A successful transition

Share this advice from fellow first-in-college students to support your student’s growth

Overcoming obstacles

How to help your student persist through difficulty
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The case for college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Academic advising and course registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The importance of orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>A new kind of relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Paying for college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>A successful transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Where to find what, on campus and online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>How to be a successful college student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>A day in the life of a college student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Support your commuter student’s connection to campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Choosing a major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Overcoming obstacles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE CASE FOR COLLEGE
By Amelia Kaspari

As you help your high school student plan for what comes next, do you find yourself wondering if college is the wisest choice?

According to the College Board’s most recent Trends in Higher Education report, tuition continues to rise faster than inflation, financial aid and income. Housing and meals, class and activity fees, and textbooks add to the overall cost. In addition, for many students, time spent in college means time out of the workforce.

College is a big investment. What if the financial sacrifice you and your student make now doesn’t pay off in the future?

THE EXCEPTION AND THE RULE
We’ve all heard about young people with $100,000 history degrees working at Starbucks after graduation, worrying they’ll never be able to pay off their loans. If you know someone in this situation, you know how very real and frustrating it is.

However, this kind of story is the exception to the rule. The “rule,” as the 2016 College Board report outlines, is that a significant percentage of student borrowers (38 percent) owe less than $10,000 in student loans. The “rule” is that those borrowing in the $100,000 range are primarily graduate students, not undergraduates (and many of those grad students will enter highly paid, specialized fields).

In fact, the College Board discovered that the average student borrower pays off their loans and recoups the money lost from being out of the workforce by the time they’re 34.

It’s true that many good jobs don’t require college degrees. Real estate agents, law enforcement officers, property managers, electricians and other mechanic, installation and repair occupations require on-the-job training, apprenticeships or certification programs in place of a traditional four-year degree.

Even in fields traditionally requiring degrees, you may know of marketers who never studied marketing, self-taught website developers, and entrepreneurs who created successful businesses out of trial-and-error and a little bit of genius.

It is possible to bring home a good paycheck without a college degree. But here are three important measurements of the value of a college degree:

1. People with a bachelor’s degree make 67 percent more than those with just a high school diploma.

   Even within the same company or industry, employees with four-year degrees are higher up on the pay scale than those without, according to the College Board report. Across ten different job categories (ranging from retail sales to sales reps and first-line supervisors), those with a bachelor’s degree consistently made more than those with a high school diploma.

2. The unemployment rate for those with bachelor’s degrees is significantly lower than for those with just a high school diploma.

   The College Board reports that “in 2015, when the unemployment rate for 25- to 34-year-olds with at least a bachelor’s degree was 2.6 percent, 8.1 percent of high school graduates in this age range were unemployed.” Your chances of being unemployed are more than twice as high without a four-year degree.

   Studies show that on average college graduates are also more likely to own a home and save for retirement.

3. The number of jobs requiring a bachelor’s degree is growing.

   The Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce predicts that “by 2020, 65 percent of all jobs in the economy will require postsecondary education and training beyond high school.”

   Rather than decreasing, it seems that the value of a college degree is only increasing. Why? What makes a four-year degree so beneficial?

COLLEGE PROVIDES UNIQUE RESOURCES
College provides skills and resources that set students up for career success. One benefit is the interaction with dozens of professors who are experts in their industry. Most professors have helpful contacts and are willing to write recommendation letters and offer advice about applying to and working in their industries. As a networking opportunity alone, college could very well pay for itself.

Simply being a college student can open doors to internships, interviews and other career opportunities. Alexis Grant, staff writer for U.S. News, writes that many contacts — some of whom may be alumni of the college — are more willing to meet with and advise someone who is a current student. In addition, many schools either host or will help students attend conferences in their field, another excellent opportunity for networking. The potential to connect with influential professionals is rarely stronger than during college.

COLLEGE HELPS CULTIVATE ESSENTIAL SKILLS
Regardless of your student’s major, college helps cultivate skills that will serve them well in any career. While some of these skills are developed by taking specific courses that emphasize writing, speaking and research, other skills are honed by the college experience as a whole:

• Managing time and meeting deadlines
• Responding to constructive feedback
• Being organized
• Working in teams and groups
• Learning to self advocate
• Thinking critically and creatively

Can these skills be learned outside of the college experience? Of course. But college provides a particularly rich environment in which to master them, and a college degree documents quality time spent in this environment.

There’s no doubt that college is an investment. It requires a significant financial sacrifice up front. But the second aspect of an investment — the reward you expect to reap later — is equally true of college.

College places your student in a fertile networking environment, helps cultivate skills and habits that make them a valuable employee, and provides the baseline they need to apply for most high-paying jobs.

David Leonhardt, writing for the New York Times, heartily agrees: “For all the struggles that many young college graduates face, a four-year degree has probably never been more valuable.”
ACADEMIC ADVISING AND COURSE REGISTRATION

By CollegiateParent

Support your new college student by reminding them to use all the college resources that are available, particularly academic advising.

Their academic advisor will be a key ally throughout college. Meeting with their advisor and learning about course registration is an essential first step on the college journey, and regular meetings with the advisor can help your student stay on track to an on-time graduation.

Your student may receive a faculty or department advisor if they have already declared a major, or they may work with someone who specializes in first-year or undecided students.

The academic advisor will:

- Help your student identify, pursue and attain meaningful educational and personal goals
- Communicate information about university policies, procedures and requirements
- Help your student create a four-year plan tailored to their areas of interest and their eventual major
- Evaluate and monitor your student’s academic progress

Encourage your student to meet with their advisor as early as possible. At larger schools, the first meeting may be over phone/Skype or by email during the summer; at smaller colleges, students may meet their advisors to register for courses during move-in/welcome week. Either way, a prompt meeting means your student is more likely to get the courses they want and need during their first college semester.

Preparing for course registration

1. Before the first meeting with their academic advisor, your student should look at the online college catalog to review Gen Ed and degree requirements and identify areas of study they’d like to explore.
2. They should prepare a list of courses they’d like to take plus questions to ask their advisor about how to achieve their goals (to acquire certain skills or prepare for a particular career, for example).
3. Your student should activate their online student account (if they haven’t already). When they log in, they will see if they are missing any forms or if there is an unpaid bill. These must be taken care of before your student will be allowed to register.
4. They should also activate their new university email address. This is how the school will communicate with your student for the next four years.

The academic advising office helps students in academic difficulty, but it is also a very useful resource for all students. If academic advising can’t answer a question, they will put your student in touch with the appropriate department.

Did your student take a personality assessment in high school like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator? If not, counselors and therapists can administer the Myers-Briggs instrument or it can be taken online. There are also free online personality tests and your student can also visit the “Know Yourself” page on The College Board’s BigFuture website.

Over the summer, students should prepare to make the most of their higher education experience. To be ready for college, they do not have to know their major field of study. They do need to understand themselves as learners. Their motivation to study and work hard (and college coursework will be much harder than high school) will come from a commitment to reaching their goals and seeing their dreams come true.

HELP YOUR STUDENT GET READY TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEIR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE.
Many schools also offer a guest orientation for parents, families and other supporters. They are eager to welcome you to campus and help you learn your way around. During orientation, you will meet many people who work at the university — it is a good opportunity to ask questions. You will also meet other parents and families whose sons and daughters will be your student’s classmates.

Family support is important as students adjust to their new lives in college. Try to attend orientation if you are able!

Topics covered at orientation will include:

- How students sign up for classes and what they need to do to graduate on time
- How to pay tuition and how financial aid works
- Residential and dining options on campus, plus clubs and organizations your student may want to join
- Campus safety
- Health, career and academic support resources available to your student

THE IMPORTANCE OF ORIENTATION

By CollegiateParent

All new college students participate in orientation, either online or on campus. At orientation, your student learns how everything at the university works and what they need to do to get their college career started, including setting up their online student account (if they haven’t already), academic advising and course registration, codes of conduct, and more.

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A NEW KIND OF RELATIONSHIP

Change can be exciting but it can also be scary. One of the biggest changes that can happen in a family is when a child goes to college.

During this transition from high school to college, it’s natural for both students and their families to have mixed emotions. Even as we are very happy for the new experiences that our students will have, and proud of them for taking on this challenge, we may worry about how it will change them and our relationship.

The relationship will change, but this doesn’t mean you won’t stay close or that family isn’t still important to your student. You and the other support people in your student’s life have played a key role in their upbringing. You helped them achieve their goal of high school graduation and applying to college. You are equally important now as you support your student in navigating the many new challenges of college and committing themselves to doing everything they need to complete their degree program.

A few things it helps to remember:

- Your college student is responsible for making their own decisions now but will still turn to you for advice. If there is something you don’t understand about how college works, ask them! They will be happy to trade roles and teach you something new.
- You should have high expectations for your student’s academic achievements, but it usually takes students a while to adjust to the harder college workload. They may be disappointed with their first term or two of grades. Help them keep things in perspective and not put too much pressure on themselves.
- If your student struggles academically in college, or has any kind of personal setback (health, work, relationships, etc.), there are many resources for them. They can find the help they need to solve their problem.
- Your student may develop new views and opinions as a result of all their new experiences. This doesn’t mean that the values they grew up with don’t still matter to them, but on some issues you may find that you need to “agree to disagree.”

By Diane Schwemm
The federal government may also provide subsidized or unsubsidized student loans, which do need to be paid back. It is important to know the difference. While a student is in college, the government pays the interest on subsidized loans. For unsubsidized loans, interest starts accruing (adding up) as soon as a student takes out the loan. This interest is added to the total amount they have to pay back.

The school will have a “priority deadline” for submitting the FAFSA. Students need to reapply for financial aid each year.

2. Recognize that loans are not free money, but taking on some debt is okay. It is sensible not to take on more debt than your student can pay off without hardship after graduation. They should have an idea of some careers they might want to pursue and research typical starting salaries. They should not borrow more than their expected first year salary.

3. Apply for scholarships. ** It takes work to find the right scholarships to apply for because there are so many. High school counselors and college support staff can help your student narrow their scholarship search to ones they have a good chance of winning.

Many colleges maintain searchable scholarship databases. There are also free online websites, and several have sections dedicated to students who are the first in their family to attend college or of Hispanic heritage.

4. Model and teach good budgeting. You can help your student be smart about money before, during and after college. Mint is an excellent free app for beginning budgeters and can help your student see where their money goes and where they can spend less, so they can create a reasonable budget and begin to build savings.

**FAFSA: Free Application for Federal Student Aid. College students need to fill this out each year to apply for financial assistance from the government and their college or university.

**Scholarship: A grant or other financial gift which does not have to be paid back. Some colleges and universities offer merit scholarships automatically, but in most cases your student needs to apply for scholarships which may be awarded for academic or athletic achievement, written essays, and extracurricular or community involvement. Some scholarships seek applicants from particular backgrounds.
A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

By Amanda Knopf

Family support is essential to a student’s confidence and success. Even if you didn’t go to college yourself, you’ve probably moved to a new place or started something new and difficult. You can use any struggles you’ve worked through to imagine what your student is experiencing.

Here is information that will help with a successful transition from high school to college.

FINDING MENTORS*
In high school, you and your student may have found mentors who helped with the college application process. Perhaps it was a high school teacher or counselor, or a friend, relative or co-worker.

Your student will continue to need mentors in college. This may be their academic advisor, a coach, an older student or the RA (Resident Assistant) in their residence hall if they live on campus. If your student had a special bond with a high school teacher or counselor, they should make an effort to stay in touch. These mentors may offer guidance about choosing a major and preparing for a career and can also provide moral support.

If the college has an organization or office dedicated to supporting first-generation students, encourage your student to connect with it.

BOOSTING CONFIDENCE, FACING FEARS
Here are a couple of ways to support your student, plus advice from first-generation college students in their own words.

1. Remind your student how awesome they are! Tell your student often how proud you are of them for making it this far. The determination and resilience they need to get through college will grow out of the skills that got them through high school. They belong in college as much as any other student.

“Going to college, I would just say not to be scared, because it’s not as intense as you think it’s going to be, and everyone here is, for the most part, a mature adult. It’s a pretty friendly atmosphere.”

2. Encourage your student to ask for help. Help your student understand that it’s okay to be vulnerable. They should take advantage of all the campus resources that are available: tutoring, the writing center, counseling, etc.

“People are here to support you. They’re not here to make you feel lesser or that you are not as smart.”

“Don’t be afraid to look for help and get that help, especially if you’re struggling in school — [mental health issues] might be why.”

“Don’t be afraid, because people aren’t going to ridicule you or make you feel like you’re smaller than them. People are just doing their own thing, and they’re friendly for the most part, and staff’s here to help you, and there are so many resources. There is so much going for you to succeed.”

The college journey is challenging, and there will be setbacks and disappointments along the way. You can model a positive attitude for your student. Confidence is contagious!

*MENTOR:
Someone you trust who has the experience to help and guide you.
There are so many different offices and departments on campus that provide services and support to students that it can be confusing! When you have a question, how do you know who to call or where to look on the website? Here is an overview.

How do we pay for things?
Typically after the first term, tuition statements are not mailed home. Bills (and financial aid updates and renewal information) are usually emailed to students as well as being available in the online student account. At some schools, students can permit their parents to create their own login for the purpose of viewing the bill and other financial information.

Nowadays students use their ID cards to enter residence halls, access the meal plan, check out books and make photocopies at the library, do laundry, get into the rec center, and more. Parents can add money to student cards — learn how on the website.

Social opportunities, housing concerns, disciplinary proceedings, special communities
Student Life may encompass on-campus housing and dining, cultural groups, campus events, sports and recreation, student government, and the deans who oversee disciplinary situations. It may also house services for special communities such as veterans, students with disabilities, first-generation students and international students. If your student is trying to get involved, needs social support, or has a concern regarding their living situation they probably want to contact:

Course registration, academic advising and support, study abroad
The Registrar handles course registration and student records. Students typically meet each term with an academic advisor to plan a course of study, talk about possible majors, and discuss how study abroad might fit in. Ask your student the name of their advisor, and find out how that relationship is developing.

Many campuses have a writing center with tutoring resources and academic success workshops; individual academic departments offer their own study groups and review sessions.

Career counseling, campus jobs, volunteering
Students can meet with career counselors or just drop by the Career Center to learn about resources and opportunities. Student Employment is a clearinghouse for jobs both on and off campus. Most schools offer plentiful employment and volunteering opportunities and, though work-study students may receive hiring priority, students often don’t need to receive financial aid to apply.

With any question or concern, it is always a safe bet to call the Parent and Family Program office. Staff will be happy to help or will direct you to the appropriate department.
HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE STUDENT

By Jo Calhoun

General Education requirements (“Gen Eds”)
Most colleges require a set of introductory courses, taken first and second year. Gen Eds ensure that students learn a range of subjects. Gen Ed requirements are described in the university’s online course catalog.

If your student earned AP or IB credit in high school, those credits may substitute for some Gen Ed courses. Policies on AP and IB credit vary widely by school so your student should check.

Academic advising
All students are assigned an academic advisor to help them plan courses and understand Gen Ed and graduation requirements. The advisor can give advice about choosing a major or finding an internship. Your student can go to their advisor with any kind of problem. Encourage your student to see their advisor often!

College classes are very different from high school. Students are becoming more independent, but they will still ask for advice. Here is some helpful information.

1. Encourage your student to get to know faculty members, participate in class, and go to faculty office hours. By getting to know their professors, students will be more comfortable in class and more likely to ask for help when they need it.

2. STUDENTS MUST ATTEND CLASS. Students who go to every class session rarely fail the course. This is what you are paying for!

3. Students should carefully read the syllabus for each course. The syllabus lists assignments and due dates, required books and course materials, and test dates. It is handed out and should also be available through the professor’s web portal.

4. Recommend that your student use a planner or calendar to keep track of their class schedule, homework and exams, and activities.

5. Show an interest. Ask your student what courses they are taking, and about their meetings with their academic advisor.

6. Encourage study skills and time management. College course work is a lot harder than high school. In college, students spend fewer hours in class but many more hours studying outside of class (typically 2–3 hours for every hour of class time). Being a college student is a full-time job!

7. Coach your student to find quiet places to study. Usually this is not at home, if your student still lives with you, or in the residence hall. Campus libraries offer spaces for individual and small group work and are open long hours. Academic buildings and coffee shops have quiet corners.

8. Remind your student to take advantage of help on campus: faculty office hours, the writing center, study groups, and more.

9. Have confidence in your student. Tell them “they can do it!”

CONVERSATION STARTERS:

- Did your high school classes prepare you for the work or will you need some extra help?
- Do you have all the books and supplies you need?
- Tell me about your favorite professor.
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A COLLEGE STUDENT

By Marlene Kern Fischer

Have you ever tried to get in touch with your college student only to have your text or phone call ignored while you wondered where they were and what they were up to? Or perhaps you’ve called and woken them from a nap...at 6 p.m.?

I recall being shocked when I texted my son at 8:30 one Sunday morning, figuring I would hear back later in the day, and he replied immediately. I asked why he was up so early and he replied that, since he had just returned to campus after a weeklong break, he wasn’t back “on schedule” yet.

What is that schedule? I asked my sons as well as other college students and this is what I found out.

Although some students take 9 a.m. classes, most try and start their day a little later — a first class at 10 or 11 is more typical. My middle son, now a college senior, generally sets off to class alone; however, according to a female source, “Girls almost never walk to class alone.” She explained that, “there is usually a ritual and is usually never broken except for someone who is sick, in which case she will typically notify the group of her illness prior to the meeting time.”

Some schoolwork may be done in the afternoons after classes are over, although after dinner seems to be a preferred time for study sessions, both alone or in groups. Almost all the students I spoke with mentioned going to the gym, doing laundry and food shopping (for those who have kitchens in their living spaces) as part of their routine.

Evenings are when meetings for various organizations take place. My son attends fraternity chapter meetings certain nights and if I forget and text or call, I will likely receive a terse text back which reads, “Can’t talk now, in chapter.”

My middle son’s small university has more than 250 student-run clubs and activities, including service organizations, cultural awareness groups, performing groups, spiritual and religious groups, sports and games clubs, student publications, and television and radio stations. Big state universities boast over 1,300 student-run clubs and organizations.

My son has participated in quite a few activities, including an entrepreneurship program in which he and his friends created an online company. He also plays club soccer — another big time commitment. Although my son receives a monthly allowance from us, my husband and I encouraged him (and his older brother when he was a student) to work at a campus job a few hours a week to supplement his funds. I know his busy schedule, plus the different hours we keep, contribute to the limited communication we have with him when he’s at school. Truth be told, I am glad that my sons have taken advantage of all that college has to offer.

According to my sources, at the end of the day, after studying, athletic practices and meetings/rehearsals are concluded, “there is usually late night Netflix binge watching or movie sessions.” Bedtime is pretty late; the hours college students keep are definitely different from the ones they had in high school and those they will have to adhere to once they graduate. When they come home, it’s kind of like returning from a trip abroad — it can take a few days for “college lag” to wear off.

Weekend schedules often run even later — waking up in the early afternoon is not unusual after a party or activity the evening before. Studying is done Saturday and Sunday afternoons (after brunch) and Sunday night because Friday and Saturday nights are set aside for going out and socializing, at least on weekends that don’t fall around midterms or finals. Weekends are also a good time to venture off campus and explore nearby cities. My son has spent some time in Boston and Cambridge, which are only a few miles from his campus, discovering museums, restaurants and shops.

Of course there is no one exact routine for all college students — in fact, from one season to the next, the same student’s schedule can vary tremendously.

Between classes and studying, friends, work and activities, our students lead a hectic existence. I try to encourage my son from afar and not take it personally if I don’t hear from him too often. I know how much he has to pack into a short amount of time; the college years are fleeting but hopefully the friendships he is making and the things he is learning will last a lifetime.
SUPPORT YOUR COMMUTER STUDENT’S CONNECTION TO CAMPUS

By Jo Calhoun

Though first-year students come to campus with diverse backgrounds they share common hopes and dreams. They want to be successful in college, and they hope to make life-long friends.

Colleges and universities structure campus life to help students achieve these goals, doing everything they can to support academic and social success. A satisfying out-of-classroom experience is important to students feeling connected to their school, and when students are connected they’re more likely to persist to graduation.

Does this play out differently for students who live at home during college? Without the experience of living in a residence hall, commuter students must work harder to make meaningful campus connections.

Here are three ways parents of commuter students can encourage them to experience college life fully.

1. Release your students from their traditional childhood roles.

Students learn from classmates and friends and spending casual time together is important. Students who live on campus don’t have curfews, or stop what they are doing to be at the family dinner table. They can continue a group discussion into the evening or go to a movie or out for a bite with friends.

If you have a college student living at home, you now have another adult in the house. That means they come and go as an adult; you may rarely see them for meals; you might consider keeping their family responsibilities to a minimum. This may be very different from high school!

To smooth the transition, talk to your student about:
- Whether or when you will have meals together
- Household chores
- Quiet hours

2. Encourage your students to experience all their campus has to offer.

This can happen by:
- Joining one or two campus clubs or organizations. Student groups based on common interests, cultural identity or faith affiliation offer an important sense of belonging.

However, it’s important to get them the freedom that we would if we left them and their suitcases in a residence hall. They have earned the right to spread their wings, even if they are returning to the nest at night.

3. Explain the advantages of an on-campus job.

Part-time work (preferably no more than 15-20 hours a week) increases a student’s chances of doing well academically and has a big social benefit, too. Students with jobs on campus meet more of their fellow students as well as more faculty members, administrators and staff — a great network for career mentorship, professional references and all-around support.

Even when our students still live at home, it’s important to give them the freedom that we would if we had left them and their suitcases in a residence hall. They have earned the right to spread their wings, even if they are returning to the nest at night.
Choosing a Major

Your student’s major will be the academic area that they focus on during their studies.

By Jo Calhoun

Students take about 10 courses of increasing difficulty and specialization in the major they choose. Choosing their major can feel daunting! Learning a little more about majors yourself is a great way to support your student and to help take a little stress out of this decision.

All schools offer a wide range of majors. Majors may be very specific, with the goal of preparing your student for a certain profession — for example, hospitality management, elementary education or aerospace engineering — or they may be more general, such as history, economics or biology.

Your student’s academic advisor, and counselors at the campus career center, can help your student learn more about majors and how they connect to possible careers. Your student’s choice of major is important, but most majors can prepare your student for a variety of careers.

Tips for being successful in their major:

1. Students do best in classes they enjoy. They should study what they love!
2. Early in college is a good time for your student to explore subjects they didn’t take in high school as well as subjects they are considering for a major. Your student might discover a passion for psychology, architectural design or creative writing.
3. Your student should pay attention to deadlines for declaring a major (usually the second half of sophomore year), but there’s nothing wrong with being undecided for a while.
4. It’s common to change majors once or twice.

• What class do you like the most?
• What’s the most interesting paper or project you’ve done this term?
• Which department’s courses haven’t you tried yet?
• When you think about the future after college, what do you dream about?

Start a great conversation!
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES

By Vicki Nelson

First-year college students face many challenges as they adjust to their new lives. Usually they can take small obstacles and minor failures in stride, but sometimes their struggles are more serious.

If a problem begins to seem overwhelming, students may feel as if they can’t “do college.” Common problems for new students include:

- Feeling unable to handle the workload
- Health issues
- Financial worries
- Having a job that takes up too much time
- Partying too much
- Homesickness
- Lack of self-confidence (“imposter syndrome”)

How can a parent know what’s wrong?
If your student confides in you, you are part way to being able to help them find a solution. Even if they don’t communicate much, you may notice warning signs: they call home a lot, or never call; they never want to come home, or come home all the time; once home, your student doesn’t want to return to school; you sense that your student isn’t going to class. Maybe there are physical changes — a dramatic weight gain or loss, or an appearance of stress and fatigue.

Here’s how you can help.

STEP 1: Get to the root of the problem
Your student needs to admit they have a problem and give it a name. Much like peeling back the layers of an onion, though, the immediate problem may not be the real problem.

For example, your student may see a failing midterm grade. But the failing grade may be the result of not attending class, so attendance is the problem.

Why isn’t your student going to class? Are they working or socializing too much and sleeping through their alarm? Are they having trouble understanding the course material and are afraid they can’t do the work? Different answers point to different solutions.

Your job right now is to stay calm and to listen carefully. A simple “Why?” will help your student peel back the layers and dig deeper.

STEP 2: Create an action plan
There are questions you can ask to help your student with this stage of the process.

- Are you interested in fixing the problem and making necessary changes?
- Is this something you can work on by yourself or do you need help?
- Who do you need to talk to? What resources are available on campus? (Consider advisors, R.A.s, coaches, the counseling center, etc.)
- What successes have you had in the past that you can build on?
- Who is your support network?
- What is the best possible outcome for this situation?

Our students don’t want to disappoint us. We can encourage them not to give up, and perhaps even tell them about the ways we’ve learned from our own failures in life. Every mistake they face up to and fix will make them more competent, more mature and more likely to persist to their goal of a college degree.