‘The Dog Ate My Homework’

Professors and students reveal best (and worst) excuses for missing class

By Cara Latham
Staff Writer

Students seem to be getting more creative and dar- ing in their approaches to persuade professors that they missed class for credible reasons, reasons that are both amusing and effective.

In high school, teachers would not accept many excuses for missing classes unless the students pre-sented a doctor’s note or had a parent calling. Missing class was punishable by detention or other means. But in college the stakes are higher and students need to have far more creative excuses.

Dr. Frederick Turner, a professor in the communi-cation department and head of the internship program, has encountered numerous of these new, innovative excuses.

“It’s amazing how many multiple grandmothers are lost during one semester,” he said. “It seems like families are having more sets of grandparents these days.”

Turner said that many people have car trouble, such as their car breaking down, which is a very com-mon excuse. However, he said that there is a “growing popularity” in students using the excuse that their car was towed.

According to Dr. David Rebovich, a political science professor, other excuses are also increasing in frequency.

“A lot of students will say that they lost power in the dorms or that just their room lost power,” he said. “Some will say that their roommate turned off their alarm or that their roommate’s overnight guests prevented them from falling asleep early and they overslept.”

Among others, Turner said that he has also heard about all kinds of illnesses and “family problems” or “personal problems.”

“Professors are afraid to ask about personal prob-lems,” he said, “because they might be really awful circumstances or embarrassing.”

Rebovich also has heard some extreme personal excuses. He said that male students will say that they were absent because they found out that their girlfriend was pregnant.

Personal problems might not be good excuses for commuters. However, they have even more leeway to give some good excuses, especially the ones regarding car trouble.

“Some commuters will say that parents were sick and had to drive siblings to school or that there was a lot of traffic,” said Rebovich. “I’ve heard that a few professors will actually call local radio stations and see if the highways that [the students] had to take really had a lot of traffic.”

One student also pointed out that he used the excuse that his car battery had died and he had no means of charging or replacing it.

However, most students usually attempt to use physical illness to their advantage, simply because it is the most common, believable and traditional excuse in the books.

Rebovich said that sometimes students will even be honest and say that they were up late because they were partying and that they were too drunk to attend class.

“One time, I showed up to class and told the professor that I had pink-eye in both eyes,” said freshman Tiffany Vaughn. However, she really did have the problem and the teacher let her leave.

Various other students agree that convincing a professor all depends on the way that they portray their physical and emotional states while giving the professor the excuse.

“You can show up to class and, after a few min-utes, tell the teacher that you really feel sick, that you are going to throw up and that you don’t want to be embarrassed if you get sick in the middle of class,” said freshman Lindsey Tossman. “They’ll usually under-stand. Otherwise, most professors will understand if you tell them you overslept and apologize.”

Many teachers feel that it is the student’s responsi-bility to attend class, since the attendance affects per-formance. Although their policies for different depart-ments at Rider require that students be penalized after a certain number of missed classes, many professors understand, even with the bizarre excuses.

“I have always told my students that I respect them as adults until such time that they prove that I am wrong,” said Dr. Gary Breovic, a psychology professor. “So most missed absences have been followed by rather personal and intense conversations.”

“You can never know for sure,” said Turner, simi-larly, although he also said that he will believe almost any excuse for the first time that the student uses it, until he realizes that it has become a pattern. “[The excuse] could be legitimate.”

Polar plunge spreads love on Valentine’s Day

By Lauren Varga
Copy Editor

Imagine this: crisp ocean air, waves breaking against the sand and people of all ages enjoying a friendly atmosphere.

Nope, it’s not a hot summer day at the beach. It is Polar Bear Plunge, right in the middle of winter.

This past weekend Sea Isle City resi-dents and other beach-goers flocked to the island to celebrate the 10th annual Polar Bear Plunge. Polar Bear Plunge is a spectacular event that takes place every February at the Jersey Shore where kids, tees and adults make their way into the cold ocean waters.

People don’t just take the plunge because they are bored or feel like being spontaneous and crazy; many people take the plunge to benefit a cause. When a patron registers to take “the plunge” they pay a $25 registration fee that goes to a chosen charity.

“I don’t do the plunge to catch pneumonia,” said Natalie Stetser, a resi-dent of Dennis Township and student at Rider University. “I also do it because I know that my money will go to a good cause.”

The plunge is sponsored by the Sea Isle City, the Tourism Commission and co-sponsors.

Taking the plunge is definitely an experience to remember, and some people find it to be the fun highlight of the winter season at the shore.

“It seemed like it would be a lot of fun,” said Amber Sulzbach, a Sea Isle City resident, who has plonged for three years now. “I was right and that’s why I keep going back for more.”

Some plungers return year after year despite the cold winter weather and the frigid ocean temperatures; that’s devo-tion!

“Last year it was so cold that I thought my feet were frozen,” said Sulzbach. “But every thing was OK.”

When asked if there was a specific way to go about “plunging” Sulzbach just simply exclaimed that you have to just charge into the water. She said that as your running in you don’t feel the cold, not until you run out.

Believe it or not the Polar Bear Club even has a Polar Bear Queen. However, she’s not the typical prom queen type. She is an older lady and, at the ripe age of 67, the Queen is still plunging. Of course there is a nice fur coat waiting for her when she returns to land.

“I would jump if I were her,” said Stetser. “She gets to jump inside an ani-mal to keep warm.”

Although this year’s Polar Bear Plunge has passed, make it a point to be down for the festivities next year. Even if the water is too cold and taking the plunge is out of the question, go down for the fun times after the plunge.

“The fun doesn’t stop at the plunge,” said Sulzbach. “We love to celebrate at La Costa [a local lounge in Sea Isle] while we warm up.”

The event is more than just a way to raise money for charity, show off a queen and get sick so a person can call out of work or take off from school. The plunge is a clear sign that summer is not too far off in the distance.

“The polar bear plunge is a great way to remind you that the summer is coming soon,” said Sulzbach.