Academic Expectations: High School versus College

5 day school week vs 2 or 3 day school week

- *In high school, students attend all week, all day.*
- College schedules are flexible. Classes run Monday-Wednesday-Friday or Tuesday-Thursday. However, keep in mind that for every hour of class time, there are usually two to three hours of homework. Do not arrange your schedule based on how much time you can have off, but rather what courses best suit your program of study. Allow time in your schedule to be able to use the library or conference with instructors. Consider being on campus five days a week if it is in your best academic interests.

Mandatory classes vs Students pick classes

- *In high school, students have to complete mandatory classes to satisfy the requirements for their diploma.*
- All the degrees awarded by SUNY Orange have degree requirements, but many allow for a number of electives. Students are sometimes surprised to discover that the courses they take at SUNY Orange are similar to those they had in high school: math, reading, writing, biology. While these appear to be similar, the level of coursework is at the college level.

Parent notification vs Student notification

- *In high school, parents are notified when you are absent, they have access to your grades and can discuss your academic progress with your teachers.*
- In college, students are responsible for keeping track of their absences, course progress and grades. While this seems to allow a certain amount of freedom, it is the student’s responsibility to keep track of their standing in a course. Each department/instructor has an attendance and a grading policy that can affect the final grade a student receives in a course. The instructor will not keep students posted on their absences or standing in the course.

Course Syllabus

Students are given a syllabus for every course they take at SUNY Orange. The syllabus contains important information including: instructor contact information, course description, student learning outcomes, assessment and grading, and policies for attendance, plagiarism, etc. The syllabus describes the expectations the student should have for the course as well as the expectations the instructor has for the student.

See the reverse for helpful tips on how to read a syllabus.
How to Read a Syllabus

By Maria Tartaglione: http://www.ehow.com/how_2146979_read-a-syllabus.html

The college syllabus is a contract between you and your professor. It spells out what she expects from you, and what you may expect from her. Reading carefully and understanding your college syllabus on the very first day of class is one of the most important steps toward excelling in any college course. There also are important clues in the syllabus that will help you decide on the first day whether to drop or keep a course. Most professors put a great deal of thought and effort into creating the syllabus. They will appreciate a student who reads it carefully before asking questions.

Instructions

1. Notice the overall length of the syllabus. A short syllabus does NOT mean the course will be easy. In fact, a long syllabus is generally a good sign. It often means that the professor has taught the course many times and improved the syllabus to clear up any areas of ambiguity.

2. Note the professor's office location and hours. Usually, professors will hold office hours at different times on different days to give students a range of possibilities. These hours are not the only time the professor will be in his office, but it is the only time the professor schedules to devote solely to meeting with students. Professors have many other responsibilities that require concentration and may not greet you warmly if you interrupt them outside of published office hours. If you have courses scheduled during all of a professor's office hours, ask him if he responds to emails or makes alternate appointments.

3. Note the dates of all major assignments and exams. If you have non-refundable tickets that will take you out of town on that day, consider dropping the class. It's possible that the professor will accept a project early if you have a conflict, but you should talk to the professor during office hours before drop/add ends. If you wait until a week before the project is due, do not expect sympathy. The professor will rightly note that the due dates have been published from day one. Also, consider when major projects and assignments fall relative to your other courses. If many fall on the same day or week, consider dropping one of the courses or speaking to the professors about your options.

4. Note the professor's policies regarding absences, tardiness and participation. Believe them. Most students will experience an unexpected crisis or opportunity at some time during their college careers that temporarily detains them. Talk to your professor.

5. Note when readings are due. When a reading is assigned, it should be completed before the lecture on that day. The lecture or course activities are far more engaging when you've read the assignment. Some professors give pop quizzes to encourage reading before class.

6. Note the submission requirements for any assignments. Does the professor prefer MLA format over APA? If so, get an MLA manual and skim it well before your assignment is due.

7. Refer back to the syllabus often during the semester. At a minimum, consult the syllabus weekly for readings. Double check the syllabus before submitting any major paper or project to make sure you have met the deadline, style, length and other requirements. If any are unclear, speak to the professor early.