



a newsletter for parents & families

November 2015

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

8 Ways to Connect with Faculty & Staff: Simple Tips for Students

Faculty and staff members are people too. Yet, sometimes students are so focused on the intent of their conversation with a professional that they forget to take a few minutes to get to know more about that person as, well, a *person*.

To learn more about the faculty and staff in their lives, students can do things like...

1. Ask about something that's hanging on their office wall ("That mask is really interesting – where did you get it?")
2. Notice their diploma and ask what they liked about attending XYZ University
3. Comment on something written on their bag, T-shirt or ball cap ("I'm a long-suffering Cubs fan, too! Why do you like them?")
4. Ask how long they've been at the institution and where they're originally from



5. Comment on something mentioned in class ("In class last week you mentioned your dog – what kind do you have?" or "The story you told last week about veterans often having trouble with driving once they return from war intrigued me and I looked up more about it.")
6. Notice a book on their bookshelf ("It looks like you're interested in Mexico. Have you ever been?")

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Adult Conversations

Adult conversations are a two-way street. It's important for students to practice having these types of conversations with faculty and staff members, rather than just expecting that these professionals will be all about serving them. Having respectful, mutually beneficial discussions can benefit everyone involved!



Getting to Know Your Student's Friends

Peers have great influence on many college students – and your student is likely no exception. By showing that you're interested in getting to know your student's friends, you communicate a desire to connect and engage.

The process can be easier than it may seem at first glance. The following suggestions can help bridge the gap between you, your student and her friends...

Just Ask. Your student is probably excited about the new friends she has met at college. Remember names and the next time you two talk, ask how those friends are doing.

Connect to Classes. Inquire if your student has met anyone interesting in any of his classes. Even if he hasn't, this might give him a chance to vent about the people he's met that he dislikes – which opens the gate for him to tell you about the better people he's met other places.

Look at Photos. Does your student take pictures? If so, ask her if she has any images of the people with whom she spends time. Again, students are generally excited about their new surroundings, and will jump at the chance to show people their new homes and the people they live with. Once you see faces, you will have a better time picturing what your student means when she talks about how her roommate never does her laundry



or how she always walks to class with the redhead down the hall.

Visit. If the school is close enough where a drive to take your student out to dinner is a feasible option, do so, and encourage him to invite his roommate or one or two of his friends. This way, you get to spend time with your son and meet and talk to his friends at the same time. He will likely appreciate the offer you extended to his new friends, and his friends will love you for buying them dinner.

Extend Invitations. Let your student know that you'd be glad to host a friend or two at your house during winter or spring break. It's important for friends to see each other's homes as a way of connecting on a deeper level.

What NOT to Do

When it comes to meeting friends, there are certain things *not* to do, also. Consider avoiding the following...

Badgering Your Student for Information. If he doesn't want to tell

you, he's not going to – and excessive questioning will most likely make him clam up in the future, too.

Making Your Student Suspect You Don't Trust Her. Let her know you are excited to meet her new friends just to see who is in her life, not because you are hesitant and unsure if you're going to approve.

Judging on Appearances Alone. Just because your student's new friend has a ring in her lip or his roommate doesn't dress like your idea of a successful young man doesn't mean they aren't good people and great influences. Your idea of an acceptable friend may be based on stereotypes – so check yourself before you say anything that might cause hurt feelings.

Getting to know the important people in your student's life will help you both feel more connected. The effort is well worth the reward.

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7. Ask if they have a favorite kind of music or if they've seen any good movies lately
8. Discuss something happening on campus ("Did you see that _____ is coming to speak in the student center? Who is one of the best speakers you've ever seen?")

Sometimes a few minutes of "get-to-know-you" talk can go a *long* way in helping your student develop a relationship with a professor or staff member. And students need these people in their lives, as educators, challengers and advocates.

Don't Try TOO Hard

In an effort to get to know their student's friends, some parents go overboard and get *too* involved. Be careful to keep your distance while also showing interest. It's important that students have friendships of their own that they can share with you, on *their* terms.

For instance, if you meet a male friend that you sense your daughter might have a romantic interest in, don't hint around or put your daughter in an uncomfortable position. Instead, just get to know the young man as her friend – and let them figure out the rest!



Thanking Our Veterans

This Veterans Day – and every day – we honor the men, women and families who serve or have served through the U.S. military. And for Canada’s Remembrance Day, also on Nov. 11, we honor those who served in the Canadian Armed Forces. Thank you.



Reaching Out

There are numerous ways that you and your student can reach out, including...

- You can learn more about the **Joining Forces initiative** to serve American’s military families at www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces/. There are opportunities to send online messages of support, to find service options and more.
- Find **volunteer opportunities** to help veterans and military

families through the website www.milserve.org.

- Attend an **Honor Flight Network** send-off, as this organiza-

tion tries to get as many World War II veterans to the National WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C. as possible. More information is available at www.honorflight.org.

These are just a few ways to raise awareness and to thank our military veterans and their families. Here’s to them!

Sources: U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, www.va.gov; Military.com, www.military.com/veterans-day/

Supporting Student Veterans

As a result of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, there are now more and more veterans who have returned home and come to campus, pursuing a degree. Encourage your student to be aware of this campus population and to offer support to student veterans that he or she meets. More information is also available through the Student Veterans of America at <http://studentveterans.org>.

Going Home Again

If your student has been living away from home this term, the Thanksgiving homecoming will likely stir up some emotions and changes. Be prepared for topics to come up, such as...

Family. Adjusting to family relationships while under the same roof will take flexibility on everyone’s part. Discussing rules and expectations ahead of time can make this transition much smoother.

Friends. Seeing old friends, missing new ones at school and sorting out complicated romantic relationships can all take an emotional toll. Be there to talk things through with your student, if he wants to.

Academics. Your student may be stressing about academics, as things get down to the wire. Encourage her to do her best and talk with instructors, plus let her know that she has your support along the way.

Finances. Looking ahead to a new term while counting the dwindling cash in their pockets can be stressful for students. Consider discussing a budget with your student to assess where things currently are and what needs to happen in the months ahead.

Sleep. Your student may just want to catch up on sleep in a comfortable, familiar setting. Letting her relax before plunging into the next few busy weeks at school could do her some real good.

Consider Discussing...

- Transportation
- Where your student will stay
- Curfews
- Expectations for events during break
- Household rules
- Visitors
- And more!

No matter what comes up during Thanksgiving break, you’ll be able to get through by lending a listening ear, a supportive shoulder and a caring heart. All the best!



Digging Out of an Academic Hole

Procrastination, burnout and feeling hopelessly behind can all be huge deterrents when it comes to academic progress. Yet, it's certainly *not* a hopeless situation, even at this stage of the term. You can help your student dig out of this academic hole.

- Encourage her to have an honest discussion with the instructor of a class that she is struggling in. By showing her self-awareness and a desire to improve, the instructor will likely be more inclined to help her determine how to get back on track before finals roll around.
- Suggest that he make an appointment with his advisor or someone

at the counseling center to discuss burnout and procrastination. These issues can be addressed head-on in order to help your student emerge stronger.

- Ask if she has talked with someone in the learning center or looked into the possibility of getting a tutor. Assure her that asking for help like this is a sure sign of strength and that you support her greatly!
- Explore study habits with your student. Where does he typically study? Might there be quieter, less distracted sites? Is he putting in enough time? Could a study

group help with certain subjects? Sometimes making a minor positive tweak to study habits can have a major impact on your student's academic outcome.

Through all of this, try to understand the frustration and defeat that your student may feel. College academics require an adjustment period. Luckily, however, there are multiple resources on campus to help her work through things and get back on track.

Keeping Up the Pace Through Finals

"How in the world am I going to keep going until finals?" That may be the question currently on your over-tired, overwhelmed student's mind.

Self-care is critical in this scenario, as the busy month of November, Thanksgiving break and then a few intense weeks in December loom large. Here are some key tips to share with your student...

Go to Sleep. Pulling all-nighters, burning the midnight oil and caffeinating to the hilt are all quick fixes that can do more harm than good. Instead, getting solid nights of sleep will help your student's mood, concentration and academic prowess.

Eat Well. Get good protein, pay attention to fruits and veggies, and steer clear of too much sugar and fat. Regular, nutritious meals will help fuel your student's body and mind.

Make Time to Move. Taking a walk, doing some treadmill time or playing volleyball with friends is not only good for your student's physical

"The synergy of self-care and academic attention can create a balanced, positive outcome."

well-being, it'll also help him sleep better – which leads to the enhanced mood, concentration and academic good stuff we mentioned above.

Have Down Time. It can't be go, go, go all the time! Students need to spend time with friends, take an occasional nap and do things for pleasure, too. Consider encouraging the reward system in this context: after a three-hour study session, your student allows herself to go to the movies with friends.

Support, encouragement and self-care are all needed as your student focuses on the finals finish line. Academics should never take the place of his or her well-being! Instead, the synergy of self-care and academic attention can create a balanced, positive outcome.

Thanksgiving Togetherness

The Thanksgiving break often provides a bit of time for students and their families to spend together. Here are a few ways to make the most of this limited time...

- Volunteer to prepare and/or serve Thanksgiving dinner to others
- Take a walk together
- Play board games or cards
- Keep Thanksgiving dinner simple
- Check out one of the new holiday blockbusters
- Wash your car
- Cook and bake together
- Play some touch football
- Write "Thankful Lists" for family & friends
- Do a holiday craft

Simple things can be even nicer when done together!