



a newsletter for parents & families



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## "I'm Leaving for School in a Few Short Weeks!" – Related Issues

It's likely hitting your student now... he's heading to college in a few weeks. With that revelation will likely come some excitement – and some anxiety – regarding topics such as:

- Will people like me?
- Will I find friends as good as the ones I have here at home?
- How will I find a place to belong?
- Will I be able to handle college academics?
- How will I find my way around campus?
- Who will I turn to if I'm struggling?
- Will I still be as connected to my family/friends?
- What if I don't get along with my roommate?
- Will people make fun of how I talk/dress/act?
- What's it going to be like sharing a bathroom with other students?
- How will I fit all my stuff into that campus room?

## Starting Off on the Right Foot

The beginning of a new academic year gives all of us an opportunity to start fresh. You can help your student start off on the right foot by considering the following...

**People.** Connecting with others on campus gives students a sense of place and belonging that is critical to their college success. So, ask who they are looking forward to connecting with on campus this year. How will they find mentors and support systems on campus? And how will they be the most open, giving community member and friend that they can be?

**Priorities.** Thinking ahead about priorities can help students organize, plan and feel ready to tackle the new year ahead. So, ask what priorities they can identify for themselves. How will they truly *make* those things priorities? And where can they go for help when it feels like their priorities might be slipping?

### Plunging In

Encourage your student to talk with people about what she's interested in, to ask questions and to try out interest meetings. Plunging in can be very easy when students show enthusiasm and interest!



**Places.** Creating and maximizing campus spaces helps students really feel like they belong. So, ask how they are planning to make the most of their living space. Where might they study on campus? And where can they go when they need to recharge and put things in perspective?

**Possibilities.** Getting involved in campus life is a key way that students feel more engaged with their institution – and more likely to stay! So, ask what possibilities for involvement are appealing to them. How can they pursue these possibilities? And how might they stretch themselves to be open to possibilities they hadn't previously considered?

By thinking about these four P's and more, your student will be ready for that fresh start!



# Helping Students Handle Their Fears

Getting involved, meeting new people and finding your place on campus can be overwhelming for some students. They may have certain fears – whether you deem them “rational” or not – about all of it.

## Fear Factors

Here are some of the fears they may express when thinking about getting involved:

- ▶ Will people accept me?
- ▶ I’m afraid I’ll look stupid.
- ▶ What if no one agrees with what I say?
- ▶ What if I can’t find anyone to connect with?
- ▶ This is my chance to make a good first impression – I don’t want people thinking I’m a dork.
- ▶ What if my voice shakes when I talk or I don’t make any sense?
- ▶ What if I’m so different from the others that we have nothing in common?

- ▶ Will I self disclose too much, making others uncomfortable?
- ▶ Will I seem smart enough to be in college if I open my mouth?

## You Can Help

Some students imagine the “what ifs” and let their fears get the better of them. You can help by:

- ▶ Listening without judgment.
- ▶ Not just offering “You can do it!” encouragement, but going the next step to help them figure out *how* they can do it.
- ▶ Reminding them that college is full of all sorts of people to connect with, not necessarily the cliques they may have experienced other places.
- ▶ Encouraging them to talk with a support person on campus about their fears, whether it’s a residence hall director, an advisor, a coach



or a counselor – there are lots of folks ready and willing to listen and problem-solve with your student!

- ▶ Letting your student know that you support her, no matter what, and reminding her of times when she’s attacked her fears successfully. That’ll help build her confidence mightily.

It’s natural to have some fear of the unknown – and college life holds its share. Yet, with your support and that of other good folks on campus, we can all set your student up for success!

## The Value of Campus Jobs

Campus jobs are a way for students to engage with their community, participate in the running of their institution and make some money along the way!

Here are some other reasons they can be valuable...

**Connections.** Students who work on campus will have built-in references and mentors, if they do their jobs well. These connections are great in the moment and in the future, too.

**Experience.** Those who work on campus experience what it’s like to help an institution hum. It’s different than working off-campus, where it can be easier to be detached. Students working on campus are part of their community while gaining valuable work experience.

**Flexibility.** On campus jobs often have an element of flexibility to them, as long as it’s not misused. This can help if a student is in the midst of exams and more.

**Transportation.** Working right on campus deletes the transportation worry involved in off-campus work. Students can walk to work before or after classes, or take campus transportation.

If your student is looking for work in the year ahead, encourage him to think about working on campus. The benefits are plentiful!



## Connecting on Campus

People need people. And while meeting new folks on campus can be exciting, it also takes effort and skill. Here are a few tips to encourage your student to try to make the most of her campus connections...

**Show Interest.** When meeting new folks, show interest in who they are, where they're from and what they're about. Asking a few simple questions shows that you're genuinely interested and want to know them beyond the surface stuff.

**Listen.** The second part of showing interest is *really* listening to the answers! If you ask a question, mean it and focus on the person's answer by nodding, asking any clarifying questions and even repeating some things back to the person to show that you're truly listening.

**Reach Out.** Sometimes the best thing that someone who is uncertain can do is reach out to others who may also be unsure of how to navigate these new waters. So ask others on your floor or in class to grab a coffee or



head to the dining hall. Some of those built-in necessities, like eating, can be non-threatening ways to connect with others.

**Follow-up.** Once you've established an initial connection over coffee or lunch, you can follow-up with an invitation to study, play basketball, check out a campus concert or participate in another of the multiple campus happenings. Do things one-on-one or in small groups, depending on your comfort level.

Those initial connections are often based on simple efforts that take

### Possible Missteps

When students are looking to connect, they may also take a few missteps as they figure things out. You can offer some warnings to help...

**Don't Just Go with the Crowd.** For example, drinking to excess, just because others are, isn't a true way to connect. Instead, your student can easily find others who aren't interested in that behavior and spend time with them.

**Trust Your Gut.** Your student may be tempted to try things that just don't feel right, whether it's vandalizing a space or trying a substance. Encourage him to trust his gut as a way to steer clear of those harmful behaviors.

minimal effort, yet can offer maximum opportunities. By building on those connections, your student is likely to find people he enjoys and who value him in return.

## Tapping Into Community Resources

The resources available to students and their families around here are numerous! Yet, as the beginning of the academic year is just around the corner, there are a few resources within the community that you may want to get intimately familiar with right away, such as...

**A Bank.** Where will your student do her banking when she's at school? Getting this situated now will make things easier throughout the year.

**A Hotel for Parent/Family Weekend.** It's a good idea to book this now, if you haven't already, to beat the rush! Places can sell out quickly.

And, while you're at it, making dinner reservations couldn't hurt either.

**A Mechanic.** If your student has a car on campus, urge him to ask around to see whom local folks use as their mechanic. Asking people like house-keeping and support staff makes a lot of sense – they know this town!

**A Place of Worship.** If your student wants to attend services, there are options on and around campus.

**A Spot of Nature.** It's good for students to have a little campus get-away, whether it's a city park, a hiking trail or a lake. Take a look at a map to see what's close by.

Connecting with these community resources – and more – now will add to the comfort level in your student's new town. Our community is looking forward to welcoming you and your student!

### Health Care Options

If your student needs mental or physical health care while away at school, don't hesitate to connect with the campus health center for help and referrals. It'll provide great peace of mind to have these things in place.





# Organizing Residence Hall Rooms

What's the difference between a residence hall room that's a hovel and one that's a haven? Organization!

Going in with a desire to organize and maximize the available space can help students focus on the positive – and what they can do about it.

Some simple tips to share with your student about getting organized right off the bat include...

**Clear the Desk.** Get ready to plunge into studying by setting your desk up now. Make it an academic space for your computer, supplies and books. Try not to clutter it up with framed photos and knick-knacks, because a full space is often less effective, just like a cluttered mind takes *much* longer to get things done!

**Put Clothes Away.** If possible, only bring the clothes you'll need for that season. Others can be picked up at home or mailed when needed. There's only so much closet and dresser space! Consider storing lesser-worn items in a suitcase under the bed.

**Contain Food.** Try to keep food items to a minimum to reduce clutter – and to discourage bugs! Use airtight containers, keep a few things in the fridge and don't have too many dishes.

## Other Organizational Tips

- Use one reusable water bottle instead of storing cases of bottled water in the room
- Don't buy much in bulk – there's just no space to store it all!
- Split items with roommates and floormates
- Maximize closet space with double hangers, cardboard dressers & more

Things can always be washed and it's rare that you will be serving a full dinner in your room.

**Minimize Books & Papers.** College life is full of printed "stuff" that can get overwhelming. Consider a file crate or small file cabinet for the room where you can file things regularly. Only bring a few books from home – there's not a lot of space for those plus all the textbooks you'll be buying. Set up a paper-recycling bin now. And try to employ the "touch it once" method of paper management to avoid piles!

One of the keys to staying organized in a residence hall room is not

having TOO much stuff! If there are leftover boxes on move-in day and no place to store certain items, take things home. It'll be a tough decision on the spot yet will help your student feel less overwhelmed – and much more organized.



## Remembering Names

You and your student will both be meeting many new people in the year ahead. Here are some tricks to help you remember their names!

**Recall Unique Features.** Focus on something interesting about the person, from hair color to a unique interest they may have.

**Try Repetition.** During your first meeting, repeat the person's name out loud ("It's really nice to meet you, Fred!"). Also, say the name to yourself several times during that first encounter and when you say goodbye, too.

**Use Mnemonic Devices.** Try turning the person's name into a mental image. For instance, "Fred" sounds like "friend," so "Friend Fred" will remind you of him from now on.

**Associate People & Words.** While repeating the name, try to associate the mnemonic with the person. Since "Fred" sounds like "friend," you can imagine him welcoming people and being surrounded by friends.

**Say a Purposeful Goodbye.** At the end of your initial encounter, repeat the person's name ("See you later, Fred!").

**Write it Down.** And if your memory needs a nudge, write that person's name in your phone or on a piece of paper. Sometimes just that action of repeating it in a different form can help the name stick in your mind a bit more easily.

Practice the name game and soon you'll be a pro, able to remember the friends, staff and professors that your student is talking about, as well as the people you meet on campus, too!