

Suggestions for How Geneseo Faculty Can Improve Students' Experiences in Office Hours

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Introduction/Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compile a list of the actions and behaviors of Geneseo faculty in office hours that were and were not received by students.

In semi-structured interviews with eight undergraduate students (conducted in the Fall 2021 semester), students were asked to reflect on practices by faculty that made them feel welcome or unwelcome while visiting office hours. Practices by that students receive well include: conversing with students before discussing content, treating student with respect, and leaving the office door open. Meanwhile, some things that students do not receive well include: the implementation of time slots, disorganized offices and forgetting or not asking for students' names.

Faculty members should consult these findings and incorporate them into their office hours in order to improve students' academic experiences at Geneseo.

Methods

Interviewees were recruited through departmental email list-serves and word of mouth. In total, eight students participated in the study.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted both on campus and via Zoom. Participants were asked questions such as:

- To you, what is the purpose of faculty office hours?
- What are some things that you feel before you enter office hours?
- Can you tell me about an experience that you had in office hours that was positive/negative?
 - What about the interaction made the experience positive/negative?

Suggestions for Faculty

Faculty should be self-critical of their actions and behaviors in office hours. In interviews, several students noted that negative interactions in office hours might lead students to not attend office hours again, and they agreed that the perceived welcomeness/unwelcomeness in office hours would influence whether students would recommend a faculty member to a fellow student. Interviewees recognized that some of these, such as not remembering students' names, were difficult asks for faculty members. Nonetheless, students would appreciate it if faculty members would try to, as one interviewee said, "meet students halfway."

Findings

What Students Receive Well

Conversing with students before discussing content

"Usually they open up with a 'How are you doing?' and you'll be like, 'Good,' and then they'll be like 'No, how are you *actually* doing?,' y'know, and you get to talk about your life for a bit before you get into what you actually went there for"

Faculty should "want to get to you know you more than 'Here's how you did poorly on this homework.'" –Liz

Treating students with respect

"[Office hours are] satisfactory if the professor takes their time, and like, they're understanding, they listen, they help out. Um, they actually treat you with respect as a fellow human being, which some professors tend not to do." –Cecilia

Leaving the office door open

"I feel like one good thing is to not have their door completely closed, because that at least shows students that, 'Hey, I am here and I'm available.' To me, at least, it kind of feels like that. Like, if their door is closed it just feels a little like they expect to be disturbed or something." –Cecilia

"Leaving their door open is always a good start . . . when you're walking by, that way you don't feel like you're intruding." –Natalie

What Students Do Not Received Well

Implementing time slots

"One thing that I would say is negative was when . . . we had time slots, and it was like, five minutes, because everyone in that class was struggling . . . If I didn't understand it [in the time slot], it was either a chain series of emails afterwards, which can get confusing and messy and unorganized, or it was that I had to wait until [the professor's] next opening time slot to talk about it, which usually, that was either like two days later or the following week, if I was lucky." –Cee

"Cluttered" or disorganized offices

"There was one professor I had who was just really unorganized, and her desk was just cluttered with, like, books, paper, trash, food, and I was, like, a little stressed out for her. She seems very disorganized." –Ashley

Forgetting or not asking for students' names

"I have a professor that . . . did not ask for my name at the beginning, and I know that he doesn't know my name . . . so, like, that's one thing. Just being, like, cold and not trying to make a connection and then also rushing through the content." –Paige