

Absences, Tardiness and Deadlines

Antonia Florence, assistant editor

A class missed is instruction lost. An assignment not turned in can lower a final grade. In college, we have deadlines to meet and when missed, most students share the reason with their instructor. However, some reasons sound silly or unbelievable even when they are the truth. However, some missed deadlines are just a fact of life. Class tardiness can be attributed to heavy traffic and accidents.

“The real world doesn’t care about excuses,” said Associate Professor of Business William Pratt. “If your boss needs an estimate by 5 p.m. on Friday to submit a contract proposal, if you don’t deliver, for any reason – even if it is a goat or dog eating your proposal, your company loses the bid!” Ironically, Pratt’s favorite excuse is, “I haven’t been skipping class, I just can’t find the classroom.” Pratt followed with, “This was about halfway through the semester!”

“The majority of students have jobs, many of which are full-time. Community/state college students often have family commitments because they live at or near home, those commitments are much harder to negotiate away,” said Professor of History Melanie Bailey. “What would have been ‘unusual’ reasons (and not acceptable as excuses) have become usual and accepted because of the financial burdens of attending college,” said Bailey in an email.

When Bailey taught in South Dakota, she noticed a significant number of students missed classes and other deadlines during planting and harvest seasons. In addition, pheasant hunting was a family event which contributed to its food stores and is a significant source of individual

and state tourist revenue. South Dakota’s state quarter features an image of a ring-necked pheasant rising up over a wheat field.

“It was simply not negotiable for a cohort of students – they would rather fail an assignment or even fail the class than miss the pheasant hunting expedition,” said Bailey, “for many students the priority is family/commitments to family, and that includes being part of family rituals and the family farm.” This included pheasant hunting.

Associate Professor of Geology Lawrence Tiezzi said, “[A student] missed the final exam and then came in the next day and said he had

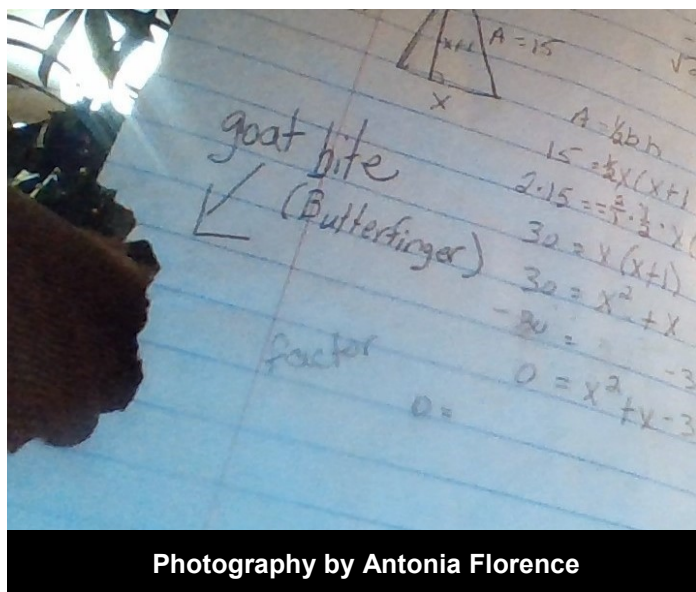
been stuck in traffic. I asked for 3 hours? He didn’t have a good answer, but I told him I would make up a much tougher exam, and he could take it that afternoon.

I took all the T [and] F questions and turned them into fill in the blank. I made the multiple choice short answer and changed some questions to harder ones.” The student missed only one answer. Then the truth came out. The

student wanted to get a 100 on the final and studied all night, fell asleep and slept through the exam, said Tiezzi.

Professor of English Jessica Kingsley and her husband Instructional Designer John Kingsley offered a few reasons to add to the collective list.

A few reasons instructors at PVCC have been told for missed deadlines include: court hearings, delivery of newborn livestock, fiancé being deployed, getting married, giving birth, had a heart attack, in jail, needing to work late, no childcare and washed USB flash drives according to Bailey, Kingsley, Kingsley, Pratt and Tiezzi. Sometimes our reasons for lost class time, tardiness and missing assignments are legitimate and cannot be avoided.



Photography by Antonia Florence