

## Laying the Foundation on the First Day of Class

Reserve the first day of class to make a personal connection with your students. Get to know them and allow them to get to know you by using a formalized tool like an introduction letter. Other possible tools include questionnaires, index cards, surveys through Blackboard, etc. Make sure you document their information so that you can refer to it during future interactions. The following list is designed to act as a list of possible questions for your students rather than a mandate, so feel free to adapt, condense, or expand any part of it. Please remember that when you introduce yourself, you should always communicate why you love your discipline. Your passion for the subject matter is a key to stimulating their interest.

### **Hobbies/Interests/Extracurricular Activities**

- Describe your hobbies and/or extracurricular activities.
- Do you like to exercise or play sports? What types of exercise/sports?
- Describe your best friend. What types of qualities do you look for in friends?
- Where were you born? Where have you lived and/or traveled?
- What is the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to you?
- Describe your eating habits (especially if they are unique)? Do you have any food allergies?
- Describe your personality.
- How do you feel about politics? What shaped those beliefs?
- Describe your role models or heroes.
- What makes you laugh? What makes you cry?
- Name your biggest pet peeve.
- Describe something quirky about yourself.
- Describe your short-term and long-term goals.
- Where do you want to live or travel in the future?
- What are your bucket list items?

### **Other Responsibilities/Potential Distractions**

- Tell me about your family. What types of responsibilities do you have regarding family?
- If you have a job, where do you work? How many hours? Describe your feelings about it.
- What types of shows do you watch? Do you watch television or movie streaming services like Netflix? How often e.g. do you binge-watch?
- What types of social media do you participate in? How often do you participate?
- How much time you spend on the internet or texting friends per day?
- What's your biggest distraction in life right now? What ways can you limit these distractions?

### **School/Education**

- Who was your favorite teacher? Who was your least favorite teacher?
- How do you learn best? What types of material do you struggle with?
- What was the best experience you ever had in a school setting? What was the worse?
- Why did you decided to attend college?
- How do you feel about school--What do you like? What do you dislike?
- Why is it important to you to be successful in this class?
- Are you a procrastinator? Why? What strategies do you use to work around it?
- What are your educational strengths or challenges?

### Example Intro Letter from Instructor to Students

My name is Ms. Davis and I am looking forward to working with you this semester. I love reading and writing and I especially love teaching English. I have a B.A. in Liberal Studies from Northern Arizona University and a M.A. in English from Winthrop University. I served in the Army, worked in social work, and facilitated training workshops for therapists, teachers, and other professionals. However, my first love is working with the English language and helping people develop their reading and writing skills.

I am married and have five children (yes, *five!*) Kristyn is 29, Courtney is 26, Ripken is 17, and Nick and Zack are 16. Although my daughters haven't lived at home for years, I still think of them as my little girls. My sons are typical teenagers – when they are not hanging out with their friends, they are either sleeping or eating.

I do not really have a hometown or a place where I am “from” as my father was a Marine and we moved around quite a bit while I was growing up. Usually when I tell people this, they ask, “Well, where were you born?” as if my answer will somehow prove that I am from *somewhere*. However, since I was born in New Jersey but left there when I was about six weeks old and have never been back, I do not consider it my hometown. I have also lived in California, North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio, Virginia, Arizona, Hawaii, Indiana, Cuba, and, now, Texas. We have been here for almost 13 years and even though I like it, I still cannot get accustomed to the humidity. Out of all these places, if I could choose one to be “home”, I would pick Arizona. I absolutely love every part of the state – the northern mountains, the lakes, the desert, and the beautiful valleys. And it is not just the scenery, but the weather. Arizona is a sunny place, but when it is hot, it is not sticky or suffocating. So, someday, I hope to be back there...

My hobbies have changed a little over the years. When I was young, I hated P.E. (along with all sports) and spent all of my free time with books. Growing up, I loved fiction: Judy Blume, S.E. Hinton, and (although I hate to admit it now) Danielle Steele. Every weekend, I would take my \$6 allowance and go to Livingston's New Books which was right next door to Livingston's Used Books (very creative names, I know) and go back and forth between the two until I figured out how to get the most books for my money. I would then spend every moment that my friends could not play, reading my new--and used--books. Although I am still a voracious reader, I no longer despise physical activity. In fact, I love to work-out and enjoy all kinds of sports. My reading has changed as well--I now like non-fiction, too especially biographies, memoirs, and political analyses.

I think the most important part of this is that I love a good story. I believe that stories (both real and fictional) help human beings put things together i.e. make order out of a sometimes chaotic world. My love for the power of a good story probably also fuels my love for taking photos and watching films. You will notice this in the next few weeks – sometimes when I want to really make a point, I tell a story to make sure it sticks with you.

For now, I look forward to hearing *your* stories and getting to know you,

*Professor Miller- Davis*