Succeed at UNT Campaign: Tips for Faculty in the Classroom

UNT’s top priority is student success. The Succeed at UNT campaign was launched in 2013-2014 (Succeed at UNT) to help students learn valuable skills that they can use to be academically successful during their tenure at the university. The following six tips are listed in this appendix with suggestions of how faculty can help support student success in the classroom and beyond.

“Succeed at UNT” Tips for Faculty

Student Tip #1: Show up.

Faculty Tip #1: Create an expectation that class attendance is important and matters to you as a faculty member. Make class time meaningful so that students want to show up.

Faculty words of wisdom: “Go to class. Attend class. At UNT, we expect you to attend class.”

Possible ways faculty could encourage this:

- Incentivize attendance. Perhaps require attendance, make a small percentage of the course grade based upon attendance or provide extra credit points on assignments for those who are showing up. For large size classes, use card scanners to check attendance.

- Include important intellectual, scientific, and/or artistic developments within the field, the history, controversy, and epistemological discussions.

- Encourage relevant input from students—bring up current events relevant to the discussion and/or invite students to do so as informal in-class discussion or low-stakes assignment.

- Create a learning environment that values and respects intellectual diversity and stimulates intellectual inquiry.

- Use hands on/engagement activities.

- Provide references/resources of examples.

- Have students work in groups to answer questions (such as, think, pair, share).
• Use Clickers or other classroom response systems (one free tool is, Polleverywhere).
• Use TAs and SIs to facilitate interactive assignments.
• Ask questions and expect responses (give credit via clickers or otherwise).
• Ask for student input and suggestions.
• Point to relationships between and among the disciplines and/or other courses students might be taking currently or in the future.
• Allow student questions to drive content when appropriate.
• Encourage responsibility for attendance. If the class, even a large class, could be split into small groups, even for brief moments of discussion/problem solving during classes, sometimes this group identity aids in boosting accountability (i.e., having some knowledge about the course material, showing up).
• Get to class a few minutes early. Spend these extra minutes interacting with the students, migrating from group to group. Some students are less likely to miss courses if they know that someone is aware of their presence.
• During class, share valuable information with the students, perhaps outside the direct purview of class, but related to career opportunities that they might otherwise miss if they are not in class (e.g., internship opportunities).

Student Tip #2: Find support. (Ask for help.)

Faculty Tip #2: Know where students can find help.

Let students know that you are a valuable resource for them throughout the semester and beyond (i.e., career advice, extracurricular organizations, and other course work).

Faculty words of wisdom: “I’m here to help you find the support you need. How may I help you? I’m available. Please stop by during my office hours, I would like to get to know you better.”

Possible ways faculty could encourage this:

• Learn about campus resources for students.
• Have information about resources on hand to share/explain.
• Post expectations (syllabus) and information about campus resources (list with contact numbers or links to relevant help centers) on your course website or Blackboard page.

• Treat all students with respect and model respect for cultural differences. Be consistent.

• Reference your office hours and office telephone and address often—even if students don’t show, they will feel certain that there was the option to have done so.

• Ask students to tell you their names as they approach you for questions—even if you don’t remember it, they feel cared for and worthwhile.

• Become familiar with the campus services available and know where to refer students for support needs. Identify where students can get tutoring appropriate for the specific level of course and include this information in your course syllabus, talking points, and lectures.

• Set fair guidelines in regards to your availability. With the increasingly online world, it is easy for students to expect around-the-clock availability. It is important to help students in understanding availability, particularly availability prior to an exam (e.g., “I am readily available during office hours, and via appointment, however; I will not be available to address last minute, middle of the night questions about your exam.”)

• Tailor specific help references for classes (i.e., Writing Center for English courses).

**Student Tip #3:** Get advised.

**Faculty Tip #3** Encourage students to meet with their academic advisor.

**Faculty words of wisdom:** “Keep track of course ordering, prerequisites, and do you best to do well in course the first time around. Be sure to meet with your advisors to get into your needed courses. Registration for the next semester begins today.”

**Possible ways faculty could encourage this:**

• Include registration dates on your course syllabus.

• Contact students prior to the semester start to remind them of the required and encouraged perquisites.

• Mention possibilities in the field in earlier courses, in particular, when students are exploring their options.

• When students are in advanced courses, mention advanced course options to them.
Arrive to class a few minutes early and encourage discussion about course and career pathways.

Possible ways departments could help encourage this:

- Provide clear guidelines about required and recommended prerequisites for courses.
- Provide typical timelines and suggested or needed order of class completion.
- Post reminders about advisor scheduling and registration periods so students get into needed classes in a timely manner.
- Create an electronic newsletter reminding students about course prerequisites, course timing, and dates for advisor scheduling and registration.
- Reserve spots in required courses for majors to ensure timely completion.
- Provide a session, career fair, or lecture about career options in the major.

Student Tip #4: Be prepared.

Faculty Tip #4: Give assignments that matter

Faculty words of wisdom: “I promise to be prepared to when I come to class and I expect you to do the same. We can accomplish more together, if you are prepared.”

Possible ways faculty could help encourage this:

- Provide students with the realities of preparation time.
- Hold students accountable.
- At the beginning of class, give students a low-stakes quiz or group assignment that is dependent upon them having prepared for class.
- Provide students with a variety of strategies that will aid them in the class (beyond “study, read, practice”).
- Use mastery quizzes (using Blackboard).
- Connect assignments to assessments.
- Be explicit about the value of assignments within and beyond the course (connect it to
professional requirements for similar content or products, etc.)—this demonstrates the being prepared here is helping them be prepared for the next assignment or for life.

- Organize course content appropriate to the level of instruction and the nature of the subject matter.
- Evaluate students based on clear learning standards and measurable outcomes.

**Student Tip #5:** Get involved.

**Faculty Tip #5:** Connect with students beyond the classroom.

**Faculty words of wisdom:** “Get involved with meaningful activities that will support your career goals. Get to know at least five classmates, exchange contact information, go to lunch together, attend a study session.”

**Possible ways faculty could help encourage this:**

- Let students know about professional/field-specific organizations at UNT, in the region, and nationally.
- Be available to students as appropriate.
- From time to time, some students need to be reminded of the importance of supplementing/supporting their academics with some form of outside activity.
- Attend and suggest events relevant to your discipline/courses to your students.
- Mention appropriate professional engagements/activities of your own or of your colleagues with an explicit suggestion that getting involved early is important.
- Keep a calendar of such events and offer extra credit for attendance when appropriate.
- Engage students by relating concepts to student’s personal experiences and community, and/or global challenges.
- Remind students that while involvement in meaningful activities is encouraged, course work comes first.

**Possible ways departments could help encourage this:**

- Use social media to keep students alerted to opportunities.
- Create an electronic newsletter detailing career tips, internship/scholarship opportunities, activities, course announcements, etc. Highlight students, alumni, staff,
and/or faculty.

- Hold a talk and/or Q&A session for any interested students about careers, internship opportunities, career advice, what employers/internship providers may look for in a letter of reference, etc.

- Make students aware of different "levels" of letters of recommendation. If they are provided with several examples of letters of recommendation early on at UNT (perhaps even at an orientation session?), this might provide a lasting impression about the importance of early success. The letters could represent a high GPA student, a high GPA student with activities, a mid-range student, a student who did poorly and did not know an instructor outside of class, and a student who rarely showed up for class. The letters could be accompanied by a question: “Which student would you hire?”

**Student Tip #6:** Stay focused. (Keep your eye on the prize.)

**Faculty Tip #6:** Give constructive advice.
Give positive feedback.

**Faculty words of wisdom:** “Thanks for doing your best on these assignments. You are a great role model for others in the class. Every assignment you complete and every class session you attend is a step closer to doing well in this class and reaching your goals. Keep your eyes on the prize.”

**Possible ways faculty could help encourage this:**

- Ask students to write down/share educational and career goals.

- Explain how to use the syllabus to stay focused and on track.

- Encourage students with examples of how prior students/classes did well in the course.

- Give regular feedback, so students can know whether or not they are on the right track in meeting course goals.

- Help students draw connections between course goals and their overall goals.

- Put sticky notes on exams that simply say, “Keep up the good work, I’m proud of your progress.”