



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

“Connections are Everything” assignment - Chem 111 Fall 2023

In the fall of 2023, my general chemistry students were asked to complete a weekly journal assignment. Approximately half were content-focused and designed to help students reflect on the connections between class content and the world beyond our course. The other half were designed to help students reflect on their experiences as a student and their development as learners more generally, using their experience in the course as a jumping off point. In week 11 of the semesters, they were given the prompt below to read and reflect on content from Connections are Everything (by Peter Felten, Leo M. Lambert, Isis Artze-Vega, and Oscar R. Miranda Tapia). The following responses to the prompt below have been anonymized and I have permission from each of these students to share them in this form.

*Susan Shadle
Distinguished Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry
Boise State University*

PROMPT: Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

A colleague at another institution whom I've known for a long time (and whose work I have long admired) recently wrote a book for college students called "Connections are Everything". It is available as a free e-book [here](#).

Download the book and navigate to the table of contents. First, scan the Introduction, so you have a sense of what the book is trying to do. Then, choose one chapter to read/scan. Read and reflect on the "Ask Yourself" and "Try This" questions at the end of the chapter. Write a journal entry about the following

Why did you choose that chapter?

What did you learn that either reinforced things you already know or served as new ideas for you?

*If you have any difficulty accessing the book, let me know!

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

I chose chapter 9 and I relearned that "Putting only buddies [in your constellation] won't help you grow and develop." I really struggle with this because it is often hard for me to meet new people. After reading the "ask yourself" I am realizing for the second time, that I want to not just develop my connection to the community with the same hobbies but also the community that can mentor me and lead into my career.

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

I chose chapter 2, titled College Comes with Challenges because I have personally been experiencing an abnormally high amount of stress recently and wanted to see what the chapter had to offer in terms of dealing with that stress. One of the quotes in the book talked about how students fail to reach out for help, whether that be for tutoring or mental health issues because of preconceived ideas of what others would think of them if they did. It also talked about how students tend to be challenged for the first time in college, and weren't so much in high school, which can add to the stress and anxiety of failure. One other idea that I really thought was interesting was the idea of imposter syndrome, where students don't think they are qualified enough to be where they are in their academic careers.

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

After looking through the book and its chapters, I chose to read Chapter 2, titled, College Comes with Challenges. I chose this chapter because I felt like it was so accurate just based on the title. Being a student, I've started to put into perspective how many different challenges college can throw at you. One thing that I found so relatable was when the chapter talked about how hard it can be for students to connect with people online. As a student who primarily has online classes, not by choice, I agree with this so much. Many people do not talk with one another through online classes; they just get the work done, and that's it. I think this also served as a new idea because it lets me know that I'm not the only person who would probably feel the same way about trying to meet people online. Overall, I think this chapter provides good insight on the many different challenges people come across and how I can relate to certain situations.

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

After overviewing and reading part of the book, "Connections Are Everything" I feel that the information from this book could be really beneficial to college students like myself when it comes to building connections in and after college. The chapter I chose to read/scan over was called "You Have What It Takes". The reason why I chose this chapter was for my own personal benefit. A lot of the time, especially in college, I have become very hard on myself academically. Oftentimes I overwhelm myself and convince myself that I am not smart enough or don't have what it takes, when in reality, I do have what it takes. I was really intrigued to see what the author had to say about this topic and how I could change my mindset so I could realize my potential and wasn't always so hard on myself. One idea that I found interesting that served as a new way of thinking for me was to take an activity or something I'm confident in my ability of and think about what I did to achieve this confidence. Also to think about the thought process I had throughout the activity that made my performance better. This way I can take these concepts and apply it to school and hopefully help build my confidence when it comes to academics. One thing that I read about that reinforced a concept I already knew was to rely on my support systems. The main support system the author brought up was family and my family is definitely a big part of my life and the people that I rely on when I feel anxious or overwhelmed.

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

I chose the chapter about connecting with professors in and out of class. I chose this chapter because currently where I am at in college I am going to need to ask for help. Talking to professors to me seems extremely intimidating. All throughout high school, school came super easy to me so when I came to BSU and realized how much I really am on my own now I struggled. I think also coming from a super small town where you personally know all of your teachers was a massive adjustment. College is partly about meeting new people. This article introduced a few ways to try and make this process a little less intimidating. I really liked how it had a theme of trying to make your professors seem more personable. It reminded me that we are all people and that asking for help is reasonable and should be expected.

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

Looking through the table of content for this book, there was a lot of different chapters that caught my eye. I decided to read through chapter 2 titled "College Comes with Challenges" this chapter really stood out to me

and it made me interested to read more about it. In this chapter it talked about all different types of challenges you may encounter in college. Lots of the challenges that I read, I myself have come upon since entering college. It was nice to learn that most of these are challenges that everyone runs into during their college career and that there are ways to overcome these challenges. I also looked at the ask yourself section and it really showed how to break these challenges up and solve them one step at a time.

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

I chose chapter 5, Connecting with Professors. I chose it because I felt as if I take some of the good professors I see weekly for granted. Some key takeaways I got from this chapter include going to office hours, and really participating in class discussion and activity. I've of course always been familiar with these and known that they can be beneficial, but I never thought of them as a means of establishing relationships with professors. I had always thought of them as ways to get help if I was struggling in class, which they are, but they are so much more. I need to connect with professors if I plan to be successful in my field. Professors have so much knowledge and experience that I could apply to situations I find myself in, so for these reasons I will probably attend office hours (probably still of a class im struggling in).

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

I chose "Start with one" because it seemed like a good starting place and made me think, 'ok, I can start with one just like I do my homework or chores.'

The "Ask yourself" questions at the end of the "Start with one" chapter were all about how to make one meaningful connection in college. Reading this made me realize that I have had opportunities to cultivate relationships, I just haven't capitalized on them. I think I may need some help in this regard and plan on doing some of the suggestions at the end of the chapter and reading more of this book to help me think of ways to get the most out of being a student. In my case, I feel out of place or like I don't belong. Sometimes when I struggle to juggle all of the demands of my obligations I feel so embarrassed that I stop asking for help or if I fail I just feel like hiding in a hole. Going back to college has been one of the hardest things I've done yet, and sometimes it's hard to balance everything, and it's easy to get into a place of self isolation. I know that's probably worse in the long run but it's hard not to when you're feeling overwhelmed and socially you're not very adept.

One thing I thought was surprising was the suggestion to use social media to help build relationships in college. In my college career I've heard so much about how social media is detrimental for students both because of mental health and time management issues, but this is one of the handful of times I've heard of people using social media to help cultivate their educational success.

Following the suggestions at the end of the chapter, I made a list of people who I would like to reach out to or things I will try to get involved with-

1. Prof X (professor in my major)
2. XXX Research program at BSU
3. [office at Boise State]
4. Prof Y (professor in my major)

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

Chapter Five - Connecting with Professors, in and out of class

1. I chose this chapter because it is in my mind the most essential thing that I need to learn how to do for a post-undergraduate life. It's pretty obvious but I don't have the easiest time talking and interacting with new people, so reading and trying to understand how to go about it, especially with professors (with whom I can get

new opportunities like access to internships, lab work, etc.), would be vital for my continuing with a career in the sciences.

2. It definitely struck a lot of the fears I had about interacting with my professors. I constantly live under the assumption that I need to be able to completely understand everything or else I am not a good enough student. Whether or not that's actually the case is beside the point - what I can do is approach the professor after class and talk with them about what problems I have. Office hours, besides getting a deeper understanding of the course, are also useful, and I don't think I had quite grasped the complete package that can come with attending those.

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

After downloading Adobe Digital Editions I was able to read the book.

After reading the table of contents and the introduction I was able to assimilate that the book was attempting to highlight the importance of relationships and the importance of surrounding yourself around people that "spark a fire" inside of you.

I decided to read the chapter College Comes with Challenges, this chapter had a variety of sections in it that all went over common fears/problems/issues students have in college. I chose this chapter because college has recently become extremely challenging in comparison to my previous academic experience and I thought I could maybe find some useful tips in the chapter. One section in this chapter that really struck me was the chapter about imposter syndrome. I have heard of the word but never really knew what it meant so I decided to read it. In this chapter the ideas that were proposed sounded very familiar to me and it kind of gave me a new perspective as to how I should be looking at myself in an academic standpoint. It gave a first hand experience of a student who convinced herself that she didn't fit the standard of somebody who should be in college. This made me think of my own experience and other people I am familiar with.

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

I read Chapter 7 on relationship accelerators. They call it a relationship accelerator because it helps increase connections with anyone in the community. High impact practices help the students connect what they are learning to the real world. This allows for students to challenge and support themselves and others. High Impact practices include things like first year seminars, internships, undergrad research, and capstone projects. Although using a relationship accelerator seems daunting for those who have a lot on their plate, it can still be in reach if you have a relational mindset and if you plan ahead. Through this reading it gave me some understanding and a little bit of encouragement. I felt like I related to this so much because I am the student that has too much on their plate, but also needs more academic connections if i want to go to physicians assistants school. I think this whole chapter served as a new idea for me. It encourages me to reach out and to not be afraid to talk to my professors and ask questions.

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

I chose chapter 4 for this assignment. The reason I chose this topic was because I have had a greater understanding of importance of building relationships with peers this last semester and I wanted to dive deeper into that subject. Some things that I learned was just how importance having these peer relationships can have. While the friendships can be hard at times like mentioned in the chapter, working through challenges can help build lasting relationships that go way beyond school. I feel like I have been the person before who just shows up to class and then leaves without socializing with anyone and now as I am getting into more specialized classes, I understand now just how important knowing the people around you can have.

Journal Assignment #11 - Connections are Everything

The chapter that I chose to read was “Part II. You Never Know Who Will Change You (or How).” What drew me to this chapter is the fact that I really don’t know who will change me. Life is such a mystery and I’ve been realizing that I need to open myself up to more possibilities and enjoy it while I can. In this chapter, it was mentioned that, “You also may experience times of stress, frustration, and anger. Being able to manage your mental and emotional well-being when things get tough will be important to your academic and personal success. You do not have to work through these feelings and experiences alone.” This really resonated with me because I am constantly feeling frustrated and isolated, but definitely helps having a close relationship with peers.

After reflecting on the “Ask Yourself” and “Try This” section at the end of the chapter, I realized that socializing and socializing properly is so important to my wellbeing in many aspects. Since starting college, I have felt so isolated being a commuter and it’s really hard to fit in and participate in the normal college experience. I think what I’d like to try is to go out and find those connections with others, especially if they’re in the same boat as me.