



a newsletter for parents & families



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## Helping Your Student Navigate New Territory

Chances are that there's going to be a learning curve as your student plunges into the college experience – for you and your student! Even though you can't have all the answers, there *are* some key things you can do to help students navigate this new territory...

**Listen Well.** When you get those calls or texts, try to focus and really listen to your student. See what she is feeling or thinking, and what she might do about a situation. Instead of just jumping in with advice or to “fix” things, listen as she works things out herself.

**Refer to Campus Resources.** Sure, you can help your student figure out what resources are available on campus to help answer his questions. However, it's typically important that he make the call or visit the office to get the answers. We work *very* well with students who take responsibility for their own experience.

**Discuss Options.** If your student is trying to decide what campus organization to get involved with or what class to take, you don't have to provide the sole answer. Instead, discuss options with her, with both of you contributing ideas. This can lead to a great two-way conversation where she learns to trust her own thoughts while also listening to yours.



**Ask Questions.** Students who are navigating new territory may sometimes need prompts. That's when asking a question or two can help him think about things in a different way. For instance, if he's trying to figure out how to deal with a roommate issue, you could ask: “Is there a time you can sit down and talk with him?” and “How do you think he is viewing this situation?”

**Educate Yourself.** Spend some time with the campus website, ask questions when you're on campus and try to learn more about how our campus operates. This will help you be a valuable resource to your student, as you help her learn to seek answers.

This is a new situation for all of you. And we are here to answer any questions that you and your student may have as you navigate this new experience!

### What You Can Do

You won't know all the answers. Yet, you can...

- Listen
- Refer
- Discuss
- Ask questions
- Educate yourself



# Getting Familiar with Community Resources

The resources available to students and their families around here are numerous! Yet, as the beginning of the academic year is just around the corner, there are a few resources within the community that you may all want to get intimately familiar with right away, such as...

**A Bank.** Where will your student do her banking when she's at school? Getting this situated now will make things easier throughout the year.

**A Hotel for Parent/Family Weekend.** It's a good idea to book this now, if you haven't already, to beat the rush! Places can sell out quickly. And, while you're at it, making dinner reservations couldn't hurt either.



**A Mechanic.** If your student has a car on campus, urge him to ask around to see whom local folks use as their mechanic. Asking people like housekeeping and support staff makes a lot of sense – they often know this town well!

**A Place of Worship.** If your student wants to attend services, there are options on and around campus.

**A Nature Spot.** It's good for students to have a little campus getaway, whether it's a city park, a hiking trail or a lake. Look at a map to see what's close by.

**An Academic Getaway.** It's also good for students to have multiple study options. So, check out a local library or coffeehouse as a getaway.

Connecting with these community resources – and more – now will add to the comfort level in your student's new town. Our community is looking forward to welcoming you and your student!

## Seasonal Student Issues

It's likely hitting your student now... he or she is heading to college in a few weeks. With that revelation will likely come some excitement – and some anxiety – regarding topics such as...

- Will people like me?
- Will I find friends as good as the ones I have now?
- How can I reinvent myself?
- Will I be able to handle college academics?
- How will I find my way around campus?
- Who will I turn to if I'm struggling?
- Will I still be as connected to my family and friends?
- What if I don't get along with my roommate?
- Will people make fun of how I talk/dress/act?
- How will I get involved?
- Will I find a place to belong here?





## Living Safely in Community

Living in a positive, caring and safe community is all about teamwork. As a campus community member, your student is responsible not only for her own safety, but also doing her best to contribute to the safety of those around her.

Here are some suggestions to share...

- Don't act like it's all about you.
- Don't prop open outside doors—you never know who might get in and do someone harm.
- Don't tamper with fire equipment—you'll want it ready to go in an emergency!
- Don't disregard your gut instincts—if something feels “off,” it's probably true.
- Don't just “get to know” fellow community members by following them on social media—do face-to-face too!
- Don't be alone with people you don't know.
- Don't slam doors.
- Don't vandalize others' property.
- Don't let your choices about alcohol and other drug abuse negatively impact others around you—or impair your judgment.
- Don't let things like burned out lights, broken glass, water leaks and more go undetected—report them right away!
- Don't assume things about others. Engage them in conversation and find out the real scoop instead.
- Don't keep to yourself so much that it's impossible to get to know you.
- Don't always have ear buds plugged in—it makes you seem really unapproachable, plus you may not hear someone coming up behind you.



- Don't take advantage of others in your community.
- Don't just look out for yourself—it's about community safety!
- Don't forget what a great opportunity it is to live with other people—and a great responsibility.

Although today's campuses remain some of the safest places to live and learn, they are not immune from incident. When students stay alert, report things that seem amiss and work together with others, everyone can stay safe and live happily in our community.

## Student Loan Management

In order to keep student loans in check, here are a few things to help your student keep in mind...

- Manage ALL of your money wisely – if you overspend, you're more likely to over-borrow.
- Borrow only what you need – remember that you'll have to pay about 30% more than you borrow, in interest, when you're paying back your loans.
- Ask yourself questions – consider how you can reduce expenses, if you can work during the school year and summer, and more.
- Use student loans to finance your education, not your lifestyle – because every dollar you're spending now will be more than a dollar that you'll have to pay back later.
- Look at all available loans – compare your options, and try to use alternative/private loans as a last resort.
- Consider other sources – have you looked at scholarships, grants and work-study before borrowing?

Sources: Financial Planning, about.com; MappingYourFuture.org





## How NOT to Connect with Others

When students are looking to connect with others at the beginning of the academic year, they may turn to not-so-positive actions as they figure things out. You can offer some gentle warnings to help them avoid these possible missteps.

**Don't Just Go with the Crowd.** For example, drinking to excess, just

because others are, isn't a true way to connect. Instead, your student can easily find others who aren't interested in that behavior and spend time with them.

**Trust Your Gut.** Your student may be tempted to try things that just don't feel right, whether it's vandalizing a space or trying a substance.

Encourage him to trust his gut to steer clear of those harmful behaviors.

**Take Care with How You Spend Your Time.** Time is a precious commodity, so squandering it by always letting others direct what activities will happen can be a waste. Help your student see that she can try new things with other people some of the time while also spending other times doing things that she finds quite satisfying and purposeful.

**Don't Compromise Your Values.** "No one will care if you take that from the dining hall." A peer may tempt your student with this type of moral dilemma, which, really, consists of stealing someone else's property. Remind him that being a person of character requires that he stick to his own values and not let others substitute their judgment for his own.

### Positive Ways for Students to Connect

- Go to a club's organizational meeting to find out more
- Head to dinner with that group from your floor
- Say hello to someone in class or as you walk by their room
- Ask that guy in line about the 5K race on his T-shirt
- Attend a program or workshop
- Work on a service project through the community service office
- Invite others to play volleyball or cards

## 7 Ways to Strike Up a Campus Conversation

As students prepare to dig in and meet new people on campus, here are some simple ways they can strike up conversations with strangers...

1. Ask about the sports team or event listed on a person's T-shirt or baseball cap
2. Compliment someone on an insightful comment they made in class
3. Inquire where another student is from
4. Ask for directions
5. Show an interest in someone else's perspective
6. Follow up on something you heard them say in class or a group meeting
7. Simply say hello as you pass each other on the sidewalk – sometimes, that's all it takes!

