieve in class.