Over half a century ago, Phillip Jacob asserted that **colleges that had a “peculiar potency”** were those where **faculty-student interactions were “normal and frequent, and students find teachers receptive to unhurried and relaxed conversations out of class.”**\(^1\) Since then, the literature has documented a wide variety of **benefits associated with faculty-student interaction, including better grades, deeper learning, greater persistence to degree, greater social integration and a more developed sense of purpose**\(^2\). Unfortunately, **many students do not know how – or why – to interact with faculty outside of class**\(^3\)

The goal of this Tip is to focus on **how faculty can make the best use of office hours, to encourage students to take advantage of the opportunity for your relatively undivided attention as well as your valuable perspective and advice.**

1. **Make sure your students know when (and where) you hold office hours.** And if you hold **virtual office hours, make sure they know how to connect with you there.** You have undoubtedly noted this information on your syllabus, and you have probably said it out loud to your students on several occasions, but still...

2. **Provide a solution for students who are unable to attend your office hours.** This might be as simple as arriving a few minutes early to class or staying a few minutes afterwards, or arranging to meet with them virtually during your face-to-face office hours. Make sure your students are aware that you are willing and able to make yourself available to them in this way, as they most likely will not ask you.

3. **Offer students the opportunity to come in small groups or in pairs.** A surprising number of students are shy or uncomfortable at the thought of coming to your office alone. This is particularly true of many first-generation students.

4. **When students do come to your office hour, spend an extra minute or two in conversation.** Take a moment, as time permits, to get to know their names, their interests, what’s going well for them, etc.

5. **Try to make your office space well-suited to the purpose.** Have a clutter-free place for students to sit, and for you to look over materials together. If your space is shared, anticipate how you will ensure appropriate discretion, should the student (or you) want to talk about a poor grade, or other challenge they are having.


\(^2\) According to the 2015 Gallup-Purdue index report, two of the most powerful predictors of post-college success are students’ perception that a professor had excited them about learning, and had cared about them as a person.

\(^3\) See, for example, research by Vianden (2006) and by Cotton & Wilson (2006). Additionally, data from two studies that colleagues and I conducted our own campus reveal that the single most common answer to why students don’t go talk with their professors outside of class is that they “had never thought of it.”
6. **Be ready and welcoming when students do come to see you.** If you typically do not have students attend your office hours, you may come to think of this as time you can use to tend to other tasks (email, grading, etc..), and students may hesitate to interrupt you when they do come, if you don’t notice them approaching, or if you appear to be busy. Consider having a bowl of granola bars, fresh fruit, or candy on hand - even if they don’t want to consume the food in your presence, they will likely appreciate it.

7. **Be there, as scheduled.** If something unavoidable comes up, post a notice and as a courtesy, send an alert to your students.

And if you have the time and feel so inclined…..

We also encourage you to participate in our [Coffee with a Professor program](#). (Let your students know you be interested in meeting with them outside of class. Once they schedule a time with you, they can pickup a Gold Points card worth $12.00 from the Center for Faculty Development – in IRC 213 – and treat you to a beverage or snack of your choice at any campus eatery.)

Our students report that they derive many meaningful benefits from meeting with their instructors this way: In response to an anonymous survey, they agreed or strongly agreed that **these relatively brief interactions permitted them:**

- to get to know one of their professors better (93%);
- to discuss a topic of interest in greater detail (91%),
- to become aware of resources they could draw upon (81%),
- to become aware of strategies that may help them be successful (75%);
- to feel more connected to SJSU (77%);
- to feel more confident about their major (72%);
- and to learn about career options (62%)

(Our faculty report numerous benefits for *them*, as well…)

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You can read all previous tips on the [Faculty Matter Tips](#) page of the CFD website, and share your own thoughts and ideas on the [Provost’s Academic Spotlight blog](#) under the category “Faculty Matter”.. Please add your own strategies using the comment link on the Provost’s Academic Spotlight blog under the category “Faculty Matter”.

**ALSO**…We have started **weekly Student Success Tips for students.** They are archived at: [http://www.sjsu.edu/sfs/tips/](http://www.sjsu.edu/sfs/tips/) and shared on the Office of Student and Faculty Success FaceBook site, Twitter, and Instagram (@SJSUSuccess). Please follow/share/like them and spread the word to your students.