Office of Multicultural Services Notes to Students

University of Alabama in Huntsville

Follow this and additional works at: https://louis.uah.edu/odei-news

Recommended Citation
University of Alabama in Huntsville, "Office of Multicultural Services Notes to Students" (1991).
Newsletters. 2.
https://louis.uah.edu/odei-news/2

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) at LOUIS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Newsletters by an authorized administrator of LOUIS.
We’ve all been on a blind date, or at least that dreaded first date. We know how scary it is not to know exactly what’s ahead of us, or for that matter, if we even want to do it. But then again, we must, we must — it’s one of society’s many dictates — get out there, meet someone, get married, have children. And of course, the other demand that we all have to live up to these days is to choose a career and then be successful at it.

In trying to write about the career planning process in a way that’s not too overwhelming (or boring), I attempted to find something to which we could all relate. What better than a blind date — and Lord knows there are many similarities between the two.

For instance, let’s look at simply getting up the nerve to get started. There you are, staring at the phone: “Should I call her?” “Should I call him?” Indecision, fear and even panic may set in. Not unlike the feeling many of us get when trying to decide what we’re going to do with the rest of our lives. But just pick up the phone. Call your career services office and set up that first appointment. You’ll find that it’s not as painful as you might think — and not nearly as scary as a blind date! The expectations are much less demanding.

What’s the first thing we do when once we pick up that date? Try to impress him or her, right? In other words, we assess our strengths and then try to make the other person aware of them. We need to do the same thing when trying to determine our career path.

There are many ways to discover what our greatest strengths and abilities are. An assessment can be based on past successes, such as always making high grades in a particular academic area. Or we can evaluate past experiences. Perhaps you’ve always enjoyed volunteer work — this may signal that you’re good with people and perhaps would enjoy a career with an emphasis on helping others.

The UAH Office of Career Services offers specialized career abilities testing to help you identify your true strengths and then identify career possibilities that match up with them. In addition, there are many self-assessment exercises in career planning books.

We’ve all met that person whom we thought was probably perfect for us, but we just weren’t sure. But if you never get around to asking them out, then you’ll never know if they’re right for you or not. On the other hand, you’re probably not going to ask that person to marry you on the first date, either. You need to explore your options, find out more about the person and take your time getting to know him or her.

Just like getting to know a new person in our lives, we need to give ourselves a chance to become familiar with our career choice — our other “mate.” Don’t wait to get started — jump right in and begin learning about possible careers. Do some career testing; talk to people in your area of interest. You can even do much of your research through books and articles.

Take your time with this process. Explore as many career possibilities as you can think of, whether or not you believe they are realistic for you. Take the time to find out what the important details, such as the educational requirements, the job outlook, and the starting salary.

We set goals in everything we do. Planning that date for Friday night, who’s party we’ll go to, who picks up whom — that’s all part of the planning process. Take the same type of steps in planning your career. Set the short-term and long-term goals, then follow through with them. Don’t be afraid to change your mind (we do that with the people we date all the time). It’s even been found that students who entered college with a clear career goal and pursued one course of study were less likely to graduate. Those who changed their minds were more likely to stick it out to the bachelor’s degree.

It’s kind of like what they say with broken engagements — “It’s better to find out now than later.”

Any career-related questions that you may have can be addressed in the Office of Career Services in the University Center, Room 212, 895-6612.
To make individuals value difference, choice, or alternatives is the purpose of a university.

Just recently, at the conclusion of a freshman writing conference, the student turned to me before leaving and, almost convulsive with excitement, said, “After spring term, I will never have to take another English course in my life! Have a nice day!”

I did not reply, but even since I have been thinking about how I should have responded. It would, after all, be good to have a ready answer to such remarks because I hear them regularly from freshmen as they near completion of their English requirements. And these declarations upset me. They imply that the promised land is just beyond the bitter bondage of EH 102, but I can’t buy that bologna. English studies fuel my life, after all, and I don’t like being told my endeavors are trivial.

My first feeling was that I had been abused in someway — unintentionally, of course, but nonetheless abused. After thinking this matter over, however, I now realize that my initial reaction smacks of self-pity. In fact, I should have told my student two things: (1) such an attitude is really a form of self-abuse, and (2) an English course actually makes an outstanding elective.

I mean to use the word “abuse” in a special old sense here. Its current meaning involves inflicting damage, whether physical or emotional. At an earlier time, however, “abuse” had a particular association with another kind of damage — mental. More exactly, “abuse” meant “deception.” And I think freshmen who look upon personally unappealing but required courses, whether in English or some other discipline, simply as obstacles to be overcome are really deceiving themselves.

One might say that they are abusing themselves because they do not know what they are doing at a university. Somewhere along the line, they have allowed themselves to be misled into believing that a “university” education means learning one thing well. Students are pressured on all sides to declare a major and get on with it. Indeed, some misunderstanding may arise from the word’s Latin roots: “uni” does suggest “one” and “versity” suggests “direction.” The truth is, however, that “university” is related to the “universe,” meaning all directions at once or all knowledge together. Taking all roads at once is impossible, of course, and no one is going to know everything. But the university remains an ideal which is approachable from any given direction, and the point is that freshmen deceive themselves if they think the goal is reached at the end of the senior year with a degree in a particular major.

As UAH’s Mission Statement affirms, “This institution recognizes its responsibility to prepare its students to engage in the challenge and pleasure of a lifetime of learning.” In other words, a UAH degree is not finite; instead, it attests to basic preparation for developing a way of life.

Freshmen might ask how this can be since they are busy planning courses of study that will lead to a particular end. But if they look closely at what they are doing and at what lies ahead, even within the specialization of the major, they should see that they are not so much traveling in one direction as going in a direction designed to challenge them with the new and the different at almost every step of the way. To make individuals value difference, choice, or alternatives is the purpose of a university. Within the university experience itself, choosing electives is a kind of built-in test of how well a student understands what a university is; I would suggest that English courses beyond the usual requirements are rich in potential rewards.

There are five reasons I hear most often when student say they will not take an English elective: “I never do well in English,” “English doesn’t interest me,” “I can’t understand literature,” “English isn’t relevant to my major,” and “I don’t like to write papers.” The first four reasons reduce to the belief that English is “not practical,” but that belief is just not true. Granted, as everyone knows, English majors do not make big bucks, but I am not talking about majoring in English. That option is not for everyone, of course. I am talking about English electives demonstrating the commitment to difference, and that commitment is extremely practical.

For one thing, electing a challenging course that is significantly different from the major curriculum shows that a person wants to get the most out of the enormous investment in time, energy, and money required of the university years. Carrying both a major and minor, students do not often have very many electives, and so those courses should be chosen carefully to provide maximum diversity.

English literature always offers difference, not only because the material may be new but also because English studies are by their very nature intensely interdisciplinary. A play, poem, or novel presents the reader with a vast array of considerations — historical, cultural, ethical, political, social, religious, biographical, psychological, and technological, as well as literary. How, for instance, can one talk about early English novels without considering that their emergence depended on a revolution in...
Even students familiar with public and school libraries in the area will find some new features and services in the UAH Library. Many of these are the result of automating services which the library has always offered. Others have evolved as new technology has made it possible to offer new services.

The PALS System

The first, and probably most obvious, change is the absence of the familiar card catalog. In its place in the reference area is a cluster of computer terminals. These terminals are connected to a large computer at UAH's Computer Center, and the contents of the old card catalog has been loaded into a database stored there. This system, as well as the automated circulation system integrated with it, is known as PALS (Public Access Library System).

PALS can be searched using simple, easy to remember commands. Materials may be found by author, title, subject, by a combination of author and title, by call number, or by key words. Indexes also may be browsed to determine such necessary details as a correct subject heading or the spelling of an author’s name. Search terms and phrases may be limited using the pound sign (‘#’) in order to broaden retrieval.

Examples: AU SHAKESPEARE WILLIAM for works by Shakespeare
TI SUN ALSO RISES for a specific title
SU OPTIC # # for works with subjects beginning with the words ‘optics’ or ‘optical,’ etc.

Library users who have located a needed book through the catalog can check its circulation status with the DS command. If the book is checked out, the due date displays, as well as any holds on the item. The patron can then add his name to the holds and be notified when the book is available for use. This command requires the use of the patron’s library card bar code and last name.

Instruction in the use of PALS is offered in the library orientation lectures and tours, and there is a booklet of instructions available at the reference desk. Instructions for dialing into the PALS system with your home computer are also available.

Some important hints for the use of PALS:
• When the screen is blank, press any key to bring up the display.
• If you don’t know where to start, type HE and press XMIT for help.
• Use the XMIT key after a command.
• A command may be entered anywhere on the screen if you first press the SOE key to enter the prompt symbol (‘).
• If in doubt, ask a reference librarian for help!

Macintosh Lab

Another facility housed in the UAH Library is a Macintosh computer laboratory. Five computers and a dot matrix printer are connected on a network in room 139. A sixth computer and a laser printer are located at the circulation desk.

These facilities are for the use of UAH students, faculty, and staff, with preference given to students. Users must present a current, valid ID at the circulation desk to check out software, including the operating system, for an hour at a time. Renewals may be made if others are not waiting.

CD-ROM Data Bases

Some data bases on CD-ROM (compact disc/read only memory) are available for library patrons to locate periodical articles and other information. They include ABI Inform, a business data base; Books in Print; and Microsoft Bookshelf. These are housed in the Technical Services area, located next to the Indexes and Abstracts section on the first floor, old wing of the library.

The search software provided with these data bases is very easy to use — library staff can help you get started. For example, the most popular of these, ABI Inform, is started simply by inserting the disc in the drive and typing SEARCH.

Database Search Service

There is a more sophisticated service offered to library patrons for a fee. UAH librarians can search online almost 300 data bases in all subject areas and retrieve bibliographies of information on specific topics or, in some cases, tabular data or full text articles. This service is especially useful if time is limited and current information is essential for a research project.

These data bases, accessed through the Dialog Information Service, are not free, but the cost is minimal compared to the savings in time, and the patron is charged only what it costs the library to access this information. Some data bases are more expensive than others, especially in the sciences and business. There are varying print charges in difference data bases too, and the farther back in time the search goes, the more citations are likely to be retrieved, thus adding to the cost. However, a straightforward search over the last few years of most data bases seldom exceeds $15, and most are under $10.

To schedule a data base search, or for more information about any of the services discussed here, please call me at 895-6313 or drop by my office, room 302 of the Library.
Black History Month began on Jan. 29 at UAH with an appearance by Autherine Lucy Foster, who spoke on her experiences as the first black student at the University of Alabama. Ms. Foster, seated right, is seen here with, from left to right, Shirley Bradley of Admissions and Records, Dr. Carol Roach, assistant professor of communication arts, and Dr. Leatha Bennett, director of the OMS.

**Black History Month**

African-American Civil Liberties and the Bill of Rights

A panel discussion will be held on February 13
8:00 p.m.
Room 419 of Roberts Hall
Panelists for this program will be Dr. James Johnson, Professor of Political Science, Alabama A&M University; Attorney Lynn Sherrod; Mr. S.C. O’Neal, President Emeritus, Drake State Technical College; and Mr. Edwin Hill, Director of the Huntsville-Madison County Community Action Agency

Dr. Alton E. Hornsby, Jr., Fuller E. Callaway Professor of History and Chairman of the Department of History at Morehouse College in Atlanta will provide an historical overview of the topic
February 19
8:00 p.m.
University Center, Exhibit Hall A

The public is cordially invited to all programs
No admission will be charged

Supported by a grant from the Alabama Humanities Foundation and co-sponsored by Phi Alpha Theta International History Honor Society, the UAH Student Government Association and the UAH Daedalus Project

For further information please contact Dr. L.E. Williams, II, programs coordinator, at 895-6310.

**Notes to Students**

is published twice a quarter by the Office of Multicultural Services for freshmen students at UAH and is produced by UAH University Relations Design Services:
Design Sadaoka Altgilbers
Editor Laurie Arneston

An Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Institution