

Late, Late and Late Again

Contributed by Akilah McMullan - Black College Wire
Tuesday, 18 September 2007

N.C. Central professors say tardiness is annoying, out of control

The students picked a bad day to trickle in 5, 10, 15, even 20 minutes late to Robert Nowell's 11 a.m. law and ethics class.

Nowell had invited a guest speaker, Rob Waters, news editor of the News & Observer.

Waters had come to speak about news coverage of the Duke lacrosse rape case. When students entered late he would look to the door, pause, and then recollect his thoughts.

Waters was learning a lesson the N.C. Central University faculty knows all too well: Student tardiness is a growing problem.

According to the University's catalog, students are allowed four absences from classes that meet twice a week and six absences from classes that meet three times a week before being dropped from a course.

But there are no official rules governing tardiness.

Michele Ware, associate professor of English, says tardiness has plagued most of her classes and she's tired of it. "I have chronic problems with tardiness in my classes, even in my graduate classes."

"I think it's inconsiderate and it's rude. I wish it would stop," Ware said. She is not alone.

Bruce Lapenson, assistant professor of political science, is also fed up with student tardiness.

"It's annoying to the professor in particular because anybody coming in distracts the students, and me."

Lapenson said students are not being held accountable for their lateness and it's becoming accepted by professors.

"I just think maybe it's the culture here," Lapenson said. "It's the students' culture here that's used to doing that, and professors don't really hold them accountable."

Lapenson added that if he did enforce a strict policy that made tardiness an absence, "there would be quite a few students kicked out of the class."

Senior history major Gregory Maull, a member of the ROTC, said that lateness is never accepted in the military. "Being

in the school environment ... it's more lax so it's kinda tolerated," Maull said.

Adity Sharma, assistant professor in the School of Business, believes it's up to the students.

"There are some valid excuses, but most of the time I think they're not being responsible," Sharma said. "You cannot make somebody responsible if they don't care," he said.

Students have a number of explanations for their lateness.

"I'm an athlete, and a lot of times that conflicts with my class schedule," said business administration freshman Teryl White Jr. He said he's often late because of conflicting schedules and poor time management.

"My time management ain't as good as it can be yet," he said.

History education junior Davita Turrentine gives these reasons: I'm late because I oversleep or I don't have my homework."

But some students say being on-time is a must.

Micole Hanulak, elementary education junior, says she's never late to class. "I'm a junior and I'm just used to showing up on time," she said.

Rob Waters, the news editor invited to speak in the Law and Ethics course, said he can relate to the students. "I was a college student once, too. And not the most responsible person, either."

When asked if tardiness is accepted at the News & Observer Waters said, "No, you're expected to behave professionally."

"If you're expected to be at a place at a certain time, you should do it."

Faculty members agree. They say students' experience in college must prepare them for their careers.

"Your education is your job," Ware said.

"I look at college as being part of one's professional development," Lapenson said.

"It's not something you want to do in your job, you know, come in late. You'll lose your job if you consistently keep coming in late."

Akilah McMullan, a student at North Carolina Central University, writes for the Campus Echo. To comment, please e-mail Black College Wire.

Posted Oct. 18, 2007

