

NO RESPECT!

Richard M. Felder
Department of Chemical Engineering
North Carolina State University
Raleigh, NC 27695-7905

The problem is, there's no glamour in being a professor. People don't think of us as powerful and important, like politicians and corporate executives; or as practicing a noble and beneficial profession, like doctors; or as pulling down a bundle for a few minutes work, like doctors, lawyers, and corporate executives; or as romantically unprincipled and somewhat sinister, like politicians, lawyers, and televangelists. In fact, people don't think of us at all. We get no crowds pointing us out and whispering to one another as we walk by; no fathers telling their children that some day they may grow up to be like us; no groupies.

Trying to figure out the reason for this sad state of affairs, I've concluded that we just don't know how to handle ourselves on the job and those other folks do. The solution is clearly for us to copy them. "But how?" I hear you cry. "I am a scholar, at home and happy in the realm of virial gases, canonical ensembles, and stress tensors. What do I know of these worldly things?"

Well, you're in luck---as usual, I have the answers. Here, then, is *Professor Power: Becoming Rich and Famous in a One-hour Work Week*.

* * * * *

M.D. Model---General Practitioner

Teach five classes each semester. Schedule them all at 9:00 on Tuesday in separate classrooms. To keep the students from getting restless while they're waiting for you, leave some stimulating reading lying around, like a few three-year-old issues of *Centrifugal Pump Digest*. At 10:00 make an appearance in the first classroom, spend about ten minutes teaching something, give an assignment, and dismiss the class, telling them to pay their hourly tuition in the department office before they leave. Do the same thing in your other classes. After the last one, take the rest of the week off to avoid burnout.

Dentist Variant

Same as the G.P., except instead of making the students wait for over an hour before the class starts, make them wait only 45 minutes and then have a teaching assistant give them some drill before you show up for your ten minutes.

Medical School Faculty Variant

Put your graduate student advisees on an 80-hour work week. Two weeks before a proposal or paper deadline comes up, make them work 20-hour days, providing them with a cot in the laboratory to get some sleep during the remaining four hours. If anyone in the administration

complains, remind them that you could be earning a great deal more in private industry. They won't give you any more trouble.

Lawyer Model

Invite the students to call on you any time they have difficulty with the course material. When they come to your office or phone you, keep track of the time you spend and charge \$2.50 a minute for it. If any of them are ever caught cheating, go before the judicial review panel and make tearful references to their previously unblemished record, the hardships they endured as children, and their devotion to their aged parents and half-blind dog. Then make disparaging and unprovable suggestions about the integrity, ulterior motives, and ancestry of the professor who caught them. Apply the usual charges.

Politician Model

On Day 1 of your course, promise that you will 1) teach the students everything they will ever need to know, 2) give all A's, and 3) provide free beer in class. Spend the semester telling them how valuable the course is and how hard you're working to meet their needs, but never actually teach them anything. Cancel about a third of the classes to attend conferences in places like Hawaii and the south of France, calling the trips "fact-finding missions." The day before the students fill out course evaluations, pass out the beer. Then give a comprehensive final, fail most of the class for not learning the material, and explain that it was all the administration's fault. Assure them that next semester things will be different---they'll get A's, free beer, and pizza. Most of them will believe you.

Televangelist Variant

Same as the politician, only, 1) promise the students straight A's for the rest of eternity, 2) pocket their tuition, and 3) don't give them the beer.

Corporate Executive Model

Demand a high six-figure salary when offered the position of chancellor. When you get it, use the interest on your University's \$200 million endowment to buy your way into financial control of a small but productive college in another state. Fire all their deans and department heads and put your own people in those positions. Move their best professors to your university, fire the others who don't have tenure, take any of their laboratory equipment you can use and sell the rest. Then fold the college and use the losses to offset the profits from the equipment sale, leaving yourself with a net annual corporate tax liability of \$3.27. Keep doing this. When you've ruined enough small productive colleges to get your salary up to seven figures, announce that it is in the University's best interests to teach all classes in Japanese: Sell controlling interest in the University to the Kyoto Institute of Technology, participate in the dedication of the sushi bar where the Burger & Brew used to be, and retire just in time to miss the cafeteria riot and the disgusting things those ungrateful student hooligans do with all that raw fish.

* * * * *

And that's all there is to it. With these few simple techniques we can easily transform our images and start to enjoy the good life.

On the other hand, there may be something to say for the status quo. As things stand now, most of us do our jobs without exploiting anyone's vulnerability or innocence, enriching ourselves at their expense, or trampling on their dignity. We may have to forego the Swiss bank accounts this way, but it still seems like a good bargain. We just have to be sure that our success is measured by the quality of our teaching and research and by nothing else...but then we're educators and scholars by profession, so there's no problem.

And now if you'll excuse me, I've got to get my notes together for the meeting at 10:00 where we review Greg Furze and Roger Snavely for promotion and tenure. Furze gets great teaching reviews and he's written a couple of research papers that people think very highly of, but there's not much by way of grants. Snavely is another story: he brings in a mint in funding but his teaching evaluations are grim and his graduate students complain that they hardly ever see him, even though he keeps them here for as long as seven years. Should be an interesting meeting.