What the *$#%& am I doing at UWRF?

Did you think that college was going to be just like an episode of The OC; full of beautiful looking people, where classes came secondary to the party scene and make out sessions? Well, now that you have been here a week or two maybe the reality of college has begun to set in. Assignments, quizzes, tests, papers, and group projects are beginning to pile up and you are left asking yourself the question “What am I doing here?”

You can look at college as a full time job, between the 15 hours you are spending in the classroom per week and the 2 hours/credit you should be spending doing homework (e.g. reading your textbook, reviewing notes, writing flashcards, attending study groups) the time easily adds up to 40+. Spending 40+ hours doing anything in a week’s time span is a true commitment, so it is important that you are happy with your life choice to be attending UWRF. Asking yourself the following questions may help to clear up any hints of doubt that may surface as you are seeking up for your first General Biology exam.

Your thoughts and feelings about the institution you attend:
1. Are you proud to be a student at UWRF?
2. Do you feel a sense of belonging; in other words, is this institution a good fit for you?
3. Are you comfortable in your dealings with the faculty, the staff, and other students on campus?

Your goals for attending college:
1. What is your main goal for attending college?
2. Is it important (based on your life goals) for you to have a college degree or to get certified in a program of study?
3. Will attending college result in a better job or change in a career?
4. What are your academic ambitions, including GPA and honor societies?

Support from family members:
1. Does your family support your desire to attend college?
2. Are you majoring in something that is interesting to you, or did your family select that path for you?
3. Does your family encourage you to try new things (e.g. enroll in glass blowing, study abroad, go rock climbing)?

If after reflecting and journaling on the following questions you begin to second guess your reasons for attending UW-River Falls, or you feel a surge of excitement about your major and you want to learn more, do not hesitate to contact your faculty advisor, the Academic Success Center, Career Counseling, or Counseling Services; we are all here to assist you in clarifying your life goal’s and commitments. If at any point you decide it’s best to leave UWRF, we are around to assist with that choice too.

Fear Factor: facing the faculty

It’s easy to feel intimidated by the person who grades your papers and exams. However, professors were once undergraduate students too. Take the time to find out for yourself that they’re just people - but very often, people worth knowing better. A good relationship with your professor can make all the difference in your college experience, not to mention your GPA.

The Faculty 411: Steps to Interacting with Your Profs

Step one
Checkout your professor’s office hours, which he or she will usually include in the syllabus. Tip: Make a conscious effort to know ALL of your professors’ names.

Step two
Write down your professor’s e-mail address as well, and office phone number in your UWRF Planner.

Step three
Be sure to connect with your professor early in the semester (e.g. “I really enjoyed your lecture on the mating practices of the African Beetle. How can I find out more about this topic?”), this step will show the professor that you care about your class. Even if you are not struggling in class, it is important to get to know your professors, so that later down the road if a question or concern arises you know where to go (and they know who you are).

Step four
Always make an appointment (see step #2) before dropping by your professor’s office, especially if you need help with the class material. Tip: Arrive on time to the appointment, and have a list of questions ready in case you forget!

Step five
Treat your professor like any other person, with kindness and respect. You never know, this person could be a future reference, your ticket to grad school or your dream job, or a guest at your wedding.

What’s not cool in school:
(For Students)
- To email your professor with the subject heading “When are you going to grade my #$%^$#^ paper?”
- To demand immediate attention from your professor after sending an email or leaving a telephone message (they have lives too!).
- To cross boundaries with your professor (i.e. “I love it when you wear the red dress on Fridays.”)
- To blame your professor for your poor performance on an exam (you made the choice to go out the night before).

What’s not cool in school:
(ForFaculty)
- If they don’t take your concerns seriously
- If they are never available to help you with your questions
- If they make inappropriate comments (sexual, racial, derogatory)

Tip: If you feel comfortable, try to talk to your professor first. If that does not work, go to your academic advisor to discuss options. If the professor is your advisor, try the Department Chair first, or the Dean of the College of your major.