

**GEAR UP Maine Podcast**  
**Students Ask Questions About College, Experts Answer**

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**Jessica Gagne:** Welcome to the GEAR UP Maine Podcast. In this episode, we'll address three questions from high school students about attending college. Questions include, how much do professors interact with their student? Should I live on campus or not? And how can I prepare for college life? A multitude of student affairs professionals give us their answers.

**Student:** How much does the professor interact with their students?

**Professional:** This really depends on the professor, and it really depends on the culture of the institution.

**Professional:** And every major is different.

**Professional:** The size of the class dictates how much a professor interacts with a student. And as you get more specialized in your course of study, when there are less students in a class, you're going to get a lot more interaction with a professor.

**Professional:** I think it's a real surprise for a lot of students when they come to college that professors are really interested in interacting in the classroom. Very rarely will you have classes where the teacher stands up front and talks, and doesn't want input from the class.

**Professional:** A lot of professors want to get involved with their students.

**Professional:** One of the biggest transitions from high school to college is that the students are used to the teachers being the one to initiate the relationships in high school, and I think when it's--and when they come to college that responsibility's more on the student to initiate those relationships with the professors.

**Jessica Gagne:** In addition to participating in class, there are many ways you can interact with your professors. Our student affairs professionals give us some examples.

**Professional:** To their study groups, to their review sessions, whatever it might be, in order to develop those relationships.

**Professional:** If you're interested in the research, especially on the sciences, you might be able to be a research assistant in their lab. There's a variety of ways to get to know faculty.

**Professional:** Both inside, and also outside the classroom, before classes, during the professor's office hours.

**Professional:** Office hours are when a professor has his or her office open, you know, say on Tuesdays and Thursdays from nine to ten, and you can go in and ask your professor any question. You can ask her how she got involved in psychology, or you can ask her how come you got a "D" on your test, or you can ask her, am I studying the right material for the upcoming midterm? You can go in and talk to them about anything.

**Professional:** This will make them remember who you are. And so, then later on, if you need a letter of recommendation for something, which happens more than you would think, you can go to them and say, "Hey, remember me? I was that really motivated student you had, and can I get a letter?"

**Professional:** So, that's part of my number one advice to a lot of students is to go see your professors during office hours.

**Student:** Is it expensive to stay on campus or better to stay home?

**Professional:** It's a very tough question, especially when it comes to finances versus the experience of living on campus.

**Professional:** Well, I think that you need to seek what options the campus provides.

**Professional:** Living on campus is, I think no matter how much you spend monetarily, it's always worth it. I think you lose more by not living on campus in a non-monetary sense.

**Professional:** Try and assess to see how difficult or easy it is to be involved as a commuter student or an off campus student, as sometimes referred to when you don't live on campus.

**Professional:** It's always less expensive if you look at just finances to live at home. Living on campus can be an expense. There are ways to overcome that

expense. A person can become a resident assistant in their second year and have free housing and dining. They also have to take on a leadership role in order to do that.

**Professional:** Living on campus enriches college life. You get to see it for more than what it is during the day. You get to see the nightlife of a college. You usually have an opportunity to participate in more programming. Student activities usually puts on programs at night. If you live at home, you're probably not going to want to come back to the campus and see that. It also gives you an opportunity to participate in those organizations, and be a part of their exec boards, or even just a part of the organization itself. So, it opens up lots of doors, and it lets you get involved, which I think is really important in school.

**Professional:** Be sure you know that student activities, whether it be student government, or clubs, or organization are not limited to students who live on campus. It's open to any student of the institution, but you might just have to try a little bit harder to become aware of some of those opportunities and to seek them out, than someone who does live on campus.

**Professional:** Sometimes it's safer and cheaper, because you know if something's wrong, you know who you can contact. But, if you're living in an apartment, you might not have those same services. You're more on your own.

**Professional:** Having the experience of living with students who are in a similar situation, learning how to study is a really good life experience for those who are looking for that life experience.

I always recommend to students, I've asked them, what are you looking for in your experience of college? And if it's just to get a degree and not--they're not worried about the--all the out of classroom stuff, then it's probably a better idea just to live at home. But, if you're looking for an experience that's going to be a full college experience, that probably will be life changing, I think that staying on campus gives you a full picture of how you can immerse yourself in college.

**Student:** What should I do to prepare for college life?

**Professional:** If you're a senior or a junior in high school, the best thing you can do to prepare for college life is to read. Read as much as you can, as many books as

you can. You know, maybe ask your English teacher what are some books that you think would be great for me to prepare myself for college. And also if you can, you know, take up any extra writing assignments.

**Professional:** I'd say also get in touch with your assigned roommate the summer before you start school and try to get to know them a little before you start living together. It's also practical because you can figure out who's bringing what, you know. I'm bringing this poster and you're bringing your lamp, and we don't both buy things.

**Professional:** I think the most important thing is for students to understand how much work it takes to be a college student. When you're in high school, you spend, you know, the majority of your time in class and a little bit of time maybe outside of class doing homework. If you have study halls, you might not ever bring any homework home. But, in college you will only spend about three hours per week in each of your classes. So, the most you're probably going to spend in class is 15 hours a week. But, you're probably going to spend, in order to be successful, another 30 to 40 hours a week studying. So, it's really important that you understand that just because you're not spending a lot of time in class, doesn't mean that you're not going to spend a lot of time doing homework and other things related to college.

**Professional:** You'll meet a wide variety of people. You know, just think about your own assumptions, too, about race and religion, and all types of things that you'll be confronted with when you get to college, and you'll be living with a real--a really wide variety of people and a lot of different backgrounds.

**Professional:** Learning about your campus is a good way to prepare. I would recommend using the website to see what resources the campus has available to you. Or if your school has an orientation program that you attend, really pay attention and soak that in.

Colleges and universities have a lot of resources to offer people, whether it's an academic skill center where they teach you about time management or, you know, it's a health center for when you're sick, or if, you know, you're having a really rough time adjusting to college and they have a counseling center, knowing where they are before you need them is really helpful.

**Professional:** I think that when it comes to academics, I think really kind of concentrating and developing those study habits early on in high school is really important, whether you're a 4.0 student or, you know, whether you're a 2.5 student, it really doesn't matter once you get to college. You need to understand that it's no matter what you're coming in with, and no matter what you're coming in to study, it's going to be harder and a much different kind of academic structure.

**Professional:** The things that you're going to learn are going to be outside of the classroom. They're going to be, you know, the disagreements that you get into with your roommates, or they're going to be, you know, having a hold on your registration because you didn't pay a bill on time. You hit these snags in life, and one of the--I feel like one of the great opportunities about being in college is learning from those problems or those snags that you hit. That's a great way to learn how you're going to deal with things later on in life, and when you get into a job and, you know, you're having a disagreement with a boss, you can think about how you were really diplomatic with your roommate that one time.

**Professional:** My one suggestion is to brush up on your time management. Only about 30 percent of all learning happens in the classroom, which means that 60 to 70 percent of that learning takes place outside of the classroom, whether it is via homework or if you get involved in different organizations, you'll learn not just academically, but you'll learn socially. And so, there's a lot of things you can cram into a schedule. So, you want to be able to manage every one of those things.

**Professional:** School starts on a Monday, if you can go down to the campus on Friday, if you don't live there, and on Friday, find out where all your classes are, so that on Monday, on the first day of classes, and you're looking for them and you can't find, you know, the Fisher Building of Education, you're not stressed out on the first day of classes.

**Professional:** Just get excited about all the things you want to learn. Flip through the course catalog and start circling classes that you think are exciting, even if you can't take them. That experience I think is really kind of unique, that you have all these possibilities.

**Jessica Gagne:** If you've enjoyed this Podcast episode, and would like to listen to more, or if you have a burning question about college and would like it considered for our next episode, please visit the GEAR UP Maine website at [www.gearupme.org](http://www.gearupme.org), select Podcasts.

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