Suggestions for Talking to a Professor

The purpose of this suggestion sheet is to encourage each of you to talk to your professors when you have difficulty understanding the material presented in class or when you have constructive feedback you would like to share with the professor. Please use this sheet as a guideline in deciding when and how to approach your professors.

**The Dos**

- Have an open, friendly attitude when you visit your instructor. Use a confident and constructive tone, but be sure not to sound aggressive.
- Take advantage of office hours or schedule an appointment if you cannot make the regularly scheduled office hour times.
- Prepare your questions, thoughts, and discussion points before going to see your instructor.
- Be specific with your questions/concerns (e.g., say that you are having trouble with elasticity, not that you don’t understand economics in general).
- Use examples to demonstrate your point.
- If your issue is personal, go by yourself. If the issue is common among several people, then e-mail the professor with the group’s concern and request a time to meet either individually or as a group.
- When a professor makes changes because of something you suggested, provide positive feedback back to the professor so he/she knows that the change was received positively.
- Listen to what the professor has to say to you.
- Follow up with what the professor suggests, even if you are not sure it will work or is right for you.

**The Don’ts**

- Do not show up at the professor’s office expecting that their schedule will match yours (this is why you schedule an appointment if you can’t attend office hours). You can stop by and see if the professor has time to meet with you.
- If your issue is in-depth and complex, do not talk with the professor immediately before or after class. Only simple questions are appropriate before or after class time.
- Do not talk to the professor when you are emotional. Likewise, don’t talk to the professor if he/she is emotional. Wait until you are able to think rationally and clearly before meeting.
- Do not go talk to a professor about an exam immediately after getting it back. Take time to go through the exam, see where your mistakes are, and then go see the professor to discuss your responses.
- Do not expect the professor will implement everything that you suggest. Each professor must balance the interests of all students.
- Do not expect immediate changes. If the professor likes your ideas/suggestions, then he/she choose to may implement the changes slowly.