

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

By CollegiateParent



As a high school teacher, I have always believed in the value of extracurricular activities. In college this slice of life is even more important. From political organizations to knitting clubs, Greek life to intramural sports, most campuses are host to an enticing variety of extracurricular options.

Academics always come first and balance is key, but the benefits of getting involved on campus are clear.

It's a great way to meet new people.

When she was in college, my friend Lea chose not to get involved in campus activities. "I was from a small town, and I had a close-knit group of high school friends," Lea remembered. "The idea of trying to connect with a whole new group of people was scary. At the time it just seemed easier to go home on the weekends."

Lea later recognized that she missed out. She didn't want her daughter to make the same mistake, so last year when Allie started college, Lea encouraged her to get out of her

comfort zone and get involved. Allie did just that and plugged into a campus social club. A year later Allie is thriving. She has made a lot of new friends and feels connected and at home on campus.

Students can continue interests they enjoyed in high school.

Did your student play a sport in high school? Serve in student government? Was your student an avid hiker, dancer or volunteer? Chances are there are clubs on campus to fit these interests or take one and spin it in a new direction.

Drew played basketball in high school, but after four years of intense competition was relieved that the pressure was off and happy to put his hoops days behind him. Then in college his friends encouraged him to sign up for intramural basketball. In this more relaxed atmosphere, Drew found that he enjoyed the sport more than he ever had before.

New passions await!

College is the perfect time for your student to try out something new. Maybe your daughter always wanted to write for the school newspaper but never had time. Your son wants to try theater or fencing, ballroom dancing or karate. The great thing about

college is that learning isn't confined to the classroom. Extracurricular activities are a way for students to learn more about themselves.

Campus involvement can provide career prep experience.

Freshmen and sophomores typically focus on activities that will help them get acquainted and have fun. For upperclassmen, activities like student government, student-directed media, professional clubs, volunteer work and internships can provide job-related skills and experience.

As a senior, Alan served as a Resident Assistant. This turned out to be far more than just a way to reduce his room and board bill. His mom Pamela said that being an RA helped Alan develop as a leader and brought out his desire to help others. In part because of this experience, Alan gravitated to a career as a police officer.

Campus involvement is an important part of the overall college experience. Encourage your student. Don't push. Keep in mind that making independent decisions, and even mistakes, is a crucial part of becoming an adult. And that, of course, is one of our main goals for our daughters and sons during their college years.



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