



a newsletter for parents & families



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

University Housing

November 2020

## Experiencing Difference – a Life-Changing Opportunity

A *big* part of the college experience is students having an opportunity to interact with those who are different from them. These differences may come in the form of...

- Someone from a rural or urban setting
- Someone with a different ethnicity
- Someone who speaks a different language as their primary language
- Someone from a different religious background
- Someone with a different gender identity
- Someone who is much older or younger than they are
- Someone with a disability, whether it's a physical disability or a hidden one such as a learning disability or illness
- Someone who is vegan or vegetarian
- Someone who was home schooled



### Other Ways to Experience Difference

Students can learn more about other people, cultures and ideas on our campus by...

- › Attending a campus lecture or event
- › Learning another language
- › Taking courses that deal with diverse topics
- › Participating in cultural fairs
- › Trying different foods
- › Engaging in book and movie discussions
- › Asking respectful questions
- › Meeting people from around the world

- Someone from a different racial background

That's just a sampling of the many differences students may experience during their time at college.

At first, it may be a bit uncomfortable to interact with someone different, as we all get used to what our

established "norms" are. Yet, opening ourselves to varied people, cultures, ideas and ways of thought can be exciting! There is no better way for students to learn about the world and the multiple differences it holds than to get to know an individual who has had a different life experience than they've had. This type of interaction personalizes difference and adds a very human element to our understanding of one another.

So, as students talk about the different people and ideas surrounding them, encourage them to engage in kind, respectful ways. It can all be a part of making your student's world bigger, more connected and much more interesting!



## Reconnecting with Old Friends

When students go home for Thanksgiving, it may be the first time they've seen some old friends. This can be a joyous occasion, while it can also be a bit awkward at first. Here are some ways for students to reconnect positively...

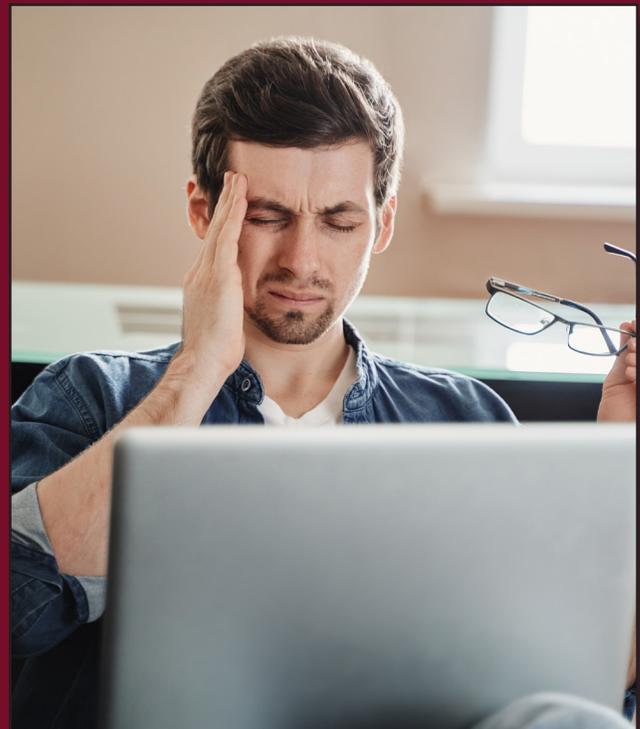
- Share stories yet make sure you're not doing all the talking
- Steer clear of bragging
- Don't just focus on the negative
- Ask questions
- Show an interest
- Share photos so you can see one another's rooms, friends, activities
- Ask about new friends at school
- Make plans for the longer winter break coming up in just a few weeks!



## Seasonal Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here are a few things your student may be experiencing this month...

- Roommate problems and floor tension
- Academic pressures due to procrastination, workload and lack of ability
- Burnout
- Not feeling like they have the stamina to keep up the pace through finals
- Job search stress for holiday break
- Problems from increased alcohol consumption
- Lack of initiative to find new friends or activities because it seems social groups are already set up
- Concerns about going home at Thanksgiving time – whether it's concern about seeing changes among old friends, how things will be with family members or dealing with a romantic relationship





# Lining Up Employment References

If your student had to name three solid job references right now, who would be chosen? An employer? Advisor? Faculty member? Coach? This is a good question for students to consider as the winter break job search draws closer.

Whether students are looking for a job during break or looking ahead to summer employment, getting references lined up now can reduce stress. Plus, it sets them up for job-search success.

Here are a few things to consider...

- Who can speak about your student's work ethic?
- Who has worked with your student in a job setting?

- Who has worked with your student in a volunteer setting?
- Who appreciates your student's way of doing things?
- Who has worked with your student in the classroom?
- Who can speak about your student's leadership style?

Making a list of potential references using these types of questions can provide a good starting point. Then, your student can choose which people to ask to serve in this capacity.

## Treating References Well

- Have an initial conversation about what you're searching for, your experiences and strengths
- Thank them regularly – and genuinely
- Keep them in the loop when applying for jobs, so they're prepared if someone should contact them
- Forward copies of job descriptions that you're applying for
- Give them a copy of your resume as a reference tool

It's typically helpful to have three to five references at the ready, should a job opportunity arise.

## Winter Break Job Search Strategies

If your student is hoping to work during winter break, it's time to start searching now. Waiting until after finals means that many offices will feel like ghost towns, with employers unavailable since they're often taking vacation time around the holidays.

So, here are some strategies that can help with that search for winter break employment...

**Focus on Contributions, Not Personal Needs.** Potential employees who share what they can contribute to an organization are much more likely to get a second look than those who just talk about their own needs. Students need to research what employers need so they can more articulately share ways they can help solve those problems.

**Reach Out to Known Elements.** Having an "in" by knowing someone can help your student get a foot in the door instead of going in cold. For instance, if a family friend knows someone who works at the local TV station, that person will be more likely to meet with your student to discuss possible employment.

**Have an "Elevator Speech" Prepared.** Your student should be able to express her interests and skills in 30-60 seconds. This "elevator speech" can come in handy when she is asked, "Tell us about yourself" during interviews and discussions. Encourage her to prepare this now!

**Be Open to Options.** Students who are open to a variety of options are more likely to find employment than those who go in with rigid expectations. Encourage your student to keep an open mind and explore the possibilities.





# Preparing for Your Student's Return

As the Thanksgiving holidays and then winter break come ever closer, it's wise to be prepared for the changes you may experience in your parent/student relationship when your student comes home.

If they've been living away at school, having them home for an extended stay can be wonderful – and also challenging at times. Consider the following...

**Rules and Responsibilities.** Yes, it's your house. Yet your student has been away, managing his time and responsibilities, for the past few months. So, consider discussing various rules that may come up – such as curfews, looking after siblings and use of the car – rather than just imposing the old rules. Having an adult conversation with your developing student can help you all get on the same page.

**Expectations for Family Time.** Let your student know ahead of time what family obligations you'd like to have her be part of, from driving to a grandparent's house to hosting cousins at the house. By giving her advanced warning, she can incorporate these important family times into her other at-home commitments, such

as seeing friends, sleeping, working and more.

**Participating in the Life of the House.** Returning students aren't "guests" – they're still members of the family unit. So, talk about your expectations for chores such as dishes, outside work, picking up, laundry and more. Students need to be participants in helping the home run smoothly while they're staying there!

**Changes in Perspective.** Chances are that your student is learning quite a bit at college – that's the idea, right? Be prepared that his perspective may be changing on certain issues as a result, whether it's politics, religion or other topics that you once agreed on. This type of change isn't an insult to you. Instead, it's a sign that he's learning to think for himself and consider options when it comes to what he believes. You may need to "agree to disagree" at times, yet the conversation can be respectful and insightful if you both commit to it.

**"Feelings of worth can flourish in an atmosphere where individual differences are appreciated, mistakes are tolerated, communication is open, and rules are flexible – the kind of atmosphere that is found in a nurturing family."**

– Virginia Satir

**Preparing Siblings.** Younger brothers and sisters may be over-the-moon excited to have their college student back in the house! Consider discussing this transition with them before your student returns, so they can be realistic while also being welcoming. Students will likely want to spend time with friends and may have a job to attend to, in addition to spending family time. Knowing this ahead of time can help siblings manage their expectations so they can enjoy the time they do get rather than being disappointed.

It can be a juggling act at times, yet you'll enjoy having your student home for the holidays much more if you consider ways to smooth the transition. Enjoy!

## Gathering Family Health Histories

Have you talked about family health issues with your student? Well, Thanksgiving Day has been designated as a day for families to sit down and talk about their health history.

Tips about how to go about gathering family health history information can be found in both Spanish and English at <http://bit.ly/2fYRMqe>.

And a web-based tool called "My Family Health Portrait" (<https://phgkb.cdc.gov/FHH/html/index.html>) is also available. It helps users learn about risks that can run in the family, organize family health history information and print it out for health care providers as well as family members.

It's all free and can help families predict health disorders that may have moved down the generational line. This Thanksgiving, why not give one another the gift of health awareness?

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)