



a podcast about how we learn, how we teach, and how they overlap

Episode 29: Kickstarting College - Academic Norms for First Years and Transfer Students

Adam: Hi, I'm Adam Sanford. I'm an academic life coach and professor in Los Angeles.

Dinur: And I'm Dinur Blum. I'm a college professor in Los Angeles.

Adam: And this is Learning Made Easier, a podcast where we discuss how we learn, how we teach, and how they overlap.

Dinur: Welcome back to Learning Made Easier. This is Episode 29: Kickstarting College - Academic Norms for First Years and Transfer Students.

So, Adam and I wanted to look at how college is going to be very different for you, as students, compared to high school. And a big, big part of that is, you have a lot more freedom when you're in college, but with freedom comes responsibilities. You've got to set up your own class schedules.

So, normally, your first two years are going to be spent taking a lot of general education, or "GE," classes - and a few electives here and there. Or, what you want to do is, you want to use these electives to figure out what subjects interest you, even if they're not in your major. And if you take an elective and you figure you didn't enjoy it, well, you've got some credits to your name, and you now know that's one less thing that you might major in, as you want something different.

Adam: Right? So you take a programming course and you realize, "I'm so not a programmer!" Well, then you never have to take a programming course again, but it counts towards your major.

Now the other thing about picking out your electives - don't take all electives in the first two semesters. This is one of the things that happened to me when I started college. I was a music major the first time that I started college, because my parents desperately wanted me to be a professional, classical musician. So I took band, and I took orchestra, and I took small clarinet ensemble, and I took music theory, and I took nothing that could count for General Ed. A lot of the stuff that I took only counted if your major was music, and what I found was that I didn't like the major my parents wanted me to take. I love music, but I did not want to do it as my living, because the moment I had to do it, it became a chore. And I didn't want music to be a chore, because I loved music.

So the second time when I went back to college, I started exploring, and I said, "Okay, well, I like writing, so I'll try journalism!" And that worked for - I took, like, two classes in English that were about journalism, specifically, and it was interesting, but it wasn't dragging me in. It wasn't telling me, "hey, this is what you want to do."

And then I said, "Well, history's interesting..." So I changed my major to history.

And I changed my major like four times in college - and you can do that. That's okay. And we'll talk about that later on - but I changed my major to history, and I said, "This is really interesting, but it's not really telling me why people do what they do." I took a few psychology classes, and that was sort of interesting. But again, it wasn't giving me the information that I wanted. It's this, this thing that I needed to know about: why do people do what they do? History wasn't answering it. Psychology wasn't answering it.

And then, just randomly, I took a sociology elective and I was hooked. I was like, "oh my gosh, here it is. Here are all the rules for why people do what they do!" And as an autistic person, that was exciting!

And so I dove into sociology and I've been there ever since. You might find as a major that you started out in engineering. And engineering, you can do it, but it's not especially interesting. You know, you do it, you get good grades, but you don't have any original ideas about engineering.

And then you take a biology class, and it just grabs you and you're like, "oh my gosh, all of this stuff that happens in a cell, I really want to know more about this! I really want to figure out why it does this! I really want to figure out how it does this!" All right, well, you may have found your major!

And the thing about it is a lot of students come in saying, "I am going to be a blah major," whatever it is - math, or biology, or sociology, or whatever - and that will change a lot in the first two years, and it's okay that it does. It's okay that you're taking electives that make you think in a different way about the world. That's part of what college is for.

I read a quote once, it was Daniel Keyes, that "college is where you go to learn that everything you thought you knew is wrong," and that freedom is part of what's allowing you to figure out, "what do I know, and what do I only think I know? What is actually interesting to me, and what is just stuff I was told I should find interesting?"

So you've got a lot of freedom when you first come to a four-year school, where you could say, "I'm going to do this and see what it's like. I'm going to take that class and see what I learned. I'm going to take that class because the name is interesting. But I'm not gonna commit myself to a major until I've found what really works for me."

Dinur: And one thing to keep in mind, too, is if you take classes in a lot of different areas, after you graduate, you might be able to merge all those different bases of knowledge, all those different ideas you've gotten, and be able to create something with them. So just because it didn't work as an academic pursuit, doesn't mean you give up on it. It just means, "Okay, I took a class, it wasn't what I thought it would be. Let me move on." But keep any ideas that really interest you, and keep working on them. Keep researching them. Because, ultimately it's ideas that are going to interest you and motivate you, not likely the name of the - of your major.

Adam: And one of the things that you might find out when you take those other classes is you've got enough classes to have a minor.

Dinur: Yeah.

Adam: You know, you may find that, “hey, I’m majoring in” - let’s pretend - “sociology, but I’ve got enough to get a minor in political science.” That can help you a lot. You know, “I’m majoring in math, but I’ve got enough electives to have a minor in physics.” That can help you too, and your minor doesn’t necessarily have to have anything to do with your major.

I know one person who’s taking programming as their major and religious studies as their minor. Why? Because religious studies is fascinating to them, but they know that programming will probably get them a better job than having a religious studies view of the world. On the other hand, they now have an understanding of a lot of their potential customer base, because what they want to do is work with churches and help churches set up their web pages and help churches set up their internal accounting systems and things like that. Taking religious studies helps them understand how to talk to people in different religious groups, so that actually helps them with their goal as well.

Now, you know your preferred learning times. Everyone knows, by the time they hit college, whether they’re a night owl, or a morning person, or something in between. There’s a book by Dan Pink called *When* - and we’ll put this in the show notes - and this book is basically trying to figure out what your chronotype is. When are you on your game, and when are you totally not on your game? For me, I tend towards the night owl. In the summer, I’m much more of a night owl than I can be during the school year, but I do my best work late in the evening and early in the midnight. You know, like, I do my best work around, starting around 10 o’clock at night is when I really get going and I can write and I can create things. I just finished creating all the lectures for a new prep that I’ve got this coming fall, yesterday, and I was doing it at about 10 o’clock or 11 o’clock at night and 12 in the morning.

But if you’re a lark, if you’re a morning person, then you’re going to be on your game at 5:00 AM, and you’re going to want to go to that 7:00 AM class, and you’re going to be unusual because there’s going to be a bunch of night owls sitting there going, “why am I here at seven o’clock in the morning?”

So figure out your preferred learning times. When are you really on your game? Is it early in the morning? Is it the middle of the afternoon? There are people who are midday people; Dan Pink calls them “third birds.” They’re neither large nor owls. Are you good at doing things early or are you good at doing things late at night?

And keep in mind that the late morning and the early afternoon classes do tend to fill up quicker because a lot of people are trying to get them in as if they’re a work schedule, so that they’ve got the evening off. But there will be classes that you will have to take at seven in the morning. If you’re a night owl, you gotta deal with that. If you’re a lark, there will be classes that don’t happen until five in the afternoon. They’re going to be a 5:00 to 8:00 PM class and you’re just going to have to cope with that.

But try to schedule your classes as much as possible around your preferred learning times.

Dinur: Now, with that being said, you also have to keep track of any outside-of-school obligations. So, if you’re a student athlete, for example, you know what times you have to be at practice, you know when you have to travel to road games or to road meets, so you have to be able to work your class schedule and your practice and travel schedule together.

If you have a job outside of your classes, obviously you should tell your boss, “hey, here’s my class schedule,” but if you know your boss needs you at fixed hours, you’re going to have to work your class schedule around that. If you have family obligations, if you always have to take care of a younger or an older relative, and things

happen like appointments in the early afternoon for them, then you know that you have to allow that block of time to be open in order to take care of their obligations.

So you can see, Adam and I are talking about your freedom. You get to choose what classes you take. You even get to choose when you take them, in terms of days and times. But we're also telling you that you have to be very conscious and conscientious of your time and your other obligations as well.

Adam: And please, if you are picking classes, don't pick a class that you know you're never going to show up to. And I will direct this to student athletes. I get a student athlete or two, every semester who signs up for a class and never shows up, and then they get a WU or an F and then they come back and say, "you screwed up my sports eligibility."

"No, you screwed up your sports eligibility."

"Well, I don't come to 7:00 AM classes."

"Well, then, why did you sign up for my class?"

"Well, it was the only one I could find."

That's not a good reason to sign up for class, all right?

If you need the classes in order to keep your sports eligibility, guess what? It's not just being enrolled that keeps your eligibility. You actually have to do the work too.

So, remember, when we're talking about doing the work, a lot of students don't understand what a credit hour or unit is. Different colleges call them different things. Some colleges will say "this class is a three unit class." Some will say "this is a three credit hour class."

But when you are in a semester system school, a credit hour is one hour in the class and two hours outside of it. So if you have a three-unit class or three-credit hour class, that is a nine-hours-a-week class, not a three-hours-a-week class. You're spending three hours in class, but you're also expected to spend about six hours a week outside of that three hours in class doing homework, doing the readings, watching videos, listening to podcasts that are related to the class, working on a paper, going and doing research, meeting with your study group.

So because of this, you want to really be careful about how many units you take. The school will tell you the typical class load is either 12 or 15 units in a semester system school, and that's - 12 units is about 36 hours of work a week. That's about 36 hours of work, per week, that you have committed to. That's a full time job.

So be aware of this - when you schedule your classes, it's not just the time you're in class that matters. You're going to have to spend a lot of time outside of class, too.

Dinur: Now, we've talked a lot about freedom so far, right? You're setting up your schedule. You've had, you're keeping track of everything. You know how to budget time, including time at home to do your readings, do your assignments, but keep in mind you do have freedom in whether or not you attend your classes, right?

Adam just mentioned he has athletes who sign up for the class - they enroll, but they don't show up. And certainly you could do that, but a few things:

One is, you are wasting a ton of money if you regularly avoid going to class, and if you don't believe us, figure out how much you're paying in tuition. Divide that by the number of credit hours you have, and divide it by the number of classes you have - and that's how much each specific missed class is costing you.

So on the one hand, if you need a day off every now and then, by all means take it. But if you make it a habit of missing classes, you're throwing money down the drain.

And two, you're going to miss out on so much material because the best classes don't just have, uh, the readings, they also have an in-class component where students can engage with one another, they can talk to the professor. The whole idea is that you're learning something in different ways, and in different levels of, well, really, depth.

And so one thing that I'd also tell you is, or that Adam and I, rather, would tell you is: go to your classes. If you're paying this much money, one, get something out of it and that's something you might view it as just a grade, but it can also be a new idea or something or a new skill that you hadn't thought of.

Adam: Yeah, this thing about "show up." It's required in my classes. There are students who say, "you can't make me come to class" and I'll say, "No, I can't, but I can make it part of your grade," in that that's where your participation points are. And if you're not showing up, you're not getting participation points. And if participation is 30% of your grade, you're going to have to really bust your butt to just pass the class with a bare minimum of a C.

And there are professors who will do this! Now the thing is, yes, reading on the outside, learning on your own is good. It's important, it's relevant, it's necessary. But when you're in class, there may be someone who asks the question you didn't even know you had, and that's where you'll get the answer. If you're not in class, you'll miss that.

So make sure that you show up. Part of learning is just being there. Part of learning is being present and open to hearing what's going on in class. The way that I conduct my classes, the first half hour of the class is always, "All right, you listened to the lecture outside of class, we've taken a little quiz on it. I know two of the main problems you folks are having. Let's go over those. But now, does anybody else have any other questions?" And this is where the rich learning begins, because now you've got a classmate asking that question that you were embarrassed to ask, and I'm giving you the answer and I'm saying, "Okay, look on page 47 of the book, you see the chart there? Do you see that part of the chart where we've got - uh huh? You see? You understand it now?"

Everyone else in class is writing down this question: "Look on page 47 and see the chart." You won't have that in your notes. You won't have that information at all.

Now the flip side is that not all classes take attendance for each meeting. If there's a lecture hall with a hundred or 300 or 600 students, no professor in their right mind is going to stand there and say, "Adams, Jane? Adams, John? Alvarez--?" They're not going to call roll. All right? If you miss class, occasionally, you really want to make sure that before you miss class, you've gotten contact info from a few classmates - their text message numbers or their emails, so that you can email them and ask what you missed.

If you think you're gonna have regular repeated absences, like let's say that you start school, and two weeks later you get a job, and your hours of the job are interfering with your class, like, you're leaving class early everyday to get to work on time.

Or if you know that there's going to be an extended absence - say, that you're sick, or that your mother has just gone into the hospital or something, talk to your teachers ahead of time if you can. Because we're often willing to work with students if we know about the difficulty ahead of time. But if you wait till the end of the term and then you say, "by the way, the reason that I missed the, you know, all of week two and week three was because my mom was in the hospital," it's not going to go over well.

Timing is everything. Remember, we're not going to know what's going on in your lives unless you tell us.

And also about this missing classes thing. Do not ever send an email to your professor and say, "Hey, Dr Blum, I missed class on Wednesday. Did I miss anything?"

"No, no, you didn't miss anything. We held a pizza party."

Dinur: We cried.

Adam: We cried. We really, really missed you!

No, of course not. Yes, we will have done things that you will have missed.

Asking, "Did I miss anything?" Uh, yeah, you missed something! But don't bother the teacher for it, because we have already provided that by coming to class and teaching it.

Now it's your responsibility to find out what you missed, by checking in with those classmates whose emails and contact information you should already have, and find out from them. "What did I miss? Can I get a copy of your notes for Wednesday, John? I had a dentist appointment."

Dinur: And we can tell the difference, because if I have an email from a student saying, "I missed class on this day and I really don't understand this part of the notes or this part of the lecture," then I go, "Okay, this part's a little unclear. Let me explain it to this person, either in person or over email."

Whereas either "did I miss anything?" or "what did I miss?? All I can say is, "Well, we went over this lecture. Um, I don't know what you missed from those slides that I said in class," and then I'll ask the student to talk to their peers who were present that day, because they're going to know what I said that I didn't put in the slides, and I'm probably not going to remember it.

And what Adam just said about timing being crucial - a while back, I had a student submit an assignment about two weeks late. without giving me a prior heads up.

And I asked why this was being turned in late, and they told me, "well I had something at work come up."

Now again, no email to let me know that something had come up. This is the first time hearing it. And I go, "Okay, so why are you showing this to me now?"

“Because I thought it was excused because it was work. And you said you would work with us if work was a problem.”

Oh, I absolutely do. But if I don't know that something came up with work - and I have 200 students in that class, there's no way I'm going to know what 200 people are doing or anything that comes up in their lives unless they make a point of telling me - and the best practice is not just tell us in person, but also follow it up with an email saying, “Hi, Dr Blum; hi, Dr. Sanford. Uh, we spoke after class today, I mentioned this...”

Because now there's a record for you that you told us we have something that we can refer to and you're not relying on my God-awful memory to try and remember that you told me that you're going to miss classes. You've got something that I can point to and say, “oh, that's right. You did tell me. Here's the email reminding me of it.”

Adam: Yeah. I'm sitting here nodding, going “mm-hmm,” and thinking of the students who have not done this. I had a student who became the primary breadwinner for her family when her mother got sick and lost her job, but she didn't tell me this. She just stopped showing up to class in, like, the seventh or eighth week of class. And then she came back in week 13 - her mom had recovered and gotten a new job, and expected to be able to do makeup work for five weeks.

Now I have a “no makeup” policy in my class, but I will work with you if you told me that there's something going on. But she didn't tell me until week 13, and I really had to consider what I was going to do.

But the fact is, don't expect your teacher to step up and help you, when you have not helped them, and not given them something to basically justify the help that they're giving you. You know, we do have to report to our bosses too. And if they say, “Why did you let this kid miss five weeks of class and then make it all up? I mean that's kind of encouraging irresponsibility. Right?” And if we don't have a letter for you saying, “my mom went into the hospital and she lost her job and I have to take care of my family so I have to work more hours at my job, which means I have to miss class,” then, you know, if we don't have that, it makes us look bad. It makes us look like we're just enabling bad behavior.

And the other thing is the email. I tell my students, you know the Internet line “pics or it didn't happen?” Well, email or it didn't happen. If you didn't email me, you didn't tell me. Because I have a memory like a steel sieve - it holds everything for about two minutes and then it all falls out.

And the teacher is not going to remember who you are. I'm sorry to tell you this, kids - we're not like your kindergarten teacher, or your seventh grade teacher, or your 12th grade teacher, who has the same kids in class every single day and learns your names because they have the whole semester every day to learn your names. We have maybe 15 or 30 class meetings in a semester, over a period of about four and a half months. That's not enough for us to learn everybody's name. Please don't get offended that we don't know. Don't expect us to know who you are. Send us an email. We will have a record at that point. The record is better.

Dinur: And actually if you do want us to remember you make a point of talking to us, talk to us about things that you find interesting from the class, because that gives us a much better idea of who you are. Because now you're not just David, one of my 200 students. You're David - “Oh yeah. I remember talking to you about this part from criminology.”

Or if you know what we're into - and we try and drop little breadcrumbs to show you who we are outside of our research and outside of our teaching so it might be, “Oh yeah, I was talking to Dave. He's also a really big

hockey fan. He and I were talking about this.” If you make that professional and/or friendly contact, that helps us remember who you are.

Because, you know, Adam mentioned we only meet between 15 and 30 times during a given term, but also, we have so many students to keep track of that we will not remember. Or what sometimes happens for me is I’ll mix up a person’s name with a different student’s face. And so the two don’t match up.

And so, one, emailing really goes a long ways so that when I’m taking care of grades, things like that don’t interfere. But two, if you do want to be remembered, talking to us regularly really helps, because it lets us see you not only as students, but as individual people, and hopefully it helps you see us not only as your professors or as your teachers, but also as people.

Adam: So getting back to the academics, cause we did kind of drift off into non-academic stuff there and we have an entire episode coming up, episode 31, that will cover the nonacademic stuff.

Dinur: Yeah.

Adam: But getting back to academics, another thing you need to know is that different classes do homework and tests differently, and this is going to be very different from high school or grade school, where - a lot of classes in high school tend to be this class 400 points between now and the end of the semester of the trimester or whatever, and you have to earn x number of points to get the grade you want. Now there are professors who still run their classes that way, but there are also professors who grade on a weighted schedule where they say, “this test is worth 40% of your grade,” or “this paper is worth 20% of your grade.” It’s - so, you’ve got to get a sense of the schedule of the class, and the kinds of assignments that you’re going to have to do really early on.

In college, you can do, that because professors are required to provide a syllabus in the first or second day of class. So take a look at your syllabus, look at the assignments that you’re going to have to do according to the syllabus. You know this, it might say “this class will have three exams and one paper.” Well, now you know those are the assignments, right?

And look at them and figure out when they’re due, how much time you’re going to need to take for each of them, and how much you’re going to get for each of them. You know, how much do they count toward your grade? So look over the course schedules, look for different kinds of assignments, term papers, exams, homework. I’ve got to listen to a lecture online. I’ve got to listen to this podcast. I’ve got to do a survey. Whatever it is that you’ve got to do, look and see and know about it at the beginning of the semester, because if you know about it at the beginning of the semester, then you can plan for it.

And again, pay attention to how classes are graded, because some professors use a weighted score system, some professors still use points, and some professors will use a standards based grading system, where they say, “in order to show me that you understand what you did, there are seven different assignments where you must pass them with a 70% or better to show me you know what you’re talking about. And if you don’t pass them with that score, you don’t get credit for those things.”

So do not assume that every class is going to be on a point based system where you just rack up the points. In college, that’s often not the case.

Dinur: And the reason your professors are going to use different grading systems is we like to emphasize different things. So for example, I don't weigh my tests very heavily, because I figure, we've all had a bad test, and I don't want one bad test from a student to torpedo their entire grade.

But instead, I might weigh participation really heavily, or I might make a term paper or a group project be worth 30% of the grade, because I expect students to take more control, because they've got more time to work on this. And because that grade is so much more in their control, I'm going to try and weigh it more heavily because of that sense of control - when is it done, to what quality - a student can control that a lot better than what kind of questions they receive on a test.

Adam: Mm-hmm.

Now, another thing that you really want to be able to do when you come to a college campus is find out about the academic services and support services that are available on campus. There will probably be a tutoring center. There may be a writing center. There might even be a coaching program where you've got an academic coach to help you get through the work, use these services.

They're part of what your tuition pays for. It is not cheating to go to a tutor. It is not cheating to get help with your writing. That's part of what the college system is for. That's part of what the college experience is supposed to give you, is how to do this stuff.

A lot of professors are going to require a paper. Many of them are not going to go over how to write it. That's a skill that as a college student you will be expected to have. If you don't have it, go to the writing center and say, "I have no idea what he means when he says thesis statement," and they will help you.

Some professors do teach you how to write, but that's usually only in classes that are writing classes like English 101, or Journalism 101. If the class is a writing class, you'll learn how to write, but if it's a class that isn't on writing, say your history class, but you still have to write a paper, you still gotta be able to write.

Writing well is not limited to your English class in college. It's expected. It's not just subject-specific. It's a skill - you gotta have it no matter what class you're in. And yes, that includes your physics class and your math class, because if you've got to write out a proof, you got to know how to write.

Dinur: Come to class prepared. Adam and I cannot emphasize this enough.

Adam: Mm-hmm.

Dinur: Don't just show up and sit down in the class. Be prepared. This is one of your workspaces.

One, we've talked to you about attending classes regularly because hopefully you'll learn something that may have not been covered either in the video you watched, or in the lecture you listened to, or in the readings. But when we say "show up to class," we mean: be ready to take notes. If you have a laptop or a tablet, make sure that you've got your word processing program or whatever other program that is class-related open. If you prefer to still handwrite, make sure you've got a legal pad or a notebook and make sure you have a view pens in case one runs out of ink. The whole idea is you're there to do some work. Make sure you're ready to do that work.

Adam: One of the things that really shocked me, when I first came to college, was that there was not a stack of paper at the back of the room, and there wasn't a jar of pencils in the back of the room. Because I was coming from a school environment where every teacher had supplies in their room, they had a stapler, they had pens, they had paper, they had pencils and erasers, whatever it was you needed, it was provided. That's not how it works in college.

One of the things you might want to do is go to the bookstore and make sure that you bought yourself a few empty notebook, bought yourself a package of pen, bought yourself a package of pencils, and a small portable pencil sharpener and a small portable stapler. Because I cannot tell you how many times before I switched everything to electronic submission. I would have students come in and say, "do you have a stapler? Can I borrow a stapler?" Because they had printed out their paper and they were trying to turn it in

And I'm all, "I don't have a stapler. That's your job."

"But you're the teacher!"

"That's right, and you're the student and you're an adult. It's your job to have a stapler."

"What?!?"

So they would have to go and find somebody in the class with a stapler.

That showed me that they were not prepared. If you show up to class and you're always asking to borrow a pen, you're not prepared. Make sure you're prepared. One of the best ways to annoy your professors, and make them think less of you, is if you're the kid who constantly shows up six minutes late without a pen, without your notebook, and doesn't take notes. If you're just sitting in the class, you're not learning anything.

You've got to actively participate. You can't do that if you're not prepared. Now, you also need to keep up with your outside of class readings, assignments, if you have to watch a lecture on a video, if you have to listen to a podcast, you've got to keep up with your outside of class assignments. Some instructors are gonna use quizzes on the material that you were supposed to prepare before you came to class. Some of them will announce that they're going to be a quiz. Some of them will just say, "Surprise! There's going to be a quiz!"

And that's to make sure that you're up to speed with the material.

Ideally the readings, the videos, the podcasts, whatever your outside-of-class material is - they are either elaborating or going deeper on the ideas that you learned in class, or they're echoing them, or, in some cases, they are giving you the initial information and then the elaboration happens in class.

For my flipped classrooms, for example, the lecture's just, basically, "Here's a bunch of terms and their definitions and kind of how they go together in a very rudimentary way." We're going to dig deep when you come to class and so, if you don't keep up with that outside-of-class stuff, then you're not going to be able to keep up with the class.

Dinur: Now, one last thing from Adam and me is that we want you to be honest with us. We also want you to show respect for your classmates, and for us as your instructors and we reciprocate. You show us respect. We will show you respect. And one thing I tell my students at the beginning of every term, and really these are the two basic rules that I run my classes with, is that I expect honesty from my students. So if something comes

up, please let me know. At the same time, if you know you forgot an assignment, or, you know, you're turning it in late without an excuse, be honest. Just say, "you know what professor, I'm turning this in late. There was no excuse for it." And you know what? Yeah, there might be a lateness penalty, but I'm also going to remember that you're honest and I goes a really long way with me. I'm going to be able to respect you.

Whereas if you are someone that I think is constantly making an excuse, why would I believe you? You come up to me and you say, "professor, I'm borderline between these grades," but every time you've given me an assignment, it's late, and you always have a really convenient excuse? That's not gonna do much for me bumping you up. Whereas if a student turns in, maybe one assignment late, but they're honest about it, maybe in the end I'm able to overlook it because they've shown me otherwise that they've done really, really good work and it's been on time. So that honesty goes a really long way.

Adam: And I want to speak to the honesty thing - in reference to the young lady that I mentioned who didn't tell me that she had suddenly had to become her family's primary breadwinner. I asked her, "why didn't you tell me this?"

And she says, "because I'm too embarrassed."

And I said, "you're doing something honorable. You're stepping up for your family."

"Yeah, but professors never listen. Professors don't believe me anyway."

Well, that tells me that she probably made a lot of excuses, and professors got tired of hearing the excuses. And then when push came to shove and she needed the help, she was too ashamed of the fact that this was a real thing to be able to come to a professor and say, "you know, I need this help."

Even if it's embarrassing, if you don't tell us, we can't help you. If you're not honest with us about what you're facing, we don't know.

And we're going to assume, just like you assume that we're just a professor, a carbon copy, cookie cutter professor - we don't know about our students' individual lives, unless you tell us. And the only way that you can let us know is to be honest with us, and to be honest with us early and often. Tell us what you need. Tell us what the problems are. Let us help you. And don't be ashamed of it just because it's something that - life threw you a curve ball and you're trying to figure out how to catch it.

Dinur: Life throws all of us curve balls and we all try and deal with them. And if you're able to be up front and honest, even when it's a tough situation, we respect that.

Adam: Mm-hmm.

Dinur: And speaking of respect, respect your classmates, they may be in a different part of their learning curve than you are, but all of you are in that classroom and on that campus in order to learn. And that means that you all have that goal in common.

And look, you are probably going to hear your classmates, in at least one of your classes in four or more years, say something that makes you wonder how the hell they ever got admitted into college and why they're there.

But you don't know where your peers are in terms of their development. If you disagree with them, one, understand that that's a big part of learning is - it's looking at material and trying to make sense of it, and people will argue, but you want to learn how to focus on arguing against a general idea or a point, rather than attacking a person.

And we, as professors, pay attention to that. We hate it when students put one another down. We really don't tolerate that, and we don't tolerate it if students try and put us down, and by the same token: you show respect; we show respect. It's a reciprocation process, where whatever is demonstrated gets reflected and it goes back and forth.

Adam: And about that respect thing from your classmates. If someone calls you out, listen. If someone says to you, "Hey, you know what? What you said was really racist," or "What you said was really sexist, bro. Did you know that?" Do not fight. Listen to criticism. That's one of the things you've got to learn how to do in college.

And if I think, for example, that criticism is not warranted, I will step in and say, "You know what, that's going over the top. If you have a problem with that, we need to have a talk in office hours." But if someone, during a class discussion, points out that maybe you've got a blind spot, the response is not to yell at them or blow them off or tell them they're a horrible person or not listen. That's not the right response.

The right response is to respect them. They took a risk and said, "Man, that was a really sexist thing you said about that girl." They took the risk. It's your job now to take the risk back and say, "Okay, look at myself. Is that something I need to listen to?" Don't be defensive, don't fight back. Listen. There are tons of learning opportunities that happen in college that have nothing to do with the curriculum, and that's what we'll talk about in our next episode.

So that's what we have for you in Episode 29! If you're finding this podcast helpful, please share it with your friends. We are always hoping to get new subscribers, so we can help more people. You can find us on Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Android. We're hosted on blubrry.com. Also, we'd really appreciate it if you wrote a review of this podcast on Apple Podcasts for us.

Dinur: Be sure to join us next week for episode 30, when we're interviewing Michelle McAnany from thecollegespy.com to give you some tips and tricks for managing this big step in your educational process.

Adam: You've been listening to Learning Made Easier, a podcast about how we learn, how we teach, and how they overlap.

Dinur: We want to say thank you to all of our supporters on Patreon, who make this podcast possible.

Adam: If you want to support us, please go to www.patreon.com/learningmadeeasier.

Dinur: We look forward to seeing you next week!