



## **Your Student's Academic Success**

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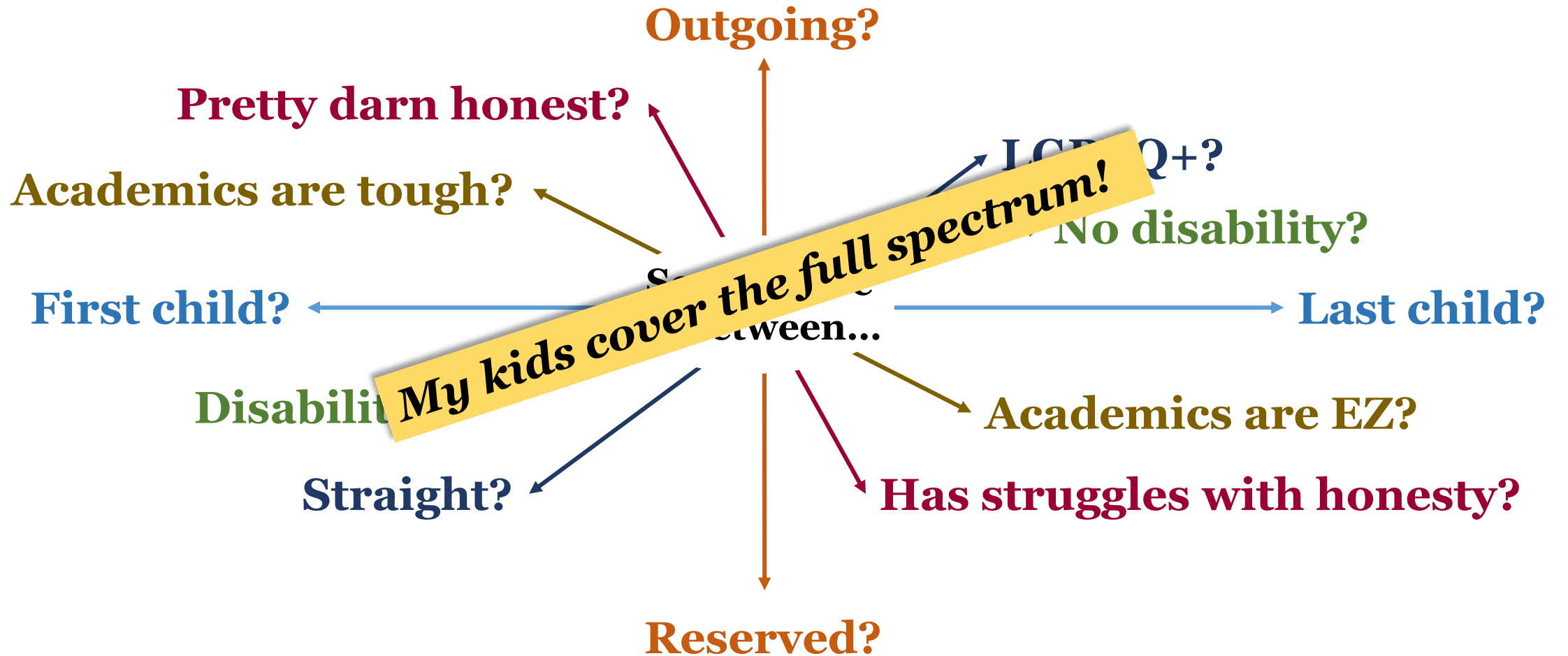
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# Thanks for being here!

- We all bring our **different experiences**
  - I have had many... you will have more!
- But we all have the **same goal: Your student's success!**
  - Both during and after college...
- I'll have to do all of the talking for next half-hour
  - I will be available afterwards to **hear from you and chat**
  - **Copies of both my “family” and “student” slides** are posted on my website
    - ...please share these slides with your student and have them do the same for you!
  - **My contact information** and website will be on the last slide



Who is **your** student?



## Who are **you**?

- *Parent? ...or other family member?*
- *Young? ...or not-so-young-anymore?*
- *Relieved? ...or anxious?*
- *College is an unknown? ...or old hat?*
- *Former Student? ...or what's that?*
- *Distracted after a long day? ...or focused?*
- *Exhausted? ...or really exhausted?*



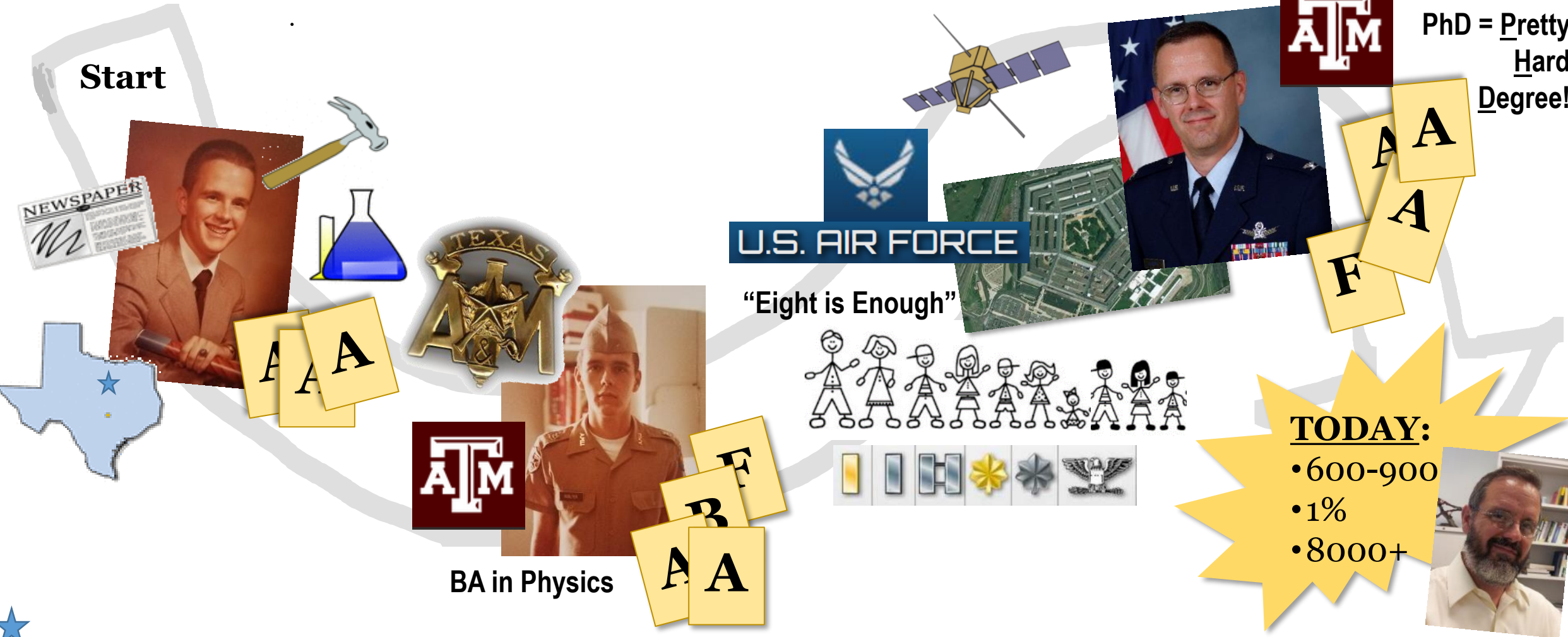
## Where you & I are going in this talk...

- My own path to this stage today
- Encouragement & advice from 4 different perspectives:
  - Student (9 years @ university level)
  - Father (29+ years)
  - Professional (26+ years as a military officer)
  - Faculty (5+ years)



# My Own Path to Today

Start



PhD = Pretty  
Hard  
Degree!

U.S. AIR FORCE

"Eight is Enough"

BA in Physics

**TODAY:**

- 600-900
- 1%
- 8000+



# Four Different Perspectives on Academic Success

- ▶ • **Student** (graduated last in 2010—oh, the pain!)
  - Father (29+ years)
  - Professional (26+ years)
  - Faculty (5+ years)

## From a **student's** point of view...

- College brings more academic challenges
  - Good grades in high school don't guarantee good grades at TAMU  
...and good grades in community college don't, either
- Why?

### *High School*

- Class attendance is **mandatory**
- Class sizes are **small**(ish)
- School day is **packed & choreographed**
- Most learning happens during class
- **Teachers teach** (and do other assigned duties)

### *University*

- Class attendance is **optional**
- Some classes are VERY **large**
- Mostly **unprogrammed** time
- **Most learning happens before & after class**
- Most **faculty** must research & publish (and also teach)



## From a **student's** point of view...

- High schools often test *recognition* of who, what, and when
  - Exams often reward memorization
  - Exams contain the exact same words as the lesson plans, slides, etc.
  - Recognition and regurgitation results in high exam scores
  - Studying for exams (when it happens) is re-reading notes and slides
- For example...

### *Exam*

1. What are the steps for a legislative bill to become law?
2. What is the formula to calculate angular momentum?

## From a **student's** point of view...

- Most college professors also assess *understanding* of how and why
  - Goal: Can students explain concepts taught to them in their own words?
  - Learning is more than studying for exams
  - Students must **fight for understanding**: before, during, and after each lecture  
...and understanding doesn't come from re-reading, re-writing, or highlighting!
  - Students should prepare for essay exams even if actual test will be multiple-choice
- For example:

### *Exam*

1. Why do so many bills NOT pass in the legislature
2. How do you calculate the angular momentum in the case below?

## From a **student's** point of view...

- **High school staffs take responsibility for “backstopping” student success**

- Often offer many types of recovery opportunities
  - ...Late assignments accepted
  - ...Low-score assignments re-accomplished
  - ...Failed course credits reinstated with minimal additional student effort

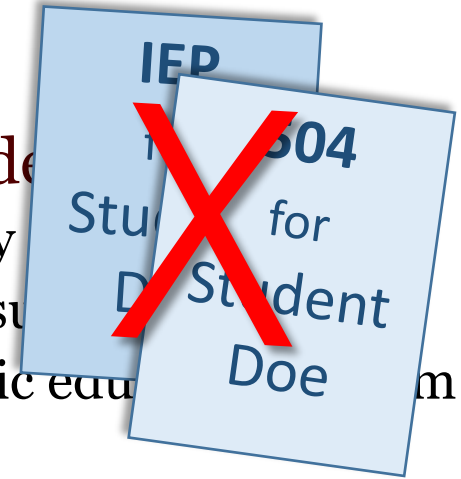


- **Most college professors firmly place responsibility on their adult students**

- Faculty members are *paid, expert guides*—not backstops, helicopters, or rescuers
- Syllabi are course contracts that include expectations, assignments, schedules, criteria
  - ...students must **read the syllabus**—all of it!
- Special favors rarely happen!
  - ...university rules require faculty to be equally fair to all of their students
  - ...exceptions usually only possible with an approved excuse

## From a **student's** point of view...

- **High school staff members advocate on behalf of their students**
  - Staff members identify students' learning, language, and disability
  - Staff members initiate & develop special plans to address these issues
  - Required by federal law because students are *children* in the public education system
- **College students must advocate for themselves**
  - Federal law sets out very different rules for young adults in college
  - University faculty and staff *may NOT* initiate services for student issues
    - ...only the students themselves may do this
  - Excellent specialists, resources, and accommodations are available here
    - ...but **students must initiate the process** by visiting with Disability Services



## From a **student's** point of view...

- **So don't be surprised when you hear a student complain that...**
  - ...late work earns zero credit
  - ...their professor is only available outside of class for 2-3 hours each week
  - ...they “studied really hard” but did very poorly on an exam
  - ...their professor won't give them the 0.05 points they need for a higher grade
  - ...they missed an assignment because they didn't write down the date
  - ...there are no opportunities to raise a low score by re-doing the assignment
- **What is a family member to do?**
  - Listen
  - Acknowledge the emotions you hear (frustration, anger, disappointment, etc.)
  - Encourage the student to *hang in there* and to **use their resources**
    - ...syllabi, instructors, teaching assistants, classmates, help sessions, librarians, TAMU Academic Success Center, Writing Center, Disability Services, etc.



## From a **PARENT'S** point of view...

- Encouragement & advice from 4 different perspectives:
  - Student (9 years @ university level)
  - ▶ • **Parent** (I've cleaned up a lot of messes...)
  - Professional (26+ years)
  - Professor (5+ years)

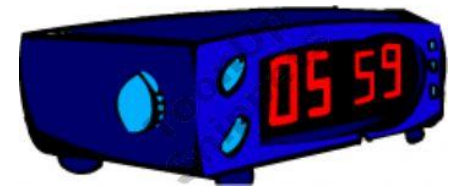
## From a **PARENT'S** point of view...

- Be your student's *encourager-in-chief*
  - Set up a regular communication routine
  - Invite them early and often to share problems as well as victories
  - Allow them to take the lead in problem-solving
  - Be a ready resource
- Set and enforce limits as needed and possible
  - Money
  - Information
  - Behavior
- When to rescue students and when to allow natural consequences to take their course varies based on circumstances, personalities, and styles!



## From a **PARENT'S** point of view...

- No one from the university will talk with you about your student's progress (or lack thereof)
  - The academic-information *apron string* is now **cut**—by federal law (FERPA)
  - Information about academic progress or problems is protected
  - University faculty and staff may not discuss protected information with you (except with written permission from the student)
  - Best approach: Be the first person your student will want to tell about successes and failures. **Convince your student to grant you info access via the *Howdy* portal**
- No one will be there to help your student wake up on time
  - Phone call I've received: *"Dad, I just slept through 3 alarms and missed my exam!"*
  - Best approach: Don't rescue them from missed alarms this summer



[http://www.clipartpanda.com/clipart\\_images/digital-clock-clipart-29772330](http://www.clipartpanda.com/clipart_images/digital-clock-clipart-29772330)



## From a **PARENT'S** point of view...

- Set very high expectations for academic honesty now and revisit them each semester
  - Pressures to cheat, plagiarize, fake, and cover others who do *will be strong*
  - Stress and desperation will magnify those pressures
  - Student to me: *“Dr. Roblyer, I don’t want you to think that this is who I am!”*
  - It’s more than the Aggie Honor Code!
    - ...there are pages of academic conduct rules (University Rule 20) and an Honor Council with both student and faculty members to enforce those rules
  - Best approach: **Don’t buy into dishonorable behavior!** Encourage them to talk to you early—before a bad decision. After a bad decision, help them be strong and honorable, and to be honest...
    - Don’t make this parent’s mistake... Student to me: *“Dr. Roblyer, I checked with my parents. **They told me it was okay to not tell you what happened so I could protect my friend.**”*



## From a **PROFESSIONAL'S** point of view...

- Encouragement & advice from 4 different perspectives:
  - Student (9 years @ university level)
  - Parent (29+ years)
  - ▶ • **Professional** (Go Air Force!)
  - Professor (5+ years)

## From a **PROFESSIONAL'S** point of view...

- College is a wonderful place to learn a lot about how to succeed in life—not just for learning formulas and theorists!
  - Taking personal *responsibility*
  - *Planning ahead* in midst of multiple, conflicting priorities
  - *Prioritizing and triaging* when demands exceed resources
  - Working and producing *under pressure*
  - *Getting along* with superiors and colleagues  
...especially those they don't like!
  - Honing *problem solving* abilities
  - Learning the importance of *flexibility and good humor*

*These are why most employers want college graduates, regardless of their exact GPAs*



## From a *professor's* point of view...

- Encouragement & advice from 4 different perspectives:
  - Student (9 years @ university level)
  - Parent (29+ years)
  - Professional (26+ years)
  - ▶ • **Professor** (8000 students later...)

## From a *professor's* point of view...

- We want your student to succeed here at TAMU and beyond!
- Thus, students need to learn to think better
  - We want to teach students *how* to think, *not what* to think
  - Desired improvements: separation of facts from beliefs, understanding opposing views, identification of likely biases, recognizing faulty arguments, etc.
- We expose students to many perspectives, and then teach them how to analyze and understand their own viewpoints, as well as those of others
  - *No expectation*—much less a requirement—*for students to change their minds* on any topic or matter

## From a *professor's* point of view...

- We cannot help students that don't come to us and tell us they are struggling academically
  - Many opportunities: before/after class, office hours, emails, help sessions
  - **Best for students to come early**, but many delay until mid-semester or later
  - We are rarely surprised by students questions—we can often quickly help a student understand what had confused them
- Some of us welcome students talking with us about **other kinds of issues**, but other faculty members feel less comfortable
  - **Top-notch experts are ready to help** at Student Counseling Services and other campus offices
  - Students today face a myriad of issues and should not face them alone!



## In conclusion...

- **I am one of thousands of TAMU faculty members**
  - Many are nationally and internationally recognized in their fields
  - Many are widely published authors of scholarly articles and books
  - Many are doing cutting-edge research to push out the boundaries of what is known  
*...but also*
  - Many are innovating within their courses to increase student learning
  - Many have taken on additional roles to directly serve students
  - Many are constantly updating course materials to keep them fresh and pertinent
- **We care!**
  - ...but **we need our students to care the most**—it is their education and their future!*
  - ...and **to remember that we are here to help**—please ask!*



# Gig'em!

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*Contact me! I'll be glad to chat...*







## From a **student's** point of view...

- College is a whole new ballgame!
- Finally! ...more variety and more independence!
  - “This place is fun!”
  - “I’ll have so much free time!”
  - “I want to do everything!”
- It’s a *much bigger* world out there!
  - Roommates & friends
  - Troublesome people & bad influencers
  - Mentors & instructors
  - Familiar knowledge and new concepts
  - Previous experiences and novel ones



## From a *professor's* point of view...

- **We appreciate students who respect our positions**
  - Refer to us using our academic titles: “Professor” is always safe!
  - Not mistake friendliness as an invitation to become chums
  - Respect our time by scheduling appointments if requested  
...and by canceling appointments that cannot be kept
- **We appreciate students who remember that we are people, too**
  - We strive for excellence... but we make mistakes
  - We devote many hours to students... but also have duties, families, and friends
  - We want to help your student learn... but have *many* students and responsibilities

