

21st century college etiquette:

Avoid crossing the line

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Knowing how to cover your tracks after a misplaced text message or saving face while hung over in class is far more important for college students than knowing which fork to use or how to fold your napkin properly. Here are a few tips to keep you in good standing with your professors and friends and maybe even make your college life a little easier.

Darn it! I went out last night and ... well, other than all of those disastrous pictures on Facebook, now I'm late to class due to ... dehydration. I can't focus and now my professor is calling on me!

Partying is a facet of college life. Whether you do or do not participate, it will most likely affect your life. But going out too often and missing class time is wasting you or your parents' money, and it's definitely wasting the professor's time. If you waste professors' time by coming in late and disrupting class, they may not "waste your time" by giving you study tips or reading over your term paper, which could prevent a better grade, or just passing the class.

Keep the partying minimal. There is absolutely no reason to go out every single night of the week. Your friends will still be there on the weekends, but your job opportunities if you flunk a few classes will dry up.

If you must go out, give yourself a time limit. The average college student needs between eight and nine and a half hours of sleep per night. If you have a 9:25 a.m. class, make sure you're snug in bed between 11:30 p.m. and 1 a.m. Give yourself enough time (about 30 minutes) to brush your teeth and hair and meander to class.

When called on and you have not followed the above tips, be honest. If you don't know, say that you don't know. You don't have to detail why exactly you look and feel like you got hit by a truck, but just admitting that you weren't paying attention looks better than floundering for an answer in your already addled brain.

At that party last night, I accidentally sent a text to Johnny that was supposed to go to Julie about Johnny. Or was it Janie? Anyway, I messed up. What do I do?

More ubiquitous than the e-mail gaffe, the text message twist is terrible for everyone involved.

Double-triple-quadruple check to whom you're sending the message. If you got the message from Julie, hit reply instead of crafting a new message. If you're sending a new message, carefully select the recipient and check again right before you hit send.

If you did mess up, fess up. Tell Johnny how you really feel. Getting things out in the open will help smooth over any drama faster.

Just don't say anything personal or private over text messages. You don't want to have any misunderstandings, and you definitely don't want to end up on "Texts from Last Night." If it's so important to say, go find Julie and let her know. That way you're sure that you're talking to the right person.

If you really have to disseminate personal information, come up with a kind of code language so that no one else knows what you're talking about.

Oh no! I think that e-mail I just sent to my professor came across as mean when that's not what I meant at all! What do I do?

This scenario has happened to almost everyone at least once. You e-mail your professor asking about the night's reading and once you hit "send" you realize you wrote more of a demand for information rather than a request for help. Of course you don't want your professor to think you're insensitive, so damage control is the best option.

Preventative measures are key. Before sending anything at all through e-mail — to your professor, to your mom, to your roommate — read it thoroughly. Check for spelling errors, grammatical errors, and, most importantly, the tone of your e-mail. Bear in mind that with the absence of facial expressions, it's laughably easy to misinterpret a message.

If you've already hit "send" immediately write another e-mail. It will appear first in their inbox, and chances are they'll read that one first. Don't send a message such as "Disregard other e-mail. Here is the real message." Be cordial and polite and plainly state that you misworded the other e-mail, and then rephrase correctly, lest you drop two angry-sounding e-mails at once.

Talk to the professor in person the next time you have class to make sure the real message came across clearly. Following up will also help clear up any remaining misunderstandings that may have arisen.

I was invited to a friend of a friend's apartment, but I don't want to go.

How do I decline the invitation?

It's a fact that you're going to have friends of friends with whom you don't get along. The worst you can do is insult your friend, but if you handle the situation properly, you don't have to.

Do not go into the specific reasons you don't want to go to the friend-of-a-friend's place. Your friend should be happy with a simple "I don't really want to," or if you feel like stretching the truth, "I'm tired." If you let them know that you think their best friend Johnny's a dud (while better than sending it through text message), your friend will likely get mad at you.

Make sure it's clear that it's not a personal attack on your friend. You might just not feel like it, or you and Johnny might have bad blood. Regardless, it's not about your relationship with your friend. It's about you not wanting a relationship with your friend's friend.

"Creating magic" through directing and teaching Performing arts professor honored with William S. Long award

Marlena Chertock
Design Intern

A high-pitched voice flows out under the door singing "Part of Your World" from Disney's movie "The Little Mermaid."

Suddenly, another voice asks the first to stop, listen to the piano pitch and try again. The singing begins once more.

Behind the door, Elon University's performing arts professor Catherine McNeela is hard at work helping a student during a one-on-one voice lesson. She has many of these meetings with students, listening to them perform and helping them to improve.

McNeela has recently been awarded the William S. Long Endowed Professorship, a prestigious honor, by the Elon's president, Leo Lambert.

McNeela came to Elon 20 years ago and began the performing arts program. McNeela said she and several other professors created a Bachelor of Fine Arts in music theater, a Bachelor of Fine Arts in acting and dance, a B.A. in theatre studies and a

B.A. in design tech.

"I was so honored to receive the William S. Long Endowed Professorship," she said. "I'm guessing that's why I got the award. Because the music theatre program, which is my baby."

Elon's music theatre program is now considered one of the top in the nation, according to McNeela. The rise of the program happened in a relatively short amount of time.

"What dramatically changed is the number of students interested in being in this program," McNeela said. "(It's) much more competitive."

There were three musical theatre graduates in 1995. In that year, six people auditioned for the program and three were chosen. This year, 400 high school seniors auditioned for the freshmen class. Only 16 to 20 students spots are available.

The strength of the performing arts program is its faculty, according to McNeela.

To become a program that stands out "you really need to be what we call the triple threat," she said. "Equally fabulous

acting teachers, dance teachers and voice teachers. And the faculty is filled with people who love to teach but also are professionals in the real world."

McNeela said the program tries to foster a healthy, competitive atmosphere. She said the faculty teaches students to sing, act and dance as well as how to be good team players and good human beings.

"I love that about us," she said. "I love that my students are grateful, and I remind them of that all the time."

Theatre is a program that needs to remain current, McNeela said.

"I will always be trying to improve what we do here until I go off to the home," she said. "Because the industry is constantly changing. A big need right now ... is to teach pop styling. There's so many musicals now that really require that kind of voice."

McNeela most recently directed the Grand Night of Singing 18 an annual performance where all the music theatre majors come together and perform. She said she tries to give the students

the responsibility to run the show.

McNeela will have more time to spend with students individually and to direct shows like Grand Night. The William S. Long award offers money and a course release.

She said the money will be wonderful because she will be able to attend shows, take classes and travel to Los Angeles to meet with casting directors. McNeela said these opportunities will make her a better teacher.

"Dr. Lambert told me I get a big medallion so I'm really looking forward to that because a girl can't have too much jewelry," she said.

McNeela seemed wary of the other aspect of the award, where she is only required to teach one course.

"Frankly, I won't take that because I can't give up anything that I do right now," she said. "I don't want to give up teaching voice, and I don't want to not direct, and I don't want to not teach my performance in music theatre class or my senior seminar. Maybe they can give me a pink pony instead. I'll take that."



PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY RELATIONS
Professor of Performing Arts Catherine McNeela was recently honored for her 20 years of dedicated work in Elon's musical theatre program. President Leo Lambert gave McNeela the William S. Long Endowment. The award offers McNeela course release and money to take improve her skills.