

Self-Advocacy

| Types of Roommates

| Renter's Rights

# CollegiateParent

MAGAZINE

California | Fall 2023

A photograph of two young women in a room, likely a dormitory, moving boxes. The woman on the left is wearing a mustard yellow hoodie and is smiling while holding a grey fabric storage bin filled with boxes and papers. The woman on the right is wearing a light blue hoodie and is looking at the first woman. They are both holding cardboard boxes. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

42

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in College**

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# CollegiateParent

## ***Dear Families***

We are thrilled to introduce our fall issue of CollegiateParent Magazine, a publication dedicated to providing informative and engaging content to parents whose children are currently enrolled in college.

Our magazine covers various topics, from campus life and resources to academic programs and student success stories. You'll also find tips and advice on navigating the college experience and supporting your child's growth and development.

Our team of experienced writers, educators, and industry experts are committed to delivering high-quality, helpful, and engaging content.

Be sure to sign up for [the Loop parent newsletter](#), and join our [Facebook community](#). We're here for you!

*– Your Friends at CollegiateParent*



# Choosing a Major Doesn't Have to Feel Major



**Your future life isn't set in stone when you enter college.  
It's best to take your time to choose a career path.**

*By Jules Weed*

Two years into my sociology degree, it was hard to imagine that I had no idea what I wanted to study when I began college.

As an incoming student, I was completely untethered. My interests ranged from visual arts to computer science and environmental science. Over a few semesters, I considered majors like peace and justice

studies, international relations, geoscience, and art history. Ultimately, no one thing cemented my course of study.

My decision to major in sociology arose from the confluence of many different experiences I had throughout my first year.

## **First, Explore**

In my first year, I explored courses in many different areas. My two most unexpectedly positive experiences were in sociology courses.

One was an urban studies class I chose on a whim, and the second was a required writing course taught by a sociology professor. I discovered that I was engaged in work not because I thought I should be but because I was actually curious about the material.

I certainly don't mean that they were easy. I've never been very confident in my writing skills, and both of these classes involved writing paper after paper. However, my interest in the field made suffering through long papers possible, and over the years, I've gained more confidence.



## **The Importance of Mentors**

The professors I had were passionate about their fields, and their excitement helped me imagine myself doing similar work.

In the course of this exploration, my college's career mentor was able to connect me with alums who were interested in talking to me about their academic and professional experiences in sociology.

These professionals helped me to address questions and concerns and feel more optimistic.

I also found that so many sociology students were passionate about their studies and used their academic pursuits in inspiring ways. I enjoyed the atmosphere in my classes and found that students were willing to talk about their observations. Many could also study abroad — something I'd always hoped would be a part of my education.

## **Dealing with Doubt**

It wouldn't be fair to pretend that I don't still face doubts about my decision. After all, it's a rather large and expensive one. My dad would have preferred me to major in biology and become a doctor, and sometimes I wonder if I made the right choice. Shouldn't my parents have a say in what I study if they're paying for my education?

I remember a friend from high school. At the request of his parents, he made it barely one year into college on a pre-med track, only to change majors because his grades and mental health suffered so terribly. He is now happier studying in a field that he is actually interested in, and he gets so much more out of his parents' investment.



What I studied in college doesn't have to cement what the rest of my life will look like. Many working professionals are successful in areas that have nothing to do with their major. For example, my mom has a degree in microbiology and just retired after a successful career as an elementary school teacher and administrator.

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***For now, I can relax and enjoy learning, knowing that my education will continue, in some capacity, far past my four undergraduate years!***

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# Studying the Arts Helps Students Succeed

Even if they don't pursue it as a major, your student can develop discipline and valuable skills from fine or performing arts.

By CollegiateParent

## *The Arts Develop Valuable Key Skills*

Science, technology, engineering, and math—collectively known as STEM—are today's most popular majors. It's easy to feel like no place is left for the arts.

Well-rounded students, however, are the ones who find room in their class schedule for the full range of human pursuits, from numbers to musical notes. Your STEM major shouldn't turn their backs on the arts.

Students who have played music, painted, written stories and poems, danced, or acted are developing the following skills that will help them succeed in any profession:

### CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

How do you show a character's emotional transition in 90 seconds of a movie? How do you use a paintbrush and canvas to evoke the feeling of standing in a seemingly never-ending wheat field? Artists are creative problem solvers, and these thought exercises prepare students for business, engineering, education, and dozens of other areas.

### TIME MANAGEMENT

Finding time for art requires your student to develop serious time management skills. Rehearsals are mandatory and depend on full attendance, and art projects can be intensive and need concentrated blocks of time.





### SELF-DISCIPLINE

Students who pursue the arts quickly realize that effort equates to reward. For example, the more they practice the piano between lessons, the faster they improve.

### HARD WORK

Returning to the drawing board to redo a botched painting isn't necessarily morale-boosting. However, students who study the arts learn that hard work makes the finished product feel so much more rewarding.

### STRESS RELIEF

Artistic expression can be a great way to relieve stress, and it's also an outlet for self-reflection that can lower anxiety and help with PTSD, grief, or chronic mental illness.

### BEING OPEN TO CRITICISM

Studying art teaches students how to receive, process, and apply constructive criticism. For example, fiction writers are all too familiar with the workshop, where other writers dissect their work, picking apart what's working and what isn't.

### LEARNING HOW TO LEARN

The arts are less cut and dry than other subjects, so students must bring a certain creativity to the learning process. Student artists become well acquainted with their strengths and weaknesses through one-on-one lessons, extensive repetition, watching online videos, or different approaches.

### EMPATHY

An artist needs to consider the mindset of the viewer, the reader, and the listener. And since art is subjective, each audience member can bring their own interpretation to a piece. Student artists have the opportunity to develop the skill of empathy, of being open-minded to how another person views something.

### MOTOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT

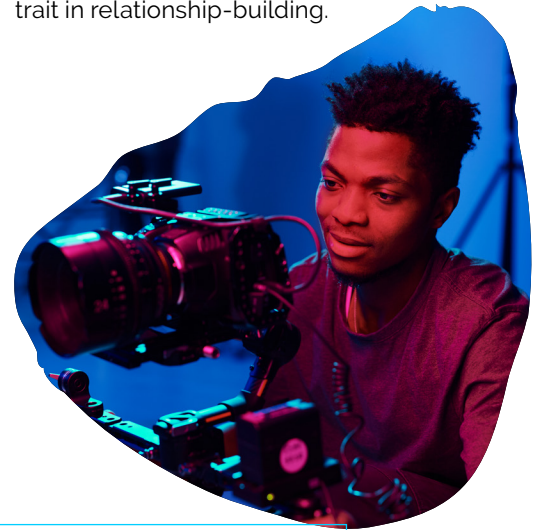
Artistic activities help with fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. The younger students are when they begin, the better—but even college students can benefit from developing muscle memory.

### SELF-CONFIDENCE AND PERSONAL FULFILLMENT

Knowing that they can make something beautiful or powerful provides the kind of self-confidence that can help them find and spread happiness in their personal life and throughout their more extensive world.

### HUMILITY

Artists fail all the time. The process of trying and failing and then trying again and again until they succeed teaches humility, a very valuable trait in relationship-building.



### *Support Your Student's Liberal Arts Choices*

Many parents of college students prefer their students keep art as a hobby, not a profession. It's challenging for new college graduates to find a good job, and you may worry that if your student pursues a liberal arts degree, they're setting themselves up for a life of struggle.

The reality is that liberal arts and STEM have never been more closely aligned. Tech companies offer well-paying jobs in design and content creation, and Hollywood would be nothing without computer experts. It's possible to pursue work in a creative field and a technical field at the same time.





# 10 Types of College Roommates

Sharing a room comes with unique challenges, but it also builds compassion and communication skills.

*By Suzanne Shaffer*

Here's a breakdown of 10 different types of roommates your student might encounter in college and how to respond to them. If you recognize your own student, remind them they're responsible for communicating and adapting as well.

## 1. The Hermit

The Hermit prefers the comfort of the dorm room and rarely attends class. They might be found playing endless video games or binge-watching the latest Netflix series. Watch for signs of depression or anti-social behavior and report it to the RA if it gets worse.

## 2. The Neat Freak

If your student isn't the tidiest, this type of roommate is a challenge. The Neat Freak insists the room be clutter-free and spotless at all times. Does your student live with a Neat Freak? Encourage them to have a little compassion and keep the mess to a minimum.

### 3. The Slob

The Slob is one of the hardest roommates to coexist with, especially if you're a Neat Freak. What is your student able to tolerate? If the room is actually unsanitary and bugs, or worse, start appearing, call the RA.

### 4. The One With a Significant Other

Does the constant presence of your roommate's romantic partner make it hard to study, relax and entertain in the room as well? It might take a few awkward conversations before the roommate spends more time with their partner away from the dorm room.

### 5. The One With a Significant Other From High School

If your student has a roommate with an ongoing romance from high school, they might see crying over fights, analyzing every conversation, moping, and possibly needing continuous comfort over breakups. Be patient. Most high school relationships fizzle out as the student becomes more involved in college and meets new people.



### 6. The Passive-Aggressive

There is constant tension, but direct words are never spoken. This kind of roommate leaves notes or uses snarky comments to convey their disapproval. Most of this behavior can be avoided by having a discussion at the beginning of the year.

### 7. The Ghost

Sometimes, you'll have a roommate who barely interacts and isn't interested in becoming friends. For students who like solitude, the Ghost might be a godsend. For those looking to make friends — particularly first-year students — this situation could prove difficult.



### 8. The Partier

The social butterfly who brings friends over all hours of the night to party can be a problem for a roommate who is trying to focus on academics and sleep. It's reasonable to agree on quiet hours, both at night and in the morning. If your student is worried about a roommate's excessive drinking, they may need to talk to the RA.

### 9. The Mooch

The Mooch assumes "what's yours is mine." They wear your student's clothes, eat their food, and use their shampoo. They take things without asking and rarely return them. Your student might need to have a talk about what's shareable and what's not, especially food, clothing, jewelry, or shoes.

### 10. The Perfect Match

Many students luck out and get a dream roommate in college who becomes a best friend. They enjoy the same things, have compatible personalities, and want the same things. Few people leave college without rooming with their perfect match at some point.

# Campus Dining Ins and Outs

**As a college parent, you might get an earful about campus dining options, but don't worry. Your student is probably eating just fine.**

*By David Tuttle*

Complaints about dining food are as old as college campuses. Save your angst and energy about this! Coach them to self-advocate, and help them be responsible stewards of their dining funds.

## Kinds of Complaints to Expect

### Quality

Most dining hall programs are a far cry from the slab of meatloaf and greasy pizza era of old. If your student complains, have a meal on campus with them when you visit, and see firsthand. Get a realistic sense by eating the food yourself.

### Variety

Think of your favorite restaurant. Now think of eating there every day, or two or three times daily. For students, finding variety can be challenging. Try to help your student explore options and be realistic about their choices. They may have more options than when they were under your care.

### Convenience

Busy students often want to grab meals quickly and take them to go, especially between classes and activities. However, the social nature of dining remains essential, and you can still see crowds at meal times.

Encourage students to dine with others, especially younger students. If they are too busy, help them look at what to-go options exist at the main dining hall or to-go options around campus.

### Value

Satellite campus dining options with national brands can be attractive. Understand these may cost more and that the money generally comes from flex dollars or personal funds, not the dining plan.

## Health

Some students clamor for healthier choices, and most programs oblige; however, these are the least used options in dining halls. Pizza, burgers, and pasta still reign supreme.

Most dining halls offer vegetarian or vegan options, huge salad bars, and ways to modify meals with meatless options. To maximize quality and variety, those with celiac disease, gluten-free lifestyles, and other specialty diets should speak to dining staff, including dietitians.



## What Can You Do as a Parent?

### Encourage them to speak up.

Urge your students to offer direct, specific, timely feedback to dining staff members. If the food could be better, say something, especially if the food is poorly cooked or portions are out of whack. Students should express concerns to front-line servers and managers directly. Talking about last week's meal isn't likely to fix anything.

### Understand and pick the right plan.

Ask if you need help understanding the difference between the main dining hall plan and the flex and bonus bucks plans.

### Go light on the meal plan.

You probably know this, but at a certain point in the semester or term, the meal plan gets locked in and can't be changed. You can always add money to dining dollars but rarely get money back that isn't used.

### Talk to your student about budgeting.

Some dining programs have calculators on their web pages for students to determine how many meals or dollars they should use weekly or even daily. It isn't your job to budget, but urge your student to maximize the money you are investing in their meals.

### Save campus stores for crises.

Students and parents may bemoan the high prices, but campus stores are no different than corner stores or airport kiosks. The best way to get grocery store prices is to go to grocery stores.



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# Understand Your Rights as a Renter

When your student decides to move into an off-campus apartment, they may need to assert their legal rights as a renter.

By CollegiateParent

*As a renter, your student has certain rights and responsibilities. When they have a lease on an off-campus apartment, ask them to share the document so you can look over it together before they sign it. Here are some common questions you may both have about student rentals:*



## 1. Does my landlord need permission to enter my apartment or house?

Generally, renters have the right to live undisturbed in a rental home. A landlord must usually give 24 hours' written notice and a valid reason to enter, such as a repair. In an emergency, your student may need someone to come in and help immediately. Check to see if there is a "privacy clause" in your lease. Your state's law will define the exact rules.

## 2. Do I have a right to get my full security deposit back?

Your student's property manager should return the security deposit in full if your student leaves the unit in the same condition they found it. This means repairing damage — including any done by a pet—and cleaning the unit thoroughly or professionally.

They'll also need to pay their rent on time and give adequate notice before they move out. Otherwise, the

landlord can use your deposit to cover unpaid rent. If they don't get back their full security deposit, they have the right to an itemized list of deductions. In some states, the deposit must be returned with interest within a certain number of days.

## 3. Can the landlord change the terms of my lease?

Landlords can't change the lease without both parties agreeing to a written change. If the landlord sells the property, the new owner must respect the lease terms for the duration.

Landlord-tenant laws vary from state to state. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) maintains a state-by-state listing of Tenants' Rights on its website.





#### 4. If something breaks, who fixes it? Also, what about bugs?

Your student has a right to live in a safe, comfortable home where plumbing and appliances work, and windows and doors function correctly—with locks changed before you move in.

The landlord must respond promptly to repair requests as part of a lease agreement. Don't wait to make a request. Something minor could become something major, which isn't suitable for either party.

If you have an infestation that you did not introduce, like mice or bedbugs, the landlord must address the problem immediately — ideally by hiring a professional exterminator.

If your landlord doesn't respond promptly to a request to make a minor repair, renters may have the right to fix it themselves and withhold the amount from the rent. Check your lease and state law first.



#### 5. Do I have a right to be safe in my home?

Yes, and if the property's condition—inside or out—makes injury likely, the property owner may be liable. That's also true if the landlord is negligent about repairs to the unit, which might make it easier for someone to break in.

If another tenant's noise or behavior is problematic, you can request that your landlord deal with this.

Your landlord is also responsible for mitigating any potential environmental hazards, such as mold, and maintaining smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

#### 6. Can I have a pet in my rental?

Your student only has a right to have the kind of pet allowed by the lease, and landlords often prohibit all pets or pets of certain sizes, types, or breeds. Landlords must not prohibit service animals. Most likely, you will need to pay an additional pet security deposit.



## Unique College Options



### Deep Springs College

An isolated college in the middle of a California desert, students commit at least 20 hours a week towards maintaining a ranch via jobs such as cook, butcher, or cowboy. Students self-govern in decisions about admissions, curriculum, and faculty hiring.

### Reed College

A small college in Oregon with its own nuclear reactor, operated by a staff of 40 undergraduate students. Interestingly, it has more female reactor operators than all the other research reactors in the world *combined*.

### Naropa University

An accredited college located in Boulder, CO that specializes in contemplative degrees as varied as Peace Studies, Ecopsychology, Yoga Studies, Food Justice, or Sanskrit Language. However, be mindful of the choice to attend here – 38% transfer out.



# 42 Things To Do in College

*Advice to share from a mother to her collegebound kid.*

*By Amy Baldwin, M.Ed.*

**1. Take classes and professors that encourage growth.**

Sure, take a few “easy A’s” from laid-back professors, if you must—but also look for classes that actually push you beyond your comfort zone. Those are the classes you will remember.

**2. View grades as an indicator of where to focus your time.**

Good grades are nice, but low grades can tell you about what to do next time. If you get a low grade on your first assignment, use it to change your approach.

**3. Take as much history, sociology, political science, and philosophy as you can.**

Whatever you decide to major in, take classes in how the world works. Build a working knowledge of history, government, society and critical thinking.



**4. Open your eyes to the beauty of your world's diversity.**

You will meet and work with people from all backgrounds and experiences. Stretch yourself to get to know them and learn from their perspectives.

**5. Ignore well-meaning advice if it isn't your thing.**

People are going to give you all kinds of advice about what you should major in and what career path is best for you. Some will just tell you that you're making a mistake or that you "need to" do this or that. Ignore anything that doesn't seem right for you.



**6. Go to the doctor if you think you are sick.**

Don't ride it out. Mom isn't there to put her hand on your forehead or listen to your cough. Listen to your body and take charge of your health.



**7. Be a good neighbor.**

You'll be living in close proximity to strangers. Think about the noise you make and the smells you emit. No one enjoys asking someone to be quieter or smell better, so don't make them do it.

**8. Be clean.**

You know how to wash your clothes and push a mop. You can continue to do those things even when you don't live at home.

**9. Apologize when you are wrong.**

It doesn't matter your intent if the impact of your words or actions hurt others.

**10. Be kind and courteous to campus staff.**

These hard-working people clean your residence hall, cook and serve you food, and keep your campus safe. Get to know them; greet them by name. Respect them by making their jobs easier, not harder. And show some gratitude.

**11. Make personal connections with a professor or two.**

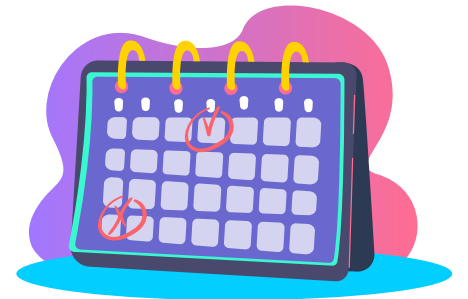
Or more by the time you graduate. Your professors will be important teachers, allies, and friends.

**12. Make friends with others who don't look like you.**

Or sound like you, act like you, or think like you.

**13. Read a real book.**

Preferably more than one book, but start with at least one. Scrolling your phone doesn't count!



**14. Use a calendar.**

Put up a large wall calendar so you can see the whole semester at once. You may know how to use your phone's calendar, but you need to chart out a semester at a glance.

**15. Be straightforward.**

Be upfront and honest in your communications with others. If your roommate's dirty underwear on the floor bothers you, tell them.

**16. Take advantage of student events and discounts.**

You won't get this opportunity to save money based on age again until you're retired. There's an advantage to being a poor college student.

**19. Don't drink too much.**

That goes for anything, including alcohol and energy drinks.

**25. Be willing to ask for help.**

No one gets through college without it.

**20. Trust your gut.**

You know right from wrong and you know when something doesn't feel right.

**26. Always do your part in group work.**

Don't be one of those people who disappears during group projects—but don't get angry at others who don't pull their weight.

**21. Read each syllabus.**

The syllabus contains everything you need and want to know about a course. Consult it frequently.

**27. Go to class unless you're truly unwell.**

Don't fool yourself that there is something more important than class and steal class time for a task or activity you should have made time to do.

**22. Explore the community, the region, the country, and the world.**

Make a point of visiting a new place, even if that place is down the block from the university. When you get the opportunities, travel beyond campus.

**28. Drink lots of water.**

It is the foundation of health. If you're thirsty, you're already dehydrated.

**23. Develop your own convictions.**

You will read, hear, see, and learn about all kinds of values and beliefs. Start forging your own convictions.

**29. Try something new.**

Your university will provide all kinds of events and experiences for you. Take advantage of them.

**24. Pretend you are confident until you genuinely are.**

A lot of life is adopting a confidence, not arrogance, about our abilities. Believing you can do something is the first step.

**30. When you know better, do better.**

When you know how to study better for your biology class, then do it. When you realize your friend doesn't like it when you ignore his invitations, then do something about it.

**17. Listen to others.**

Truly listen to what their heart is saying. Also listen if they are giving you directions or help with something.

**18. Ask "why?"**

Question authority, rules, and policies when necessary. Your inquisitiveness may help spark positive change.





**31. Support your friends.**

Be there for each other during the ups and downs.

**32. Take notice of other people's compliments.**

You may discover a strength or an interest you didn't know you had.

**33. Focus on experience rather than a career pathway.**

Look for opportunities to learn something, anything, about yourself and the world around you. Any job, event, or course could give you invaluable information.

**34. Be reliable.**

If you can't deliver on a promise, communicate immediately.

**35. Communicate when you need something.**

Let someone know if you feel you can't work something out on your own. As an adult, it's time to learn to take care of yourself, but you don't have to do it all.

**36. Get involved.**

College is not made for sitting on the sidelines — or in your bed playing video games.

**37. Be idealistic and optimistic.**

Explore crazy ideas such as reversing climate change or eliminating poverty. You are far too young—and will live way too long—to be cynical and feel hopeless at 18 years old.

**38. Take advantage of all training your university provides.**

Students who take full advantage of these professional development offerings will build real-world skills and be better positioned for success after graduation.

**39. Explore something that interests you.**

Now's the time to figure out if you truly like leading a group or contributing to a community.



**40. Learn how to create and follow a budget.**

You might be thinking, "I don't have any money." That may be true, but the little that you have from working all summer needs to last the whole year.

**41. Be kinder than necessary.**

I have made lots of apologies to people whom I judged too quickly. I have never regretted being kind to someone.

**42. Listen to your mother.**

Maybe I should have started with that one.



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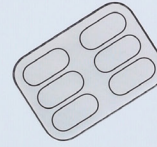
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# Is Your Student Ready for a Credit Card?



**Paying with plastic isn't the right choice for everyone. Here's how to help your student become a responsible cardholder.**

By Erica Sandberg

*A credit card can give you and your college student peace of mind, especially if their campus is far from home. If you decide together that they're ready, here's how to select the right card and manage the new account properly. Refine options to the most attractive accounts within their reach, then identify the best one from that shallow pool.*

## Minimum Requirements

First, all credit card issuers require an applicant to be at least 18 and have enough independent income to cover payments. Those funds can come from any combination of job earnings, a verifiable cash stipend, government assistance (not loans), grants, and scholarships.

Lenders will check your student's credit report to measure lending risk, even if they've never had a credit card.

Depending on your situation, here are credit card types to zero in on:

## No Credit History and Some Savings

Many lenders offer secured credit cards, guaranteed with cash that acts as collateral against the credit line. In most cases, the credit line exactly matches the deposit. If your student doesn't make the payments and defaults, the issuer dips into the cash deposit to take the money owed.





### **No Credit History and No Savings**

If your student doesn't have the cash to set up a secured credit card, they may qualify for an unsecured card.

Students typically need to submit proof that they're enrolled in school, either full- or part-time. They don't need an established credit history—though it doesn't hurt.

These cards carry greater risk for the lender, so credit lines tend to be low. However, if your student charges to the account often and keeps a low or no balance, the credit line might increase after a year or two.

### **Established and Good Credit History**

If your student has a positive credit report, perhaps by being an authorized user on someone else's well-managed account, they may qualify for a more mainstream unsecured credit card.

Have your student request their credit scores, either from FICO or VantageScores. These range from 300 to 850, with higher numbers predicting lower lending risk. If your student has a credit score in the high 600s, they should qualify for a card.



### **Excellent Credit History**

Some students already have high credit scores — in the mid-700s, up to 850. In these cases, they could be eligible for premium credit cards. These may have an annual fee and come with valuable perks, such as airline points or cashback bonuses.

Read the details of four or five cards very carefully. Fees should be reasonable, and the interest rate should be as low as possible. Check the issuer's website to see if they have a good customer service rating.

With the above strategies, your student should be granted the proper account without any trouble and will be ready to begin building a solid credit history.

## **College & University Trivia**

1. What college, founded in 1636, is also America's oldest and first cooperation?
2. What is the name of Yale's elite, secretive society of senior students?
3. In 1837, which US college was first to admit women?
4. Which historically black college or university (HBCU) was the first to become a state-supported land-grant college?
5. Which public university in Texas was the first in the southwest to have a medical branch?



Check Answers page 22.

# This Fall, Take Time to Wonder

By Kate Gallop

The professor told us to pay attention in one of my first college classes. For first-year students, everything is still fresh and exciting. We are startled and thrilled when the green trees we've walked past each day suddenly turn bright yellow. Sophomores recognize us because we look at maps on our phones to find a building. We wonder what clubs are like, how cold it will get, and who our closest friends will be.

At the time, I figured this newness was a phase I should try to get through quickly. Wouldn't it be better when I knew what I was doing and where I was going? My professor saw it differently. "You are still in wonder," he told us, "and that's a beautiful thing."

I read a book about memory. It explained that we remember best what we make meaningful, the most unfamiliar things that happen each day, and what we pay attention to. I remember the first time I toured campus as a prospective student, and I remember freshman move-in. I remember when the university closed because of the pandemic, then returning to get my belongings. I remember video chats with my friends. I remember feeling thankful for my family's health.

We forget what we don't pay attention to. We forget familiar, habitual actions, like brushing our teeth, making coffee, and driving to work daily. I often forget when I return to my freshman dorm room. After my first few nights studying in the campus library, I forget all the other nights, and I forget the second time eating at that restaurant everyone recommended.

This fall, I'll get a chance to experience another, more familiar new. A new crop of first-year students will learn how it is, sophomores will learn how it once was, and juniors and seniors will learn how it has changed.

I'll recognize all the buildings and remember the secret color of the trees. But in many ways, I'll return to the state my professor told us to cherish. That's before the muscle memory kicks in, before it becomes automatic, and life again becomes normal. Until then, I'm left to wonder.



## Trivia Answers

1. Harvard University
2. Oberlin College
3. Skull and Bones
4. Alcorn State University
5. Baylor University



# College Students and Motivation

**The best-laid plans of college students can go astray when academic pressure builds.**

By Rob Danzman, MS, NCC, LCMHC

We use the term "motivation" all the time, but few of us really understand what it is and how we lose it.

As neuroscientist Dr. D. F. Swaab titled his bestselling book, *We Are Our Brains*, motivation is essentially brain chemistry and nothing more.

Our brains release a chemical called dopamine whenever something good happens to us, and it's released anytime we pursue a goal and believe we're headed in the right direction. The pleasure we get from dopamine is not obtained by accomplishing our goals but by achieving them.

It's almost like the goal doesn't matter, neurologically speaking. We will still get pleasure from dopamine by simply putting in the effort. Dopamine reshapes our brains, and our brain wants to continue in that same direction when it's released.

## What Kills Motivation?

Anxiety, depression, substance use, poor sleep, poor nutrition, and lack of exercise affect our motivation.

- Anxiety makes us afraid to take chances.
- Depression sucks our energy and makes it hard to imagine the benefits of our behaviors.
- Drugs disrupt our brains by filling our nerve endings with addictive substances rather than brain chemicals.
- Poor sleep keeps our brains from cleaning out the junk from the previous day.
- Poor nutrition makes it difficult for our bodies to keep things running smoothly.
- Lack of exercise allows our muscles and brain to atrophy.

With so many factors affecting motivation, it's no surprise that many college students struggle with it.



## What Can College Kids Do?

- Develop a “growth mindset,” which helps us thrive on challenges and see failure as an opportunity for growth.
- Break large projects into smaller pieces.
- Be 100% present. Put the phone away and schedule at least 60 minutes of undistracted time.
- Find inspirational people. Surround yourself with YouTubers, podcasters, writers, professors, and ANYONE who is leading a life you desire.

## What Can Parents Do?

Sometimes, the less parents do, the better. Yes, you read that correctly. Parents' most effective strategy is often to back off and give the space for their kids to rally.

I'm not talking about giving up or not caring. Love, along with random texts and phone calls, is so crucial. Besides, I couldn't convince you to stop caring anyway.

Instead of asking, “How's your engineering class going?” consider saying, “You don't talk about your engineering class anymore,” and then adding, “What are some things keeping you from being more successful in that class?”

## Purpose

Parents generally have a strong sense of purpose. But we didn't always.

We must remember it takes time to cultivate that alchemy of purpose, and college kids often struggle to find it in these early adult years. Parents have an opportunity to provide nurturing and some gentle nudging to help their kids find purpose.

Purpose might be something more proportional to young adult-ness. Relationships can provide a purpose. Getting into grad school or landing that job from the internship could provide a compass heading.

Ask your kids what matters to them. Start that dialogue about meaning, purpose, and values. Talk about how what matters to you has evolved or adapted over time.

*See the full article on [CollegiateParent](#) for additional, in-depth advice.*





# Get Wise About Wisdom Teeth

There's a good chance your student will have a trip to the oral surgeon sometime during college. Here's how to be prepared.

By Shari Bender



Wisdom teeth can be a big pain (pun intended) for our kids. Most Americans have had one or more of their wisdom teeth extracted, and your child is likely to have a wisdom tooth or two (or four) removed before they are 25.

## How Do You Know Wisdom Teeth Need to Be Removed?

Dentists check the position of wisdom teeth to tell if they need to be removed. Dr. Andrew Palermo, D.D.S., explains it like this: "Often there isn't enough room in the mouth for a third molar, and this results in the tooth being trapped or 'impacted.' If the tooth doesn't have room to erupt into place behind the second molar, then it should be removed."

In layperson's terms, your child's mouth may not be big enough for wisdom teeth without complications. If your child experiences jaw pain or swollen gums, it's time to go to the dentist, who may refer you to an oral surgeon to help minimize complications on what could be a difficult extraction.

## How Can I Help With Recovery?

After extraction, our bodies form a solid clot in the extraction site during the first 24-48 hours after oral surgery. Take the following steps to help with the recovery:

### 1. Catch-Up Early

Encourage your child to tell their professors or employers ahead of time about the surgery. This way, they can get as much work done as possible in advance and be prepared for absences.

### 2. Avoid Hard Foods

Steer clear of foods that require chewing for 48 hours after surgery to help keep the clot from breaking loose. Soft foods like powdered mashed potatoes, broth, soups, smoothies, applesauce, and yogurt are favorites after wisdom tooth removal.

### 3. No Straws

A straw is your enemy with all these soft foods and ice cream shakes. When you suck something through a straw, the suction can dislodge the blood clot.

### 4. Ice, Ice Baby

Your dentist or oral surgeon will likely encourage your child to "ice the area," which can be tricky unless you invest in or borrow a specially designed jaw ice pack. They generally run for less than \$20 on Amazon and can be a lifesaver for hands-free jaw icing.

### 5. Follow-up as Needed

After extraction, our mouths usually heal quickly over the next week or so, but sometimes you can get a dry socket. If the clot breaks out, the area becomes painful. Your dentist may apply a special paste on the site to help form a new clot and heal the area properly.

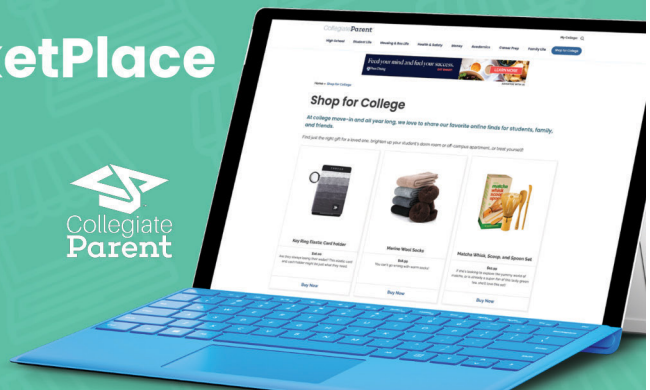
You may find your child misses their wisdom teeth once they have them removed. Don't worry; that is normal since they were pretty attached to them.

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# The Power of Self-Advocacy

**If your student requires resources or accommodations for their disability-related needs, it's best to reach out before the semester begins.**

By LaTrina Rogers

Starting college can make you feel like there's nothing you can't do—and it's great. For many students, this burst of optimism is not enough.

Many incoming first-year students have disabilities, such as mental health, learning challenges, or addiction support. Sometimes these students and their families attempt to move forward without establishing support for those needs.

This can be risky because college is often the first time a student will be on their own. They may not have developed the skills needed to handle their challenges in a larger environment.

## **Share Your Needs with College Officials**

Your student is responsible for sharing information with college officials about their needs. Colleges and universities can only work with students based on the information provided. Self-advocacy is an important skill for students with disabilities to learn. By sharing their needs with college officials, students can ensure that they receive the accommodations they need to succeed.

And there's a small window of opportunity early in the year for staff and faculty to develop a relationship with a student and connect them with resources. It's essential that information related to a student's needs be communicated prior to the semester's start.

## A 'Clean Slate' Can Lead to a Real Mess

It's potentially unhealthy and dangerous to send your student to college without letting officials know about their special needs.

For example, new experiences can trigger anxiety. If residential life staff know that a student has anxiety, they can check on them periodically to make sure they're using resources to help them maintain healthy habits and be successful.

Another example is the challenge of living in a communal environment. Dorm life is an adjustment for all students, but students dealing with certain issues tend to have messy living spaces. If old food is left out, trash not removed, dirty laundry piles up on the floor, this is not only a problem for the roommate but it can constitute a health hazard.

**"Clean slate" situations can be distressing for everyone involved:**

- The student is dealing with their diagnosis with no support or ability to navigate the new environment.
- The parent is upset that their student is not doing well.
- Faculty and staff are frustrated because they don't want to see any student failing or struggling.



## Set the Stage for College Success

Often the disclosure of a mental health or learning diagnosis comes when there is a problem in a class or the residence hall. Unfortunately, by that time it is almost always too late.

There are forms for housing asking for disclosure of any medical conditions or mental health diagnosis. Information about campus services is provided during student orientation, and available on the college's website and online student portal. The goal is to ensure students know the resource is there for their personal and academic success.

Remember, everyone needs help from time to time. It doesn't make the person incapable or a failure. It's hard but necessary to be open and up front about personal challenges. Students entering a new chapter need all the resources available to ensure stability and success.

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Join the conversation at [facebook.com/collegiateparent](https://facebook.com/collegiateparent)



# The Benefits of Students Acting Up

A simple protest sign can give your student a powerful sense of purpose and belonging.

By Amy Baldwin, Ed.D.

College education has always centered around protesting injustice. It involves caring about an issue, organizing a response with others, communicating with different audiences, and acting purposefully and with integrity. Parents need to know more about campus activism, its roots, its purposes, and the benefits to their students for getting involved.

## It All Started With Stinky Butter

The roots of college protests go back almost 300 years when students started a literal food fight. The Great Butter Rebellion at Harvard was a student protest about "stinky" butter.

Apparently, there was a history of poor food at Harvard—which is putting it mildly, as previous complaints included "goat's dung" in the pudding. The butter was the final straw. The students stood up, and the administration finally gave them what they wanted: better butter.

**I Can't Believe  
It's Old Stinky  
BUTTER!**



### Stay Safe and Follow the Rules

For the most part, on-campus activism is peaceful and short-lived. Many groups only want to elevate their cause by getting noticed by the administration or the community.

Many colleges have policies about campus activism in the student handbook. There may be special locations on campus for student activism, and they will certainly require that all participants stay peaceful. Students who peacefully protest on their own time should not face negative consequences, but they may get in trouble if they skip class.

It should also be noted that protests anywhere can get out of hand; your student should be aware of their surroundings, try to stay safe, and leave if they ever feel uncomfortable.



### Student Activism Has Benefits

College also helps students see the immediate impact of their communication skills. Some students experience an intellectual awakening or confidence about fighting for or learning how to get others to listen.

Students who find an issue that is important to them may discover that they want to continue to be engaged with it. A sense of community also develops among people who work together to make a difference.

### Current Issues Spark Activism

Colleges have been a hub for activism, with methods like walkouts and protests drawing attention to important issues.

Think of the Civil Rights Movement, Vietnam War, and school integration. During the summer of 2021, students at Juilliard protested a tuition increase. During the pandemic years, students protested vaccination and mask policies, demonstrating how they feel about the restrictions both on and off campus.

Other controversial topics such as critical race theory, Confederate statues on campus or in the community, an institution's ties to slavery or racism, "cancel culture," and free speech may also stir up sentiment.

Where your student goes to school can also affect the likelihood that activism will be a part of their college experience. Institutions that are more diverse and located in urban or metropolitan settings may host more student activism. This is not to say that a small, rural, religiously affiliated college won't have students who get involved in a campus-wide protest.



## Meet Our Writers

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Amy Baldwin, Ed.D., is a Senior Lecturer in the Student Transitions department at the University of Central Arkansas. She is co-author of "A High School Parent's Guide to College Success: 12 Essentials" and lead author of "College Success" (OpenStax), a free online student success book. Amy and her husband are parents of a college graduate and a current student. She blogs at [higherparent.com](https://higherparent.com).

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Shari earned her B.A.c in communication from Stanford University and freelances all things communication and marketing. She is a cat-loving spiritual vegan and former admissions interviewer. With two grown children, Shari is happily and sentimentally embracing her Empty Nest along with her husband of more than 30 years. Her musings delight parents in numerous publications and online platforms.

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