



MIAMI UNIVERSITY

STUDENT LIFE



CollegiateParent

Insider

Your Family's Guide to the College Years

Tips To Help You Support Your Student
Throughout Their College Transition



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Meet Our Writers

Active Minds is the nation's premier nonprofit organization supporting mental health awareness and education for students. With a presence on more than 800 campuses, Active Minds empowers students to create supportive communities, connect peers to resources, and take action for suicide prevention. Explore helpful resources at activeminds.org.

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CollegiateParent has published this magazine to share insider information about the college parenting experience and highlight campus and community resources. This resource is brought to you by Miami University.

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Table of Contents

6 Miami Resources

- 6 Welcome to Miami University
- 7 Ongoing Engagement Opportunities for Miami Parents and Families

8 The Adjustment to College

- 8 First Year of College Wisdom
- 10 The Academic Adjustment from High School to College
- 12 Finding Community on Campus

14 A New Perspective on Parenting

- 14 Surviving the Early Weeks as a New College Parent
- 16 Start a Real Conversation with Your College Student
- 18 Bracing for Reentry

20 Academic Success and Career Prep

- 20 Choosing a Major: 6 Tips for Guiding Your Student
- 22 The Path from College to Career
- 24 Finals Support for Your Student

26 Life in Balance

- 26 Wellness Advice to Share
- 28 Supporting Mental Health: A Checklist for Families
- 30 Balancing the Budget

Welcome!

Congratulations on the beginning of your student's first year at Miami University! We are excited for you and your student to be a part of the Miami Family. Your support during their Miami experience is integral to their success, and you're a valued and important partner at Miami.

We know that the first few weeks after sending your student to college are often filled with excitement and anxiety — for you and your student! This time is also a very real reminder of the significant shift in your relationship with your emerging young adult. Remember, the values you've instilled over time form the core of the person they are becoming. College is a place where they will clarify those values and learn from people who may hold different values.

College is full of ups and downs, successes and failures, false starts and learning experiences. We tell students that this is a safe place to take well-calculated risks, and that the most significant growth and learning often comes from making mistakes. However, this can be especially hard for you to watch from afar and resist the urge to intervene when your student experiences frustration and hardship. Shifting to the role of coaching your student through the situation, rather than intervening for your student, will go a long way toward developing their ability to handle similar situations in the future.

We don't expect you or any family member to support your student alone or to know the answers to all of their questions. This guide is structured to provide information directly applicable to your student's college experience and many of the common situations students encounter. We hope you will find it helpful in better understanding these issues and identifying resources that can facilitate your student's success.

Parent & Family Programs and the Division of Student Life at Miami are committed to supporting you throughout your student's time on campus. We are with you every step of the way, now until graduation.



Love and Honor!

Mark W. Pontious, Ph.D.
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& Family Programs
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Parent & Family Programs and the Division of Student Life at Miami are committed to supporting you throughout your student's time on campus.



Ongoing Engagement Opportunities for Miami Parents and Families

There is a lot of information related to supporting your student that doesn't necessarily make sense to communicate at orientation, but also requires more interaction than an email newsletter.

This is why we are proud to offer a schedule of parent and family webinars throughout the academic year. These online sessions provide the opportunity to hear directly from Miami staff on topics such as planning for study abroad, fraternity and sorority recruitment, supporting a student who is sick, and academic support resources. Additionally, your questions are immediately answered in the moment with a depth of information not always possible with a newsletter. Visit MiamiOH.edu/parents and click on "Resources" to find the list of this year's webinars and recordings of previous sessions.

Beyond sending you information related to your student's time at Miami, we recognize that you also have knowledge and experiences that can benefit other Miami families and the University. Share your wisdom by joining and actively participating in the [Miami University | Parents & Family Members Facebook group](#), which has over 11,000 family members of Miami students who trade information, strategies, and celebrations related to their Miami student.

Not yet receiving newsletters and other messages from Parent & Family Programs? Visit MiamiOH.edu/parents and click on "Stay In Touch" to join the email distribution list for your student's class year.



First Year of College Wisdom

By Vicki Nelson

As a professor, I often feel I have so much I could share with new college students to help soften the blow of the adjustment — if they would just listen to me. But students don't always heed the advice of their professors. However, they do listen to other students — they're interested in the wisdom of those just a step or two ahead of them.

As the last academic year wound down, I sat down with a group of eight first-year students as they reflected on their experiences. I asked each of them one question: "What will you do differently next year?" Their responses showed a firm desire to build on lessons learned.

Time Management

Marcus was quick to say he knew exactly what he needed to do differently next year: manage his time better. He's a good student, but just assuming he'd find the time to get things done meant he was

always worrying about his projects and assignments and still sometimes missed deadlines. First on his list for sophomore year is to buy a good planner — and use it to sketch out when assignments are due and what he will do when.



Discipline

Matthew used a planner and put his assignments in it faithfully. What he didn't always do was follow through with his commitments. His calendar said it was time to study for an upcoming test, but he found all sorts of other things to do instead. This fall he's going to discipline himself to stick to his plans.

Sleep

Stefan also knew right away what he he wanted to change: his sleep habits. Freshman year, it was hard to stick to a schedule in the noisy residence hall. He struggled with assignments when he felt groggy from lack of sleep and missed more than a few early morning classes. To get more Zzz's, he plans to buy noise-canceling headphones and consistently go to bed at a reasonable time.

Procrastination

Shari tended to procrastinate and also to underestimate how much time assignments would take. All her work was harder and more time-consuming than it had been in high school. She'd had to ask for too many extensions on projects and had taken too many tests feeling unprepared. As a sophomore, she intends to start things earlier to avoid all that last minute panic.

Join In

As a freshman, James was so worried about getting his work done that he turned down chances to join clubs and participate in intramural sports. James loves basketball and wishes he'd joined the campus newspaper so he could write about sports. He plans to sign up for a few things this fall so he can get to know people who share his interests.

Self-Care

Hillary had some academic struggles as a freshman, often because she had trouble staying focused. She is determined this year to take better care of herself — especially by working to shut out all of the drama that can happen with roommates and with other students' problems. Her summer plan was to learn more about meditation so she can use it to calm her thoughts and distance herself from everyone else's high emotions.

Lists

During the first year of college, Austin often felt overwhelmed by everything he had to do — both inside and outside of the classroom. He had a planner for big assignments, but it was the little things that got past him because he was trying to hold them in his head. He wasn't sure whether he'll keep lists on paper or in an app on his phone — just so long as he gets all of the to-do's out of his head and together in one place.

Balance

Unlike James, Marisol got involved on campus — maybe to a fault. She's a strong student and managed to keep up her grades even while participating in several clubs, hosting a radio show, and saying yes to the many requests to get involved in special projects. She wants to learn to say "no" — not to everything, but enough to be selective. She recognizes that doing less will let her enjoy what she does do even more.

This is first-year wisdom straight from first-year experiences. Eight students with eight ideas that will make a difference for their success.

The Academic Adjustment from High School to College

By Vicki Nelson

You can support your first-year student by talking with them about how their college academic experiences will differ from high school in three major areas:

1. Classes and assignments

- Lectures may not directly follow the textbook, but students are still responsible for material covered in the book as well as in class.
- Students might not be tested on material assigned early in the term until much later or even on the final exam.
- Professors may not remind students of upcoming assignments or exams and may spend little or no time reviewing material. Students are expected to manage their own progress by following the syllabus, and in general the pace of classes is faster.
- College assignments often emphasize theory and the application of concepts over learning facts.
- Instead of regular quizzes and chapter tests, there may only be two or three big tests or projects.
- The professor may or may not consider attendance, attitude and effort when calculating your student's final grade.

2. Expectations outside of the classroom

- **Free time:** Most high school students spend 6-7 hours a day in class, five days a week. College students may spend as little as 12-15 hours per week in the classroom. Those extra 20+ "free" hours per week mean that students are free to schedule their study time as they wish, not that they don't have anything to do during that time.
- **Doing the work:** Students are expected to do most of their coursework outside of class. They can expect to spend an average of two hours outside of the classroom for every hour spent in the classroom. In other words, a student carrying 15 credits (15 classroom hours) should be spending an additional 30 hours per week on classwork. Many students who struggle academically do so not because of their ability but because they underestimate the amount of time they should spend studying.
- **Finding help:** Almost every college offers resources to help students succeed. However, students are responsible for knowing those resources, recognizing their need for help, and taking advantage of the help available. Encourage your student to seek help early and often.



In high school, students have little control over their schedule and both teachers and parents help them stay on track. In college, students are expected to keep track of their own work and progress. Students who are ready to advocate for themselves and take advantage of the support available are students who succeed.

3. Relationships with professors

Many college students don't take advantage of the mentoring that faculty members can provide. You can help your student understand the importance of connecting with instructors and also give them tips for how to foster this connection.

- **Taking the initiative:** In high school, students have daily contact with their teachers. In college, they may see a particular professor only a couple of times a week. Most professors want to get to know their students better and help them succeed, but it's the student's responsibility to reach out.
- **Office hours:** Going to office hours is the easiest and best way for students to get to know their professors. Students can use these conversations to get feedback and ask for suggestions about how to improve.
- **Teaching Assistants and study sessions:** Most college professors are experts in their field of study, but may have less training in teaching methods. If your student's learning style doesn't seem to match the professor's teaching style, they may need to reach out for clarification of material. Teaching Assistants are upper level students who help run discussion sections, labs and study sessions and are approachable and knowledgeable.



office hours

Regular times each week when faculty members are available for students to drop by their office without an appointment.

syllabus

A document handed out in each class at the start of the term — it includes the information covered by the course; dates and deadlines for tests, papers and projects; the instructor's contact information; required books and materials; attendance policy; and grading procedures.

Finding Community on Campus

By Kelli Ruhl



To thrive instead of just survive, college students need to find community. Community is a friend or a group of friends who feel like home — who allow your student to grow into the person they want to become, and stand beside them throughout their college years and beyond.

All new freshmen want to make friends but it doesn't happen overnight. To find your people, you have to put yourself out there.

In my case, it took a whole semester (and a firm nudge from my parents) to find a group of close friends at my large public university. The first few months on campus, in a new place without the circle of friends I'd grown up with, I felt adrift. Seeing this, my parents pushed me to check out a college ministry that my older brother had attended, and to sign up for a service trip to Costa Rica.

Despite my reservations — as in I didn't know a single person on the trip! — I gave it a shot. That decision changed my life. On that trip I found my community.

Your newly independent first-year student is in the driver's seat now, able to make their own choices about how to spend their time outside of the classroom. They are no longer limited to the experiences and personalities of their hometown, or the high school pressure to blend in. In college, they get to celebrate what makes them unique.



If your student isn't sure where to start on the road to building community, here are some options worth checking out:

Social and Cultural Identity Groups

These are a great way for students to engage with individuals of similar backgrounds or lifestyles. The University of California Santa Cruz, for example, has a large selection of student-run groups, including chapters of the Sikh Student Association; Prism: Student Coalition for Gender, Sex, & Sexuality; Iranian Student Association; College Diabetes Network; Black Student Union; Hermanas Unidas; and Hmong Student Association among many, many others. No matter your student's unique identity, they can find a place to embrace it among peers, and many of these groups welcome allies and host campus-wide activities.

Intramural and Club Sports

For serious (and not-so-serious!) athletes, intramural and club sports are a fantastic way to meet people and feel part of a tight-knit group. Intramural sports provide a range of men's, women's and coed team and individual activities. Club sports are a more competitive option for those who want to compete at the local, intercollegiate, regional or even national level.

Student Clubs and Organizations

No matter what sparks your student's interest, there is likely a club that caters to it. From school publications and student government to groups centered around chess, creative writing, yoga, bee-keeping, fashion, mathematics and more, there truly is something for everyone.

Sororities and Fraternities

Students looking for a truly immersive social experience may want to look into Greek life if there are chapters on their campus. These "brotherhoods" and "sisterhoods" involve communal living, secret handshakes and social calendars chock-full of gatherings, meetings,

philanthropic events and bonding experiences. Sororities and fraternities can be expensive, but they often pay off in the long run. Alumni look out for their brothers and sisters, which translates into prime networking opportunities for graduates.

Beyond finding a group of close friends, it's also important for students to get involved with their campus community as a whole.

Cheering at games, attending events or getting involved in volunteer work are fun ways for your student to feel like they are truly a part of their school.

Volunteer and Social Justice Opportunities

Suggest that your student explore the college's website for opportunities to volunteer in the community or sign up for an "alternative break" trip (these may be local projects over shorter breaks, or involve travel to other parts of the U.S. or even abroad).

Intercollegiate Athletics

Sporting events are a prime place to meet people, and also the perfect way to foster team spirit and feel connected to their school and their classmates.

Campus Events and Performances

Calendars boasting a wealth of school-affiliated events, from concerts and lectures to art and photography exhibits, can be found on the college website. Encourage your student to check the calendar every week or two to see what sparks their interest.

A Class in a New Academic Area

As your student digs into their major, there should still be time to take a few classes just for the joy of discovery. Cheer them on as they embrace the challenge of moving outside their intellectual comfort zone. The bonus: a chance to meet classmates they might not otherwise cross paths with.

Surviving the Early Weeks as a New College Parent

By Suzanne Shaffer



When it was time to say goodbye to my daughter after helping her move to her new campus, I didn't even mist up. But on the airplane later, I'm sure my fellow passengers wondered why I was crying the entire flight home.

Not all the tears were from sadness. There were tears of pride and thankfulness, too, and in general a feeling of breathless expectation. She and I were both about to go through some big changes.

The early weeks of my daughter's college career were a mix of excitement, frustration and panic...and those were just my emotions. After 18 years of doing my best to raise a responsible adult, I wasn't so sure she would act like one — or so sure I was ready to let her try.



The start of college requires a new approach to parenting. Here is what I learned:

Embrace your changing role.

The day-to-day responsibility of meeting all your student's needs now gives way to listening and advising (with a heavy emphasis on the former). Fear not: you are sure to get the occasional phone call with a ridiculous question ("How many degrees is a fever and what did you used to give me to make me feel better?") reminding you that they still rely on you.

Don't expect overnight adulthood.

No matter their maturity level, all freshmen need time to get the hang of their new responsibilities. Be patient. As they figure out how to study, write college-level papers, keep an eye on their bank balance, make new friends, detach from those friends if they turn out to be unsuitable, and so much more, they will drop balls and make mistakes. It's a process.

Anticipate some academic struggle.

When my daughter, a former straight-A student, got B's and C's on her first papers and tests, she was crushed. I encouraged her to take advantage of tutoring, writing labs and study groups and to meet with professors to ask for help. It takes a term or two to adjust to the college curriculum, work load and testing style and to figure out what's important to study from a lecture. Grades will almost always improve.

Prepare to be ignored (if only a little).

College students have action-packed schedules. The time they spend on their phone will be communicating with friends, not their parents. To avoid worrying, establish some communication guidelines that work for both of you, whether this means scheduling a regular weekly call or just having a rule about how long they can wait before texting you back.

Don't race to the rescue.

Psychology professor Marshall Duke has addressed family members at new student orientation for three decades. If and when your student calls home with a dilemma, Duke recommends moving "like your feet are stuck in molasses." Remind your student of the resources available on campus and express your confidence in their ability to handle things. In my experiences with both my son and daughter, they almost always just needed to vent and talk through the situation. They weren't looking for me to solve their problems; they simply wanted a listening ear and advice if asked.

Send some love.

My daughter was homesick at first so to let her know I was thinking about her, I mailed frequent short letters, popping in a gift card, some confetti, a silly sticker. A few months in, she informed me that, while she appreciated the letters, her mailbox was filling faster than she could empty it. What a happy sign — she had better things to do than haunt the mailroom! I still wrote and sent occasional care packages, just not as often. (Because in all honesty, writing the letters may have mattered more to me than receiving them did to her.)

Know that it's okay to let go.
You've done everything to
make sure your student is
prepared. They've got this.
And so do you.

Start a Real Conversation with Your College Student

By Marlene Kern Fischer



Communicating with your college student can be a tricky thing. When (and if) you're able to reach them, you may find that they're in a rush, surrounded by other people or simply not in the mood to chat. You're willing to settle for a text conversation, but even those can be less than illuminating ("TTYL").

After sharing your student's daily life for 18 years, it's understandable that these abbreviated exchanges may leave you feeling blue. Cheer up! There are ways to improve your conversations. Through trial and error, I've identified three approaches which can be used to glean information from a college student. The methods aren't mutually exclusive; you can employ any combination.

The Humorous Approach

My sons get less annoyed at what they view as prying if I make them laugh first. Example: "Are you eating your Tide pods or using them?" This might elicit a chuckle (or a groan) and pave the way for a discussion about things such as how often they're doing laundry, what they're eating, and other nuts and bolts of college life. I was appalled to discover that my boys were only changing their sheets a few times each term and was willing to use any opening to encourage more attention to housekeeping.



The Roundabout Approach

Our college students don't appreciate us snooping into their social lives, especially regarding relationships. My oldest son once told me flat out that when and if there was an important development in this area he'd let me know. But I was rarely patient enough to wait. When I knew my two older sons had their fraternity formal coming up, I'd ask about it and then oh-so casually inquire if they were taking anyone. This was how I discovered both of them had girlfriends.

I also used the roundabout approach to find out how they were getting along with their roommates. When it was time for next year's housing selection, I'd ask if they planned on living with their current roommate, and if not, who they were considering instead. This gave me some insight into the shifting landscape of their friendships. It can be a way to get them talking about the classes they're taking as well. Saying something like, "I just paid the Amazon order for your sociology books — they look interesting," might pave the way for them to open up.

You can employ the roundabout approach as a gentle prompt, too. Meeting with professors is important to having a successful academic career. As a senior my middle son expressed regret that he didn't start going to his professors' office hours until halfway through college. If you want to know if your student has reached out to their professors, you might ask, "So, does your history professor have pictures of her spouse and kids on her desk? How about her dog?" Your student may get the hint, find out when office hours are, and plan to stop in.

The Direct Approach

Sometimes this is the only way to go. Parents worry — it's alright to just come out and ask what we want to know if we're concerned (or even merely curious). If our students get annoyed, so be it. I've asked my sons outright about their health, happiness and homesickness, to name just a few topics. When using the direct approach it's best to be specific. Instead of "how are you feeling?" try, "It sounds like your allergies are bothering you — are you taking your medicine?" I avoid open-ended questions where the answer could be "fine" because more often than not that's the answer I'll get.

Not every student is a born communicator and you may have to learn to live with that. I find that my sons generally share more in person and sometimes I have to wait until I see them to find out what's really going on.

At the end of the day, at a time in their life when they're asserting their independence, no matter what you ask or how you ask it, you may be met with some resistance. Keep trying. The important thing is for them to know that you're always there, ready to listen when they're ready to talk.



Bracing for Reentry

By Connie Lissner

When my oldest was coming home for his first extended break freshman year, I was positively giddy. I couldn't wait to have the whole family under one roof again. We could talk for more than 10 minutes on Sundays! Things could go back to normal.

After he was home for a couple of days, it was clear that "normal" had a new definition.

Following months of being on his own and doing things "his way" (a phrase I heard 20 times a day), my newly returned college student bucked against the family routine. Sleep was on his time (i.e., not when the rest of us tended to sleep), meals were

often eaten out with friends, and hanging out with us wasn't a priority.

He wasn't the only one who needed to readjust. When he first left, I thought I'd never get used to setting the table for three instead of four. Shockingly, I did. I also got used to less laundry, smaller grocery bills and a significant reduction in noise in our house.



I learned a lot from that experience, and after three years have developed a “survival plan” that seems to work.

1. Set ground rules early.

Whatever you expect of your student (chores, family commitments, attitudes), address this early and often. Take curfew. I can guarantee your student will balk at having one. Their argument will be: “You didn’t stay up all night worrying about where I was when I was away” (little do they know, right?). But maybe you want them home at a reasonable hour so you can sleep without being woken at 3 a.m. by someone making a grilled cheese sandwich.

2. That said, be flexible.

Sure it’s your house, your rules, but remember that your student has been managing life without you (no matter how many times a day they text). You want to encourage that independence. Now is the time to loosen your grip — just a little.

3. Recognize that reentry will always require some adjustment.

Things will be different every time your student comes home. Even after three years, the first few days are always awkward at our house. Everyone is navigating the new setup and trying hard not to start a fight (well, almost everyone).

4. Respect the evolving sibling dynamic.

Perhaps your middle child is reveling in the new role of older sibling, or your solo younger child is enjoying their space. With the return of your college student, family dynamics will shift and new conflicts may pop up. Eventually everyone will settle into their new roles.

5. Negotiate what you’re willing to do for them.

Will you do their laundry? Cook every meal? My son knows how to do laundry, but I prefer to have all the laundry done at once and personally don’t want my laundry washed like a college student washes their laundry. I also enjoy cooking, so making dinner for everyone isn’t a problem for me. (Three meals a day, on the other hand, is not an option.)

6. Prepare to see less of your student than you might like.

Schedule an occasional mandatory family meal and squeeze in a game or movie whenever an opportunity presents itself (it may be a quick round of Hearts on a rainy Saturday afternoon). Seize any chance to chat in the kitchen even if that means you’re awake and willing to make that post-midnight grilled cheese.

7. Enjoy the spontaneous moments.

That first break, I spent so much time trying to plan activities that I missed many of the little moments I could have shared with my son. Once I realized it was a lost cause, I chucked the bucket list and started enjoying the found time between us.

8. Don’t put your own life on hold.

I know I’m not the only parent who waits around on the off chance that my kid might want to grab lunch or run a few errands with me. Don’t blow off that yoga class, bike ride, or dinner with friends. And don’t feel guilty about it either.

Most importantly: Marvel at the new person your young adult has become. Maybe it’s because of a class he’s taken, a new friend he’s met or a new experience he’s had, but every time my son comes home he is a little different, a little more his own person. And that really is something to look forward to.



Choosing a Major: 6 Tips for Guiding Your Student

By Amy Baldwin, Ed.D.

Every parent wants their student to find their “calling” and click with a major that will help pave the way to a career. Students want that, too! But the process of declaring a major can be scary as well as exhilarating. “Am I making the right choice?” they wonder. “Will I be able to find a job after graduation?”

Luckily, there are stress-reducing ways to support and guide students who are at this juncture.

- 1. Relax.** No need to make this experience more fraught than it already is. Remember that it’s normal for the journey from major to career to twist and turn. Make an effort to keep things in perspective and share this attitude with your student.
- 2. Have them reflect on their past to figure out their future.** Encourage your student to reflect on what they liked when they were younger, what they did in their spare time for fun, and what activities they participated in and why. Their past holds clues about the kinds of majors that might interest them. Someone who counseled their friends through difficult times may find themselves interested in psychology or social work. An athlete might gravitate to sports management...or sports medicine.



3. Encourage them to focus on what they want to learn, not what sounds good. The best way to erase self-doubt is to find a subject they like and that will help them build transferrable skills. Ask what kinds of classes interest them the most and which classes challenge them to think and grow. A student who says they want to major in business “so my parents will leave me alone” is not a student who will be happy with their choice long term.

4. Suggest they compare degree plans. Reading through the course catalog (available on the university website) is another way to narrow their choices. If your student is choosing between economics and education, for example, suggest they read through the degree requirements to see which plan appeals to them more and also browse the course descriptions. They’ll spend a lot of time in their major courses and should be intrigued by the topics that await them in that department.

5. Suggest they interview recent college graduates. Some of the best advice about college majors comes from recent graduates. New grads are likely to tell your student that, in general, the skills they acquired in college (e.g., critical thinking, written communication, appreciation for diversity) are more important than the content knowledge they gained from their major. At the very least, their advice may lower the pressure to make a “right choice.”

What if my student wants to change their major?

Students change majors for a variety of reasons and it is perfectly normal. But it can still be worrisome to parents, who wonder if their student will be able to graduate on time.

In addition to discussing what led them to this new direction (was it a single fabulous course or professor? a new career goal?), here are questions you can ask to help your student make the best decision:

- *How many additional courses do you need to take?* The earlier the change is made, the less likely your student will need to take lots of additional courses.
- *Will you need to take more credit hours per term or take summer classes to stay on track?* In some cases, an additional course per term or a couple of classes over the summer may be all that’s needed to graduate in four years.
- *What other requirements does the new degree plan include?* Some degree plans require internships or practicums that must be taken into consideration.

The Path from College to Career

By Lauren Herskovic

A college degree is not an automatic ticket to a career. This fact has a lot of people (including concerned parents) talking, mostly about jobless college grads living on their family's couch. Some people are questioning the value of a college education.

The truth is, a college education is 100% worth it. Students just need to understand how to leverage these four magical years into a promising career or admission to graduate school.

Here are five things your student should do during college to prepare for what comes next.

1

Explore.

Some students arrive on campus knowing what they want to do and some don't. Others think they know but change direction when they get there.

College is an opportunity for students to figure out who they are and what they love. They need to find those intriguing classes (even if they don't seem "practical" or relate to an intended major) and take them. Exploration exposes students to new subjects and ways of thinking. Best case: they discover a passion that leads to a potential career. Worst case: they've broadened their minds a bit.

2

Get involved.

College campuses teem with student groups and activities. There's something for everyone and your student should jump right in. Just like high school, it's not the number of activities but the level of involvement that matters. Whether student government, fraternity and sorority life, a cultural or service organization, campus politics or sports, they can get involved, have an impact and, when they're ready, take on a leadership role.

Campus involvement leads to a happier overall college experience, boosts academic success and contributes to a stronger resumé. When your student applies to graduate school or for a job, being able to show leadership or relevant experience will set them apart from other applicants. BONUS! Activities also give them more awesome people with whom to...

**3****Network.**

While students are making friends and having fun, it's important they keep networking in mind. They should connect with peers, TAs, professors, everyone. They should get to know people and make sure people know them. It will come in handy in ways they can't even imagine now, which is why most students don't think to do this on their own and may need a push from you. The college network may be the most valuable thing they leave with at graduation.

4**Get to know — and stay in touch with — professors.**

Encourage your student to talk to professors after class and go to office hours. Does a professor have research your student can assist with? This is terrific experience, especially if the subject relates to their career goals. Through their own networks, professors may be able to help with job placement. They will also be able to write stronger graduate school letters of recommendation if they have developed a mentoring relationship with your student.

5**Do an internship.**

Whether during the term or over the summer, internships are important for many reasons — here are the three biggies.

1. Students get real-life experience in a field.
2. Internships look great on their resumé because they illustrate your student's initiative and desire to challenge themselves and gain new skills.
3. Internships give students a chance to see if they like a field. Speaking as someone who tried three careers before finding the one that truly fit, I wish I had dabbled when the stakes were lower.

The University Career Center

is here to help your student gain professional experience through internships, part-time jobs, and student organizations on campus. They can teach your student how to share their experiences through their resume and cover letter, LinkedIn, interviewing, and networking.





Finals Support for Your Student

By Diane Schwemm

The weeks last weeks of the term are tough on students. No way to sugarcoat it. They are buried in work: reading, exam preparation, final projects, paper writing.



Some first-year students experience another wave of homesickness. Seniors are extra stressed as they work on theses and capstone projects while applying for jobs and graduate school. Oh, and it's cold and flu season!

You may not hear from your student much, or at all. This is natural and most likely okay. They need space, but they also need encouragement and support. When you do talk, or in a letter or a text exchange, you can reinforce strategies for getting through finals healthy and whole. Here are tips to share.

Maximize academic support.

- As soon as final projects and papers are assigned, break them into smaller pieces and get started.
- Put all these tasks into a master calendar or your planner and prioritize in order of importance.
- Attend all available study sessions, faculty office hours, etc.
- Get individual tutoring in subjects where you're struggling.

Take care of yourself.

This means:

- Get enough sleep.
- Take short, frequent study breaks (you can put these in your planner).
- Exercise — including outdoors in natural light if possible.
- Spend quality time with friends (again, you can schedule this).
- Eat healthy meals.
- Stay hydrated (try not to rely too much on caffeine).

Encourage your student to pay attention for finals support events on campus at the student union, library, health center, etc. and reach out for stress relief through the counseling center.

What else can family members do?

Understand that your student may not have time for the usual phone calls. Send an occasional text/social message that doesn't require a response. Check in to confirm their travel plans and offer to help if needed. And they'll welcome a finals care package:

- Healthy snacks (nuts, dried fruit, protein bars)
- Fidget or stress relief toy
- Cozy hat, gloves, scarf or slippers
- New earbuds
- Gift card for coffee shop or restaurant they like in town
- Calming teas
- Vitamin C drops or Emergen-C



Wellness Advice to Share

By Amanda Taylor

The pace of college life is invigorating, but it can also be exhausting. Whenever you have the chance, take time to mentor your student in healthy life habits. Here are tips to share and discuss.

Managing stress

Stress in college doesn't have to be a given. There are many proven ways to manage stress:

- Cardio exercise, yoga and meditation lower stress levels and calm the body and mind. Integrating these practices takes discipline at first but pays off big-time in the long run.

- A daily spiritual practice, being in nature, spending quality time with a friend or journaling are all ways to combat stress.
- Staying organized and managing time are also key in combating stress.

Talk with your student about what has worked for them in the past, and about people you both know who do a good job managing stress.



Eating for optimal health

In college, students may not eat as well as they did at home. Some talking points:

1. Remind your student that eating fast foods, drinking too much caffeine and consuming lots of sugar will make them feel sluggish and can weaken the immune system.
2. Encourage your student to eat fresh fruit and veggies and try not to skip meals.
3. Keeping healthy snacks on hand — cheese, nuts, seeds, protein bars — can help them maintain normal blood sugar levels and stave off binge eating.
4. Taking daily vitamins and drinking plenty of water are also good nutritional habits.

Sleep is key

It's normal for students to experience disruptions to their sleep schedule in college. There are ways to facilitate a good night's sleep and productive day:

- Establish a bedtime routine.
- Work at a desk instead of the bed.
- Turn off screens.
- Limit caffeine, alcohol, soda and hardcore snacking before bed.
- Limit all-nighters.

Abstain or limit alcohol consumption

Drinking is a major health concern on college campuses and increases the risk for accidents, sexual assault, violence, unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and poor academic performance. Talk with your student about drink limits. If they are underage, encourage them to wait to

drink as there are legal consequences for underage drinking. Help your student establish healthy boundaries and talk about alternatives to drinking alcohol.

If your student chooses to drink, educate them on the dangers of binge drinking — that's four or more drinks depending on percentage of body fat, metabolism and other factors like medication. The more they know about drugs and alcohol, the more likely they are to make wise choices.

Know the resources

College campuses offer health and resource centers to address most of your student's needs. Familiarize yourself with where everything is and what's offered when you're on campus; browse the website, too. Talking with your student about what is available can empower them to reach out and get help if needed.

More Health Tips

1. Make sure your student has a first aid/health care kit including a thermometer, and knows when to go to the campus health center.
2. Encourage your student to get a flu shot (often offered for free on campus).
3. Talk up the benefits of a regular exercise routine. Joining a team, taking a class or finding a workout buddy can make this easier and more fun.



Supporting Mental Health: A Checklist for Families

By Stephanie Pinder-Amaker, Ph.D. and Active Minds

Mental health issues are far more common than most people realize. Fifty percent of us will encounter a mental health challenge in our lifetime! Unfortunately, the group least likely to seek help are young people. And while starting college is exciting, some students find themselves overwhelmed by the transition to an unfamiliar environment full of new pressures and expectations.

Awareness and open lines of communication — with family members, professors/instructors, coaches and friends — can go a long way toward making sure no student struggles alone. Check out these tips on how to empower and support your new college student.

1. Prepare your student.

It's very likely that your student, or one of their roommates or friends, will experience a mental health issue while at college. Prepare your student by talking about mental health on a regular basis. Review together what campus resources are available if they're ever in a position to help a friend. By maintaining a dialogue, you'll help them feel comfortable coming to you with questions and problems without fear of being judged.

2. Scope out services and have a plan.

All students, but particularly those who have already experienced mental health issues, should have a plan in place in case things get too difficult to handle. Call or make an appointment with the campus mental health or counseling center to learn what services are available.

If your student is already in the care of a psychiatrist or psychologist, make plans to continue that care with a clinician close to campus. (The campus mental health center may keep a list of convenient off-campus providers who work well with students.) Your student should have regular check-ins with a professional to monitor any changes. They can also pre-register with the Accessible Education Center to access helpful accommodations.



If you feel your student needs immediate help, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or text “BRAVE” to 741-741 for free 24/7 confidential support.

3. Stay in touch.

Make time for regular conversations in addition to texting your student. It’s easier to hear in their voice when something is bothering them. Facetime and Skype can be even better. Keep an eye out for symptoms of depression (including sadness), anxiety, hopelessness, irritability, restlessness, sleep difficulties, loss of appetite, suicidal thoughts, unexplained aches and pains, and tearfulness. A sudden drop in academic performance can be another sign that support is needed.

4. Check in about self-care.

The importance of a healthy diet, adequate sleep and regular exercise can’t be overstated, particularly as they relate to overall mental health. Help your student connect self-care with emotional stability — ask them how they feel when they eat well or when they sleep poorly.

5. Forget stigma.

If your student is experiencing mental health issues, prioritize getting help over the fear of tarnishing their transcript or reputation. Some students will need time off from school to recover and get back on track. Each college has its own policy about granting medical leave — you can contact the Dean of Students office to find out the procedure for taking a temporary leave of absence.

6. Allow mistakes.

Perfection is not a realistic goal and it’s important to let your student know that you support them no matter what. Mistakes and failure are an unavoidable part of life and we can learn from them. A perfect GPA isn’t worth it if it comes at the expense of your student’s emotional well-being.

Active Minds is the nation’s premier nonprofit organization supporting mental health awareness and education for students. With a presence on more than 600 campuses benefiting 5.4+ million students, Active Minds empowers students to create supportive communities, connect peers to resources, and take action for suicide prevention. Explore helpful resources at [activeminds.org](https://www.activeminds.org).

The H.O.P.E. (Help Over the Phone Everywhere) line is available 24/7 for students to call for immediate support, crisis intervention, and stabilization from a licensed mental health counselor.

The H.O.P.E. Line phone number is 855-249-5649.



Balancing the Budget

By Suzanne Shaffer
and CollegiateParent

One of the biggest challenges outside the classroom for students adjusting to college life is learning to manage money.

They're suddenly responsible for paying for all sorts of things on their own, from textbooks and groceries to laundry (you hope) and maybe an occasional haircut. With the convenience of buying and ordering stuff with a smartphone or debit card, it can be easy to let little purchases add up to a financial headache.

The parent's role? Help your student make a budget and, if you have access, help them track the money going in and out of their bank account. Printable budget worksheets are easy to find online, including on your bank's website, and there are many good smartphone budgeting apps, too — Mint is a favorite.



The Fall Term Spending Money Budget

If you didn't do this before the start of the school year, take time now to make a list with your student of their likely flexible/recreational expenses (everything besides tuition, room, board and student fees — although if they'll contribute to these, put them in the budget as well).

Flexible expenses can include:

- Textbooks
- Clothing
- Electronics and school supplies
- Toiletries and other personal items
- Dorm furnishings
- Laundry money
- Food/drink outside of the meal plan
- Entertainment
- Local travel
(PeaceHealth Rides, Uber trips)
- Recreational travel and trips home
- Sorority/fraternity or club dues

Next, estimate how much each item will be and agree on who's paying for what, taking your student's income into consideration. Their income will come from their savings, any earnings from a campus job (if they will work), and possibly an allowance from you. Make it a goal for your student to maintain a certain level of savings.

Be sure to discuss how peer pressure can cause students to overspend. Your student may need to say no sometimes to an activity or purchase that a roommate or friend doesn't think twice about. On this subject, be clear up front about what will

happen if your student doesn't stay within their budget (in case they assume you'll automatically bail them out).

Fall term will involve some experimentation. Your student may find it easy to stay within their budget or end up running short each month. Over winter break, you can look back together at the experience and help them revise their budget based on what they learned.

The Perks of Campus Employment

A great way to balance income and spending is to get a campus job. College students who work part-time during the school year get better grades than those who don't,* probably because they need to be more focused, organized and conscientious about budgeting time for study.

Finding a job in the local community is always an option, but on-campus positions have special advantages. The hours are usually flexible, and supervisors will accommodate your student's schedule. Student employees 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.

If federal work study is part of your student's financial aid package, they can research and apply for available work-study positions, but there are usually plenty of campus jobs to go around for any student who wants one. Departments that hire students may include the admissions and alumni offices, recreation center, library, dining facilities, bookstore, museums and art galleries, language and computer labs, and performance spaces.

*A comprehensive study published by NASPA, "First-Year Students' Employment, Engagement, and Academic Achievement: Untangling the Relationship Between Work and Grades" by G. R. Pike, G. D. Kuh and R. C. Massa-McKinley, is often cited and its findings have held up over time.

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