



Student Communication Handbook

**Presented by the UNTSCP Student Professionalization Task Force
2018 - 2019 Student Liaison Team**

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Introduction

The UNTSCP Student Professionalization Task Force was created in an effort to summarize best practices for student professionalization and recommend strategies to enhance student professionalization at UNTSCP. This handbook was created as a guide to enhance effective communication. Information provided should not replace specific instruction provided by UNTSCP faculty, staff and affiliates (e.g. preceptors, guest lecturers and facilitators).

The task force would like to acknowledge and thank the following student leaders and task force liaisons for their contribution to the creation of this handbook.

- William Davis, Class of 2019
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Verbal Communication

When introducing yourself, the following recommendations should be followed:

- First greet by title and last name, then state your name, then state a comment for the meeting.
 - Ex. “Hello Dr./Mr./Ms. Doe, my name is John, it is nice to meet you.”
 - In certain situations, it is recommended to add your title and location after your name.
 - Ex. ... “, my name is John and I’m a pharmacy student at UNT,” ...
- Address others with their title and last name unless granted permission to address them otherwise
 - Addressing others by first name or without a title when a close relationship has NOT been established shows disrespect and leaves a bad impression.
- Speak in a friendly, calm and low tone
 - A high pitch, hoarse, and trembling voice is often associated with nervousness and is highly recommended to avoid.
- Maintain a steady rhythm – Do not talk too fast or sluggishly
 - A fast-talking pace is often associated with hidden agenda or impression of lack of time.
 - A sluggish-talking pace is often associated with a lack of interest and negative opinion from the receiver
- Speak in an audible manner and enunciate your words
 - Do not slur, use slangs, or mumble

During conversation, the following recommendations should be followed:

- Maintain a steady, calm and friendly tone and rhythm.
- Do not dominate the whole conversation (no monologues)
 - Do not go on tangents or overpower the conversation
 - Answer all questions succinctly and on topic
- Thank the other party for the meeting or conversation
 - In a steady and friendly tone

General Tips

- Maintain a professional manner
 - Do not sigh, clicking teeth, whistling, or other awkward sounds in the entirety of the conversation
 - Keep an optimistic, low tone and steady rhythm when talking
 - Do not make the conversation one-sided

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication can often speak louder than verbal communication in professional settings. When communicating with preceptors, faculty and staff, you want to display confidence and a level head. While using colloquial language to communicate with patients is important, it's also critical to be aware of your own nonverbal cues as well as those of your patients. Picking up on the nonverbal gestures of others can help you adapt your own cues to improve communication and understanding.

Nonverbal communication with healthcare providers:

- Gestures
 - Keep arms open (not crossed) and close to the body
 - Be aware of your facial expressions and hand/arm movements
 - Avoid distracting behaviors like tapping on a table or constantly clicking a pen.
- Posture
 - Be aware of your posture and try to avoid slouching
 - Walk with purpose (shoulders back, head straight)
 - When standing, avoid crossing your legs
 - Keep your body faced to the person that you are speaking with
- Eye Contact
 - Maintain eye contact with a positive facial expression
- Things to keep in mind
 - Does the person that I'm speaking to look interested in what I am saying?
 - Does the person that I'm speaking to seem surprised or offended at my verbal or nonverbal language?

Nonverbal communication with patients:

- Gestures
 - Keep arms open (not crossed) and close to the body
 - Be aware of your facial expressions and hand/arm movements
 - Show empathy
- Posture
 - Be aware of your posture and try to avoid slouching
 - Walk with purpose (shoulders back, head straight)
 - Keep your body faced to the patient
 - Make a conscious effort to get on the patient's eye level
- Eye Contact
 - Maintain eye contact when documenting and taking notes
- Things to keep in mind
 - Does the patient understand what I am saying?
 - Does the patient look confused or uncomfortable

Email Etiquette

Email structure

Although E-mails are a fast, convenient and efficient way to communicate with peers, faculty, staff, preceptors and potential employers, they should still be handled with utmost care and professionalism. For starters, every email should at minimum contain the elements below. Before sending an email, it is a good idea to follow the checklist below.

1. Does the matter require sending an email at all?

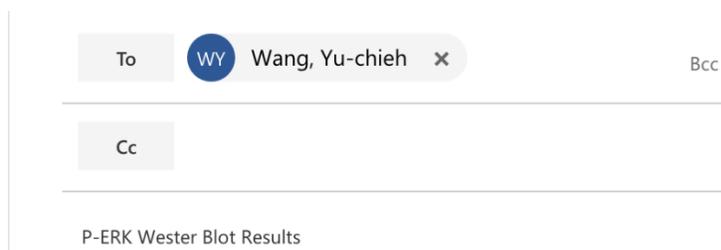
Not all matters require sending an email. Contemplate whether the subject matter really requires it. For guidance, here are examples of appropriate and inappropriate reasons to send an email.

- a. Questions to ask before sending an E-mail
 - i. Is this an easy question that can be answered in one paragraph or less? If not, an in-person conversation may be more appropriate.
 - ii. Is this information that I can find on my own? Time of faculty, peers and preceptors is valuable and the last thing you'd want to do is waste their time.
 - iii. Is the content of this email appropriate to send? Good rule of thumb is if you have the slightest bit of hesitation, it is probably not appropriate and should not be sent.
- b. Examples of Inappropriate reasons to send an E-mail
 - i. Don't bring up any topic that will require continuous conversation. These are more appropriately taken care of in person.
 - ii. If things become heated, there is a large risk for misunderstanding, so it's best to talk face-to-face.
 - iii. If you have an extension for an assignment, it is better to turn it in in person unless specified otherwise.

If you determine an email is appropriate, it is important to have appropriate structure and sound communication. The following below are elements that all emails should contain.

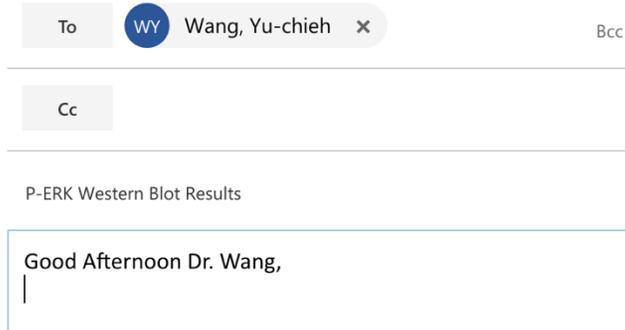
Subject Line

Should be short, concise and to the point.



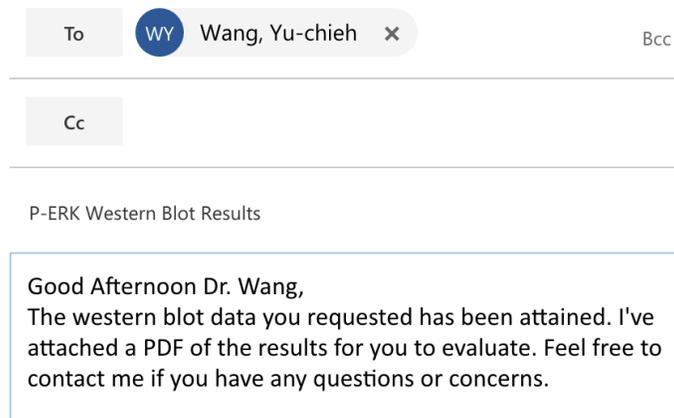
Greeting

The e-mail should open with a greeting such as Dear Dr. Wang, or Good Afternoon Dr. Gaviola, etc. Make sure to address whomever your emailing with a proper preface (Examples: Dear, Good Afternoon, Good Morning, etc.) and proper title (Examples: Mr., Mrs., Dr., etc.). Never address someone in an informal manner (Examples: hey Meredith, Good Afternoon Kyle) unless they have disclosed a preferred way to be addressed. Once you have exchanged emails with the same subject line, a greeting is no longer necessary.



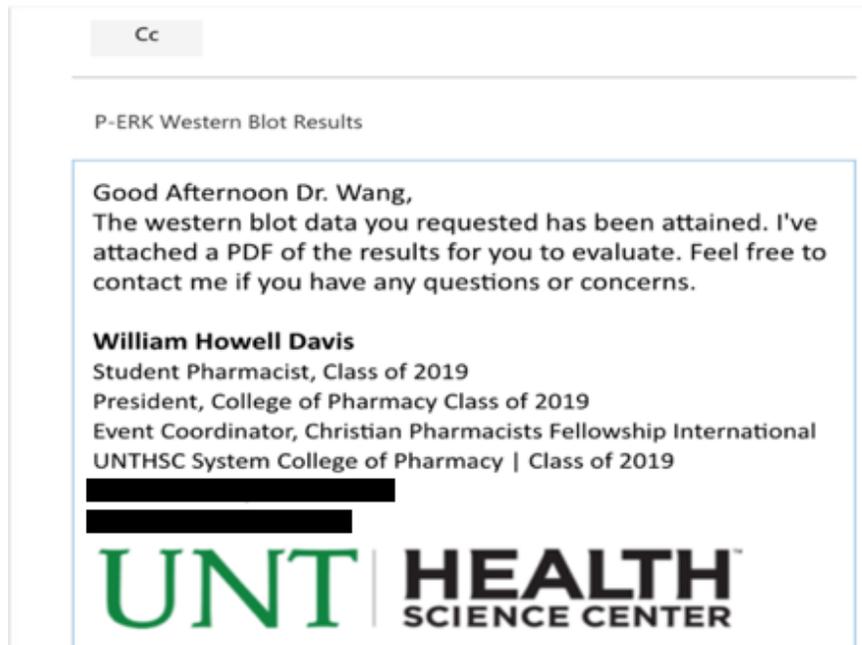
Body

Write clear, short paragraphs. Be direct and to the point. Professionals and Academics see their email accounts as business, so conduct contact as such. If you intend to add an attachment, make sure you state that you are doing so and include what format it is in.



Clear Closing

Be cordial, polite and thankful. Thank the individual for taking the time to reply to your e-mail. If you've already established a professional relationship with the individual, a thank you might not be necessary. An e-mail signature is also another useful addition that adds a sense of aesthetic and professional appeal. An e-mail signature should include your name, titles and other contact information you wish to disclose.



E-mail Etiquette

When contacting professors via email, it is important to:

- 1) Start by introducing yourself. Start the email off by including your name, your year, and what class you're inquiring about.

Eg. Good morning Dr. Doe,

My name is Student Pharmacist. I am a P1 in your Physiology course, and I am inquiring about the assignment.

- 2) Make sure your tone remains professional, respectful, and as non-accusatory as possible.

Do Not Say:

"In class, you stated this and I'm confused because we were taught something else in another class."

"You teach too fast, and no one knows what is going on."

Do Say:

“I am looking for clarification concerning this specific point. You stated this in class, but when I am looking through my readings and notes from my other course, I wrote down something different. Can you clarify whether [follow up with point you need clarification about]?”

“I am concerned about how I will perform in this course. During lecture, I have been experiencing difficulty keeping up with the material. I know you have much material to cover in a limited timeframe, but would it be possible to slow down or pause every so often for questions?”

- 3) If you have a question over lecture materials, but you’re not sure it was discussed during lecture, make sure to go back and listen to the recordings for the answers, before contacting the professor.
- 4) If you are contacting a professor from your cell phone, make sure to remove the line that says, “Sent from iPhone”
- 5) Make sure your emails have a professional signature at the bottom. This usually includes your name, your class, and your primary officer positions in student organizations (can be limited to top 2).

Other important considerations for Email Etiquette

- Utilize sound, proper grammar. Use standard spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Do not use all caps.
- Never send an e-mail when emotions are involved. Wait until the emotion subsides. You do not want permanent proof of things you wouldn’t say under normal circumstances that could potentially hurt you professionally.
- Be conscious of the “reply” and “reply-all” buttons. Know which one you’ve select.
- Don’t say anything you would regret. E-mails are not as private as they seem.
- Respond to e-mails in the same time frame you’d respond to a phone call.
- Write in a positive tone making sure to avoid negative words.
- Try to avoid smiles and winky faces unless there is a clear established relationship with the recipient that would make it acceptable.
- If stating a complaint, briefly state the history for the problem and explain attempts you’ve made to resolve the problem. Show why it is critical for the problem to be fixed and offer suggestions on ways it can be and how you can help.

Asking For Help

Asking faculty, staff or preceptors for help outside of classroom can often be intimidating. There are a few strategies which can make the process less intimidating and help you to develop a rapport with the person you are talking to. This section will focus on person-to-person interactions, however these strategies will be just as effective when used in conjunction with the advice provided in the previous sections.

This section will discuss the general approach strategies for asking a preceptor, faculty or staff for assistance. After a brief introduction an example will be given of how to use these strategies in specific circumstances like:

- Asking for academic assistance during office hours.
- Asking to participate in a research project or shadow a practice experience.
- Asking for a letter of recommendation or feedback on a curriculum vitae.

When asking for assistance you will want the conversation to follow this general path to ensure that you maintain a high level of professionalism, build quality rapport with the person you are asking for assistance, and give you the highest likelihood to be successful in your request. At the very least, you do not want the conversation itself to be why you are not successful.

- Greet the preceptor, faculty or staff warmly, by name and title. If this is the first time you have spoken with this person one-on-one also tell them your name and class.
- Thank them for something specific related to your request.
- In a respectful and direct way; make your request. Avoid beating around the bush, or popping a question at the end of a long explanation. Be upfront about your request and if explanation is needed, you can provide it after.
- Provide an explanation, if needed, and agree to the details of the request. The details will almost always include a timeframe.
- Thank them for their time during this conversation, and their time that will be expended fulfilling your request. If they want to give you an answer at a later time; thank them for their consideration.

Ok, so let's take a look at a few examples of how this might work in practice. We will start with asking for academic assistance during office hours. An important part about asking for academic help outside of class is that you should not expect the faculty to teach you the material again. You should come with a few specific questions in mind, or to ask for clarification on a particular concept.

STUDENT: Hello Dr. Jones, my name is Miley Cyrus and I am a P2. Do you have a few minutes to talk?

FACULTY: Sure, what would you like to talk about?

STUDENT: Well, first, I really wanted to thank you for the great handout you prepared about calcium-channel blockers. It was very helpful. I was wondering if you could explain some of the particulars about substituent functions. I'm still a bit unclear about how everything comes together.

FACULTY: I'm glad the handout was useful. I'm having office hours right now, so I would be happy to help. Do you have a particular question?

// Miley and Dr. Jones discuss CCBs //

STUDENT: That's very clear now. Thank you, Dr. Jones, for your time this afternoon and for helping me to better understand what we talked about.

Next, let's take a look at a conversation where you ask to shadow a preceptor in a practice experience. When asking about participating in practice experiences you should not necessarily expect a "yes" answer. Many factors may prevent preceptor from allowing a student to participate in a particular practice experience. Don't feel discouraged or take a "no" answer personally.

STUDENT: Hi Dr. Smith, Thank you for sharing information with the class about your clinic. It is very interesting to learn about different career opportunities for pharmacists.

PRECEPTOR: You're welcome, I'm glad you found it valuable!

STUDENT: I would like to learn more about ambulatory pharmacy and what a typical day looks like. Would it be possible for me to shadow you one day at your clinic to get a better idea?

PRECEPTOR: Unfortunately, I rotate between the clinic site and the university every 6 weeks. I won't be going back for about a month. However, if you would like to come out for a day next month I think that would be great.

STUDENT: I completely understand about the schedule. Next month works really well for me! Thanks so much for allowing me to come out. I really appreciate it! If you would like I could send you a quick email with some days we don't have class next month to see if they work with your schedule.

Lastly, let's take a look at asking a faculty member for a letter of recommendation. There are some important considerations to keep in mind when asking and choosing who to ask for a letter of recommendation. First, you want to only ask someone whom you have worked with closely for some time. Someone who is able to comment about your work in an in-depth way. Preceptors, faculty that you have done research with, or student organization advisors are good choices. Secondly, you want to make sure to ask for a *strong* or *good* letter of recommendation.

STUDENT: Hi Dr. Baker, Do you have a few minutes to chat?

FACULTY: Sure Miley, what do you need?

STUDENT: First, I wanted to tell you how much I have really appreciated the opportunity to work on your medication adherence research over the last few months. I feel like I have really learned a lot about conducting research with human subjects, and it has been a great experience.

FACULTY: Well, you are very welcome, having students in help in these projects benefits us just as much as the experience benefits you. So, thank you for your help as well.

STUDENT: It has been my pleasure. I will be applying for residency at Parkland in Dallas this December. I would like to know if you would be willing to write me a strong letter of recommendation to support my application.

FACULTY: Certainly! Can you tell me a little about the residency and when you need the letter?

// Miley and Dr. Baker discuss particulars //

STUDENT: Thank you so much for your time today Dr. Baker, and thank you agreeing to write me a letter of recommendation! I will send you the specific information about the residency and the deadlines as well as a copy of my CV this afternoon for your reference.

Expressing gratitude

Thank you e-mails and cards are a great way to express gratitude and build relationships with your faculty, staff, peers and preceptors. The following are guidelines for writing thank you e-mails/cards.

- When possible, a thank you card is preferred over an e-mail and should be written similarly to a formal letter with a salutation, body and closing. Cards are more sentimental than e-mails and should be hand delivered if possible. They may cost a bit more in terms of inconvenience and money, but it could pay off in the end with a letter of recommendation or even a job offer!
- A thank you e-mail or card should be sent to each preceptor, regardless of your experience at the site. Remember, these individuals were willing to take you on and train you at their site. The notion exhibits that you appreciate the opportunity that you have been given.

Resources

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/694/01/>

Writing a Cover Letter

The purpose of a cover letter is to express interest in a job position. When writing your cover letter, it is important to:

- 1) Make the letter specific to the position you are applying for.
- 2) Introduce yourself in a way that is both memorable, personal and professional, so that employers gain an idea of your personality before offering you an interview. Employers and HR managers read through several materials for applicants. Avoid getting lost in the shuffle by staying away from overused terms and expressions.
- 3) Include anecdotal information that expands on what employers will find on your resume. This can include detailed examples of skills laid out in your resume or relevant projects completed in positions listed in your work history.
- 4) Highlight what you can bring to the company, with supporting evidence from your work history.
- 5) Conclude with a polite and open-ended call-to-action that expresses your excitement with the prospect of this position, and willingness to provide more information upon request.

Cover letters should be unique to you. Below is just an outline for starting purposes:

STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

Anatomy of a Perfect Cover Letter

- 1 YOUR NAME** 555-212-8533
your-email@gmail.com
- 2** Dear [Recruiter/Hiring Manager's Name],
- 3** **INTRO PARAGRAPH:**
Grab the reader's attention right away with a **unique opening line**. In a few sentences, describe what role you're applying for, why you're interested in the job (**and the company itself**), and what makes you a good fit.
- 4** **BODY PARAGRAPH(S):**
List the responsibilities of your position, projects you participated in, skills you acquired, and above all, the impact that you had. Feel free to include any accomplishments or awards you received.
- 5** **CLOSING PARAGRAPH:**
Re-emphasize why you're interested in the position, why you're passionate about the company, and why you'd make a good fit. In addition, describe how you, if hired, would contribute to the company.
- 6** **CALL-TO-ACTION:**
Prompt the reader to move forward with your application by inviting them to follow up with you, and thank them for reviewing your cover letter.

Sincerely,
[Your name]

glassdoor

References:

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<https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/how-to-write-perfect-cover-letter/>. Published September 6, 2017. Accessed April 23, 2018.