

# Academics and Academic Expectations at UC Merced: Habits for Student Success

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# Overview

- 🔗 Welcome!
- 🔗 What can your student expect from academics at UC Merced?
- 🔗 What is general education all about?
- 🔗 What does your student need to do to be academically successful? Including advice from current students!

# What does your student need to do to succeed academically at UCM?



How do we get from here...



...to here?



# Student Success

- What **students** do -- time and energy focused on academics and other educational experiences.
- What **the university** does – using effective tools to help students be successful.
- And **families** are partners for student success for both.



# What Students Do: Time

**Key:** Time in college is **very different** from time in high school. So most students – even those who have been successful in high school -- need new time management skills and habits to be successful.

# What Students Do: Time

<Time in college is less structured, less scheduled

>Students have more freedom and more distractions

“I’m taking only 16 Units, so I’m in class just 16 hours a week”

- ❧ Classes have a certain number of “units” (for example, 3 or 4 per class).
- ❧ Your student will take at least 12 units each semester, but 15 or 16 is more typical (and better for success).
- ❧ That means he or she *will* be in class about 16 hours a week.
- ❧ But units do *not* represent the number of hours your student will spend on classes each week; *it will be much more time (and work) than that.*



# How do course units translate into expected effort at UC Merced?

⌘ In general: Students should expect to spend *at least*\* 3 hours of effort outside of class *for every course unit*.

\*Depends on the student *and* the class.



## Example: Psy 10—Analysis of Psychological Data (4 Units)

- ✂ Lectures: 3½ hours per week.
- ✂ Homework assignments: 2 hours or more per week.
- ✂ Reading and studying: 6½ hours or more per week.
- ✂ Total: this 4 unit class will require *at least* 12 hours of time each week.

# Example: Bio 1—Contemporary Biology (4 units)

- ⌘ Lecture: 3 hours per week.
- ⌘ Discussion: 1 hour per week.
- ⌘ Laboratory: 2 hours per week.
- ⌘ Reading and studying: 6 or more hours per week.
- ⌘ Total: this 4 unit class will require *at least* 12 hours of time each week.

*45 to 48 hours: Is that typical of the amount of time your student spent every week on academics – reading, writing, studying - in high school?*

# What Students Do: Effort

**Key:** Academic effort in college is different than academic effort in high school.



# What Students Do: Effort

- > Longer timelines
- < Fewer deadlines
- < Fewer grades
- > More independence
- > More responsibility

# What are lectures like?

- ⌘ They tend to be large. But not too large!
- ⌘ Material is fast-paced, complex.
- ⌘ They require careful preparation by students and by faculty.
- ⌘ They require students to focus, perhaps even more than in smaller classes.



# What about discussions?

- ❧ Small classes that provide an interactive style of learning.
- ❧ Large, lecture-style classes often have small discussion sections too.
- ❧ Again, preparation and focus are necessary. But so is participation.



# Why Spend Time on General Education?

- ⌘ My daughter is going to be a (medical doctor, computer science engineer, small business owner [insert your special interest here]). Why does she have to study things outside that discipline?
- ⌘ For one thing: Part of the University's job is to create well-educated and well-rounded active citizens.
- ⌘ For another: Most of the skills employers want are the focus of our general education curriculum: **effective written and oral communication, integrative thinking, critical thinking, teamwork, ethical decision-making, etc.**



# National Survey of Employers (AAC&U 2013, 2015)

- 93%: “a candidate’s demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is **more important** than their undergraduate major.”
- 90+%: hires must demonstrate ethical judgment and integrity; intercultural skills; and the capacity for continued new learning.
- 83%: hires must be able to work effectively in teams.
- 78%: hires must bring broad knowledge in liberal arts and sciences.

# General Education at UCM

## & University GE Requirements – all UCM Students

- ✓ Writing
- ✓ Math
- ✓ CORE 001

## & School and Major GE Requirements

- ✓ Subjects outside the major, designed to provide *breadth and depth essential* to a student's program:  
History, English, Psychology, Biology, Math,  
Sociology, Political Science, and on and on.

# Keys to Student Success -- What UCM Students Say:

Fall 2015 FY students in academic difficulty (at least 1 D or F) at midterm:

- &I don't allow enough time out of class to meet requirements of my courses.
- &I haven't used available tutoring.
- &I haven't met with my instructors to get help.

# Keys to Student Success at UC Merced\*



- 🔗 Manage time effectively.
- 🔗 Develop *and use* good study skills and habits. **From DAY ONE.**
- 🔗 Ask for help and use all available resources.

\*So you can be helpful when the time comes



# Time Management

- 🔗 Go to class! And use time *between* classes to do homework and study (e.g., in the library).
- 🔗 Keep a calendar with all due dates and assignments (course syllabus) and other commitments.
- 🔗 Plan ahead: Don't procrastinate and don't fall behind.
- 🔗 Allow time for other activities. Yes, your students should study and go to class, but they should also eat, do laundry, work out, see a movie, spend time with friends, get involved in the community. And sleep.

& Know what **you** need to do to be successful *and* do it;  
academic success isn't "one size fits all."

& Know how you are doing  
in your classes:

- ✓ **Faculty office hours**
- ✓ **Mid-semester grades**



Good Study Skills – make them a  
habit

# Mid-Semester Grades:

October 18, 2016

(Family weekend: October 21 – 22, 2016)



# Know Course Expectations

- ✂ Every class has a syllabus -- the roadmap of the class.
  - ✓ Specific deadlines and evaluation criteria.
  - ✓ So students must read the syllabus. *A lot.*
- ✂ Obtain all course materials specified by the instructor, including textbooks. Yes, they can be expensive, but **required readings really are required**.
  - ✓ For the sake of your student's success, she or he should not plan to share readings with classmates or friends.
  - ✓ Textbooks are not available in the UCM Library.



# Student Success -- What The University Does: **Challenge and Support**

**Key:** We expect – and will challenge -- your student to be successful *and* we provide lots of resources to help your student succeed.

# The Support: We are here to help your student be successful.\*

- ✧ Student success tutoring and workshops
- ✧ Academic Advisors, Peer Advisors
- ✧ Health, Wellness, and Counseling Services
- ✧ Residence Life Staff, Career Services & Professional Advancement



\* There's nothing wrong with asking for help!  
In fact, we *expect* your student to ask for help. But for some, that's a challenge.

# Faculty are Resources, Too

- 🔗 Faculty members at UC Merced have been successful students! They can help your student with the process of learning how to learn.
- 🔗 Their advice on how to set goals, manage time, and enjoy learning is a valuable resource.
- 🔗 How does a student access that resource?
  - ✓ **Office hours!**



# What Can Families Do?

## Challenge and Support

You play a significant role in your student's success.

**Challenge:** encouragement,  
independence, information

**Support:** encouragement,  
independence, information



# Advice about Academic Success from Current Students:



What are the keys to your  
academic success at UC  
Merced?

What do you wish you had done differently during your first semester at UCM? What do you know now you wish you had known then?

What advice do you have for  
new students' families about  
their students' academic  
success?





Questions?