



THE CONSERVATIVE STUDENT'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

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As a professor at a major American university, I'm well aware of higher education's liberal bias. I also know the unique challenges that college students with conservative views face. If you are one of those students, here are seven ways you can turn those challenges into opportunities for learning and growth.

1) Face Reality

The reality is that at most colleges and universities the Leftist worldview is the norm. Everything else is considered a deviation. This is certainly the case in the humanities and social sciences. Even the hard sciences and professional majors, like business, have been influenced – although, thus far at least, to a much lesser degree. Simply being aware of this ideological imbalance is a big step forward. It will help you think critically about what you're being taught.

2) Seek Out Allies

The easiest way to do this is to identify the non-Left and conservative groups and clubs on campus and to join some of them. We all need allies. And we all need friends with whom we can talk freely. Plus, fellow independent-thinking students can give you advice on how to navigate the Politically Correct obstacle course that runs through almost all college campuses – and where to find the few non-Leftist faculty. (They do exist!)

3) Avoid pointless ideological battles

It's not your personal responsibility to correct the Leftist bias that permeates higher education. You're not going to turn around the professor who has no patience for your conservative views, so don't try. It's fine to pose probing questions, but don't push too hard. The same goes for your fellow students who espouse Leftist views – probe, but don't push too hard. Also, recognize that many left-leaning faculty are committed to an open discussion of controversial topics. Conflicts with closed-minded professors will happen less often than you might imagine.

4) Stay cool

If you do mix it up with a Leftist professor or fellow student always be calm, reasonable, and respectful, even if they don't return the favor. Think of yourself as an ambassador for conservative ideas. Coming off as a hothead isn't going to help the cause. It's not easy to control your temper, especially when you are being falsely accused of being sexist, intolerant, xenophobic, bigoted or racist, but that's what you have to do. Your opponents will look for any

excuse to dismiss you as a crazy conservative. So don't give them the chance. Remember this: the person who loses his cool often loses the debate.

5) Choose wisely

Consider a major that isn't inherently hostile to conservative ideas. The hard sciences like physics and chemistry are much less likely to be politicized in part, because the material is less subjective. In the social sciences, Political Science and Economics tend to be more tolerant of conservative ideas, if only because a proportionally large minority of the faculty hold views that are centrist or right of center.

For example, in the years I've taught at Penn State University in Harrisburg, the Political Science faculty have been, without exception, committed to teaching politics and policy impartially. On the other hand, Gender studies, Ethnic studies, and pretty much anything with the word "studies" after it, tend to be more ideological. I would suggest steering clear of these courses your freshman year. Wait until you have a little more experience and confidence before taking on these subjects.

6) Know your rights

If your instructor or even the administration targets you because of your beliefs, you have options. Organizations like the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) who fight for freedom of speech, religious liberty, and due process on college campuses can help you. You may be in an ideological minority, but you're not alone.

7) Work hard

College faculty value hardworking, enthusiastic students. Period. The easiest way to win over your Leftist professor is to do your class work in a conscientious manner. That's your way of showing respect. Many teachers will respect you in turn. If you read the assigned materials, take part in class discussion, and show that you understand the key concepts, chances are you'll do just fine.

As I noted in a previous Prager University course, "How the Liberal University Hurts the Liberal Student," I believe that conservative students stand to get more out their college experience than their liberal counterparts.

Why? Because conservative students are constantly exposed to dissenting viewpoints. This opposition sharpens them intellectually and helps them grow. The secret is to be prepared.

Follow these seven rules and you will be.

I'm Matthew Woessner, Associate Professor of Political Science at Penn State Harrisburg for Prager University.