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To: CSUN

Subject: for faculty and students

YOUR COLLEGE YEARS

A senior was sitting at the same table with a new freshman at the Arbor Grill. "So, what brought you to Northridge?" asked the senior. "I want to get an education," the freshman responded. "Wrong verb," said the senior. "You should have said, 'I want to build an education.'"

The senior was correct. We don't */give/* anyone an education, nor is a degree a product that you simply buy. A university is a place where you have to earn your way in, and then earn your way out. We can guide, we can help; but your work is what matters.

If democracy is to survive, we must have a citizenry capable of exchanging arguments, not rants. This requires graduates who excel in four critical intellectual processes: to read, to write, to think, and to articulate.

Seat time, without intellectual effort, does not count. Skimming assigned readings only to regurgitate a scramble of topic sentences is not learning. Learning requires sustained focus, uninterrupted by surfing and texting. Allowing electronics to intrude into your classroom experience, besides being discourteous, also weakens your intellectual focus.

You must develop a strong sense of the university as a special place. It is not a raucous high school. Respect for others' study and opinions is expected, as is reasoned disagreement. Many classes encourage everyone to speak out; but remember, the professor has the authority. This decorum may require some adjustments in your habits, behaviors, and attitudes.

Your university experience is obviously not completely separate from everything else that happens in your lives. You come from a variety of backgrounds, you bring with you a variety of experiences and problems, you seek fulfillment of a variety of needs. However, your future, and society's future, requires that you devote to your university experience the level of intellectual effort and discipline that its importance deserves.