
Maintaining Professional Classroom Relations

— Presenters: Jeff & Gokila
(PIE Associates) —

Professional Relationship

The first step in building professional relationships between students and yourself is establishing yourself in a leadership role.

- It's an easy mistake to want to be seen as their equal or peer
 - Opens the door for students who would take advantage of a "friend-relationship"
- Don't let the relationship you have as a graduate student with your professors influence how you as an instructor relate to your students
 - Very different roles.

Professional Relationship

Communication should be professional and from a place of authority

- We of course don't want to be a disciplinarian or tyrant, but don't relax grading guidelines set forth by the syllabus or due dates without strong justification
- Make sure announcements and emails have a professional tone
 - Be informative and thoroughly describe items that pertain to class, but avoid unnecessary details i.e. reasons why you've made an administrative change
- **GRADES CANNOT BE DISCUSSED OVER EMAIL**

Professional Relationship

The most effective way to handle problematic situations is to manage the class such that they do not arise in the first place.

Professional Relationship

Example:

A student misreads the instructions for an assignment and as a result earns a very low score and wants to be able to re-do it. How would you handle this situation being a T.A.?

How might the situation be different if you had been developing a friend-relationship with this student?

Office Etiquettes

- Leave the office door open
- Greeting the student when they arrive at your office
 - Hello, Would you like to see me?
- Engaging in chit-chat and getting to the point
 - So, what are you here to talk about?
- Using paper and pencil
 - Write down unclear points
- Expressing disagreement/saying “no” politely
 - I can see your point, but
- Bringing Closure
 - Do you think we’ve covered everything?

Other out-of-class experiences

General guideline: don't change your behavior to encourage or discourage student interaction in a public setting.

- You will inevitably run into students at the grocery store, gym, coffee shop or bar. The appropriate amount of interaction is not well defined.
- Examples:
 - You go to trivia at proof every week with friends and you see a two students there two weeks in a row who ask to join your team.
 - You're sitting in the sauna at the Leach, wearing your bathing suit and a student walks in.

Dealing with “that” kind of approach...

- How to recognize?
- How to react?
- Be aware of how your actions could be perceived...
 - Avoid commenting on student’s dress and appearance
 - Be mindful of how your gaze is directed
 - Distracting dress - the university considers a dress code discriminatory
 - How do you handle distracting dress in your classroom?
- Sexual Harassment

Personal Relationship

- Mutual attractions/ Consensual Relations
 - How to deal with relationships?
 - Potential Conflict of Interest
 - Professional Reputation

Student's Personal Problems

- Mental Health or Stress (Financial, Physical, Family-related)
- Counselling
- Play a liaison role, don't try to be a problem-solver for your student. Route them to the right department who can handle the issue.
- A student may become despondent if they feel like you're just passing them along. Perhaps offer to walk them to the counseling or wellness center.
- Contact the Dean of Students if the problem interferes with academics

In-Class Emergencies

- If an emergency arises in your classroom, medical, criminal, or otherwise
 - Press the yellow button located on the Technology Enhanced Classroom workstation
 - FSU Police 850-644-1234
- Smaller crises may arise. It's important to respond appropriately for that student because the rest of the class is looking to you for guidance
 - A student will not stop asking questions during lecture as a way to hold the class hostage and draw attention to himself...
 - A student walks into class and collapses at their desk and begins crying....

Discriminatory Jokes

- Examples:
 - Continuing to mispronounce the names of students even after they have corrected you time and time again.
 - “Is Jose Cuinantila here?” “I am here, but my name is Jesus Quintanilla”.
 - Scheduling tests and project due dates on religious or cultural holidays.
 - “It has just been pointed out to me that I scheduled the mid-term during Rosh HaShanah, but we are OK because I don’t see any Jewish students in the class.”
 - Unknowingly, if you happen to schedule a test/assignment deadline on a religious festival day, would you permit the student to take the test on a different day?
 - The University policy lets the student inform the professor/TA about the religious festival **within the first two weeks** after the semester begins.

Gender Neutral Language

- Make every effort to use gender neutral language in your classroom to avoid students feeling excluded and alienated.
- Example:
 - Using heterosexist examples or sexist language in class.
 - “Atoms sometimes attract each other like this male and female here. At the same time, atoms sometimes repel each other like these two males here.”

Handling Harassment Issues

Florida State University's Office Equal Opportunity and Compliance (EOC)

- EOC is responsible for advancing and monitoring the University's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO);
- Sexual Misconduct (SM);
- Affirmative Action (AA);
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA);
- Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA);
- Telecommuting policies, procedures, programs, and initiatives.

Thank you...