

## How Is College Different From High School?

Ken Petress

College is different from high school in several ways: there are environment differences such as: multiple buildings, each class in a different classroom and variable class meeting times, elective and core courses, and major and minor programs; there are differences expectation for student maturity; there are intellectual expectation differences; there are, for many students, residency differences [some live on campus and others do not]; there are student classroom work load differences in various classes; there are class delivery differences; there are testing and class assignment differences [in terms of deadlines, content, style, preparation, and level of accomplishment; and there are differences in the level of student freedoms and responsibilities in-class and out-of-class. These differences are neither good nor bad; they do, though, need to be learned and adapted to fairly quickly for you to succeed.

There are five buildings in which classes are delivered: Pullen Hall, Folsom Hall, Normal Hall, South Hall, and Wieden Hall. You likely will have your classes in different buildings. Classes meet at different time frames: (1) some classes meet for three one-hour sessions a week usually MWF; (2) others meet twice a week for 75 minutes each on T-TH; and (3) still others meet one day or evening a week for 3 hours. All three arrangements result in the same credit being given for classes.

The university requires all students to take some courses called the "**core**." Other courses are required of students if they enroll in certain majors. Another set of courses are required for students who need a **minor**, a cluster of courses required of some majors outside their major interest area. Some major programs like education require **professional courses**; these are taken in addition to core, major, and minor courses. Remaining courses are called **electives**. Each academic program has a prescribed setup for students to follow.

College students are usually told once about assignments, test dates, and specific expectations. Often these notices appear in a document called a **syllabus**, a document typically given to students on the first day of, classes. Reminders and follow-ups are not usually given; students are expected to recall their duties and to have work done on time and in the proper manner. Most classes are taught in a way that is different from high school. Professors typically go beyond material found in textbooks, using textbook material as a springboard for further, in-depth

classroom analysis/discussion. Many classes demand that students read from sources beyond textbooks [ie: journals, periodicals, and other books] and students are usually not checked upon to determine if they are reading outside materials. It is left to students to do their work. Tests are left to professor discretion. Each professor has his/her own style of question type, testing schedule [although midterm and final exams more often than not occur in clusters], and testing motive.

Professors have regularly schedule office hours when students may visit their teachers without appointments. Each professor chooses his/her own office hour schedule. Most instructors offer students opportunities to visit at times other than regular office hour times by making advanced appointments.

One way of learning is through peer interaction. Students learn by sharing out-of-class reactions to, questions of, and challenges to class material. Many successful students form informal study groups, students who agree to meet periodically for the purpose of talking about what they are learning. Many insights, classroom material relationships, and useful intellectual discoveries arise from such informal get togethers. Such meetings are only useful, however, if students remain focused on the learning dimension and do not let such meetings deteriorate into bull sessions.

Students are expected to do their own work. Using someone else's work as your own is **plagiarism**, a form of intellectual theft. Having someone else do your work is cheating and is guaranteed to get you into trouble as well as assure that **you** will not learn anything.

Students do not learn exclusively from classroom experiences or from study group sessions. True learning also originates from student activities, informal discussions with professors [those you have/have and for classes and those you never study with], and from cultural events on campus. Student activities are ways of relieving stress, getting to know more of your peers in real life situations, and in building confidence, responsibility, and skills. Discussions with faculty members allow you, the student, and faculty to know each other outside the classroom environment. Most faculty members have diverse interests, experiences, and talents that are unknown until discovered informally. Cultural events enrich your education and are fun too. There are many staff members on campus; use their knowledge and skills. Do not hesitate to ask questions or to request help, no matter what you need. Rarely will you be turned down and certainly you will not be laughed at for needing something.

Learning is **genuine work**; the work, if you do it earnestly and promptly, is fun work. Professors and

reading materials sometimes use words you may be unfamiliar with. Keep a dictionary handy so you can master new vocabulary when you encounter it. Welcome to the university community.