A Professor’s Perspective
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Principal Lecturer
and
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Department of
Chemistry and Biochemistry
Education

BA (Molecular Biology)  
University of Colorado

MS, PhD (Biochemistry)  
University of Oregon

Faculty Appointments

Duke University

University of Maryland
Courses Taught (~70)
General Chemistry I, II, Accelerated
Organic Chemistry I, II
Survey of Biochemistry
Biochemistry I, II
Bioorganic Chemistry/Enzymology
College Park Scholars Colloquium
Why Me?

Despite the abnormal level of education and the alphabet soup after my name, I think I am a pretty normal guy.

I was eighteen once and actually remember a fair amount about what I was like then.

I like Mexican food, old rock and roll, and playing bass guitar badly. In my younger days I played basketball fairly competitively for about ten years, and yes, I could dunk.

On the other hand, I have taught something like 10,000 students in my chemistry classes and advised hundreds of majors during my twenty years as a faculty member.
“When I was seventeen, I felt my father so ignorant I could barely stand to have him around. When I reached twenty-one, I was amazed at how much the old man had learned in just four short years”

~Probably not Mark Twain
“When you have progressed through school to the point where you think you know everything, you receive a high school diploma. Then, you enter a process designed to illustrate that you know nothing, after which you get a bachelors degree. If you are a glutton for punishment and continue, you will ultimately realize that you don’t know much, but neither does anyone else. At that time, you are awarded a PhD.”
The world is becoming such a complex and confusing place!

I pretty much have everything figured out.
You are about enter a new world, unlike the one you have known.

Change can be fun and exciting, but also sometimes scary and frustrating.

Your success will depend on how well you adapt.

You will adapt. If the University didn’t think you were capable, you wouldn’t be here.
High School vs College

**Time spent in class:**
- High school: 6-7 hours/day
- College: 13-16 hours/week

**Attendance:**
- High school: Mandatory
- College: Expected

**Time spent out of class studying/week**
- High school: 3-4 hours
- College: ~2-3 hours/credit hour

**Length of a course**
- High school: A full academic year
- College: One semester
High School vs College

What will impress your instructor

High School: SAT scores, GPA, sports, etc  
College: Performance in class

Who passes any given class

High School: Virtually everyone  
College: Top 70-80%

Course content/assessment strategy

High School: School Board  
College: Course Professor

Course Syllabus:

High School: ?  
College: Defines everything
Faculty, Syllabi, and Other Things
WHAT DID WE COVER IN CLASS LAST WEEK?
IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS.

WHAT'S YOUR LATE HOMEWORK POLICY?
IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS.

WHEN ARE YOUR OFFICE HOURS?
IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS.

HOW WILL MY GRADE BE COMPUTED?
IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS.

IT'S IN THE SYLLABUS

This message brought to you by every instructor that ever lived.

www.phdcomics.com
What to do?

Study
vs
Staying up late
Video games
Partying
Focusing on significant other (or lack thereof)
Obsessing about Yikyak/Snapchat/Instagram
You get to decide

The possibilities are endless

You have to decide which things to focus on

The choices that you make are yours

The consequences are yours to deal with
The years you spend at Maryland will be some of the most interesting, fun and important of your life. They will also sometimes be the most frustrating.

The balance between work and play is harder than you think.

You will ultimately figure it out and be successful
“The study of law is something new and unfamiliar to most of you -- unlike any other schooling you've ever known before. You teach yourselves the law, but I train your minds. You come in here with a skull full of mush, and, if you survive, you leave thinking like a lawyer.”

Professor Charles Kingsfield
(John Houseman, The Paper Chase)
Have a Good Orientation and Semester