

Our most recent article in the **Ask Your Professor** series comes from Lynda Carroll, an instructor in the Sociology/Anthropology. In addition to teaching here at SUNY Cortland, Lynda has taught for several years at a number of colleges, so she has a wide variety of experiences working with students in a number of courses and settings. She offers some great advice on how to get the most out of your meetings with your instructors.

The problem I see is how do we officially define student success? Not dropping out? Getting all As? Getting at least Cs in all classes? It's such a difficult thing to talk about, because what does student success mean? Student success means different things to different people. What is a success to one student (passing and graduating) may be considered unsuccessful to another (not getting all As).

Also, when students come to office hours, that may contribute to student success, but it may not always be about coming with a specific question. So for me, it really doesn't matter why they come. I have noticed many different reasons why they do come that are not directly related to a question about class.

But if I had to categorize why they come, this is my list:

- concerns about the class or a specific grade
- need a more one-on-one learning environment; lectures don't work for everyone
- they may find my personality one they are comfortable with and just need a friendly space to be in
- they may want to learn more about my profession
- they may want an authority figure that they can share with, but don't want to approach a counselor

Sometimes student success isn't just about getting the answers right, but learning how to become comfortable in their new environment. Some students have never been away from home and need someone to talk with. Student success may have nothing to do with getting great grades. So student success may depend on having a faculty member just be willing to take time to talk with them.

If they do come with grade or course-related questions, it is most helpful if they

- Specifically know what they are struggling with, after having gone through the material; when students say they don't even know where to start studying, and they are doing poorly because of that, that signals a problem larger than studying.
- Have specific questions about material they don't understand; if they are so lost that they cannot even think about WHAT they are struggling with, it is hard to narrow down a conversation.
- It is helpful if they have their notes; if they don't know how to take notes, I can sometimes tell, and we can go over that
- if they want to go over an exam, bring the exam.

Let me know if you have other questions. Good luck!