Increasing the retention rate of incoming freshmen is one reason colleges and universities spend so much effort working with new students. While many resources exist to help ease the transition from high school to college, one area is often overlooked: the relationship between professors and students. The connection can pay off at all stages of a student’s college career.
Connecting with professors helps students move forward

By Dave Etienne
Enquirer contributor

Attending college can be daunting, but it’s especially challenging for new students. There’s finding your way around campus, getting used to living on your own, managing your time and making new friends. Add in time spent participating in sports and clubs or working a job and it’s no wonder only 46 percent of students complete college, according to data collected by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for its report “Education at a Glance 2010.” According to the study, among the many factors influencing graduation rates are such things as income and whether their parents completed college.

Not to be overlooked are more abstract measures such as developing relationships with their professors, a habit often started when consulting with high school guidance counselors. Website www.thedailymuse.com suggests that students who reach out to their professors are better informed about career choices within their fields of study and may even have a leg up on internships, co-ops and post-graduate opportunities.

“From my earliest undergraduate days as a student, I have always valued the opportunity to make a professional connection with my professors and this has carried over to my work today,” said Charles H. Matthews, Ph.D., Professor and Executive Director of the University of Cincinnati Center for Entrepreneurship Education & Research. “I have never viewed the classroom as a static, dull place. Rather, I have always seen the classroom as a vibrant, networking environment.”

Matthews can cite many students with whom he’s kept in contact and watched as they’ve gone on to form successful ventures and pursued rewarding careers. “Many professors provide opportunities for students to engage with them on research and other venues,” said Matthews. He also mentioned that professors are great resources for letters of reference for internships, graduate programs or jobs.

One student with whom Matthews connected is Diana M. Hechavarria, who is currently a doctoral candidate in the Lindner College of Business at UC. “Connecting with my professors has helped me in my college career through creating a genuine mentorship relationship,” she said. In turn, as I prepare for a career in academia myself, I am well aware of the importance of being accessible to my students for constructive feedback. My goal is to be able to connect with them and inspire them to reach their fullest potential, just like prior professors have done with me.”

What she wish she’d known as a freshman

By Emily Genco
USA TODAY College

As a freshman at the University of Wisconsin, I was constantly on the move between classes, newspaper pitch meetings and yoga sessions at the campus athletic facility. Here are a few nuggets of wisdom I wish I’d known before I settled into what would become my home for the next four years.

Choose a dorm based on size, not appearance

Dorm selection is a sticking point for many incoming freshmen. The choices can be overwhelming—should you live by the lake or in the city, on a co-ed or single-sex floor, in a double or quad room? Imagine deciding between flavors at the local ice-cream parlor multiplied by 100. You aren’t just deciding between coconut and pistachio. You’re making a selection that will help to shape your social experience as a college student.

For many, the core group of friends established as a freshman will endure. The bond forged between students figuring out the best dining options...