



a newsletter for parents & families



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

University Housing

February 2020

## The Importance of Parental Support

Parental support is one of the keys to student success at college. “Family emotional support is beneficial for academic outcomes as it promotes psychological well-being and facilitates greater student engagement,” said researchers examining both emotional and financial family support among a sample of 728 first-year, low-income students at eight four-year institutions.

Their findings, published in *Research in Higher Education* (June 2019), show that family emotional support has a greater impact on student outcomes than family financial support. “Low-income families have a particular resource that they

“We know when families are involved in healthy ways with their student, graduation and retention rates go up.”

– Amy Swank, director of parent and family relations at Gonzaga University (WA), to *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (5/5/19)

have plenty of and that they invest in their children, and that’s emotional support,” Josipa Roksa, a professor of sociology and education at the University of Virginia and the lead author on the study, told *Inside Higher Ed*. “We shouldn’t underestimate that value and the importance of that resource.”

Other findings about students who reported receiving more emotional support from their families include...

- They were 19% more likely to have a GPA of 3.0 or higher
- They were 19% more likely to accumulate at least 24 credits during their first year
- They were 24% more likely to finish a second year of college

Findings like this point to family support playing a big role in student retention and persistence. “Family support is related to how much kids study, how they engage with faculty, whether or not they belong,” Roksa said. “Those things that we hold dear in higher education as indications of academic and social engagement and that we usually try to address institutionally are actually related to parental support.”

**Sources:** *Inside Higher Ed*, 7/11/18; *Research in Higher Education*, June 2019; *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 5/5/19





# Battling Burnout

Is your student feeling overwhelmed and under-motivated? If so, he may be experiencing burnout, which can show up as a feeling of emptiness, having trouble finishing simple tasks, or feeling irritable, over-worked and over-stressed.

## What Causes Student Burnout?

Burnout can be a result of...

- Unrealistic expectations and goals
- Trying to be too many things to too many people
- Being in unethical and unwelcoming environments
- Giving 75% to all things, rather than 100% to a few things
- Being part of an organization that is incongruent with your values

## Stress vs. Burnout

Although they sound the same, burnout and stress are different. One specific difference is your own awareness. People typically know when they are feeling stressed, but burnout can sneak up on you, sometimes taking weeks and months to surface.

- Feeling trapped in a particular role
- Responsibilities and tasks that are boring and not challenging

## How to Address Burnout

Here are some strategies to share with your student...

- Look for new challenges that will be meaningful to you
- Get enough sleep to recharge your body
- Eat balanced meals and get physically active

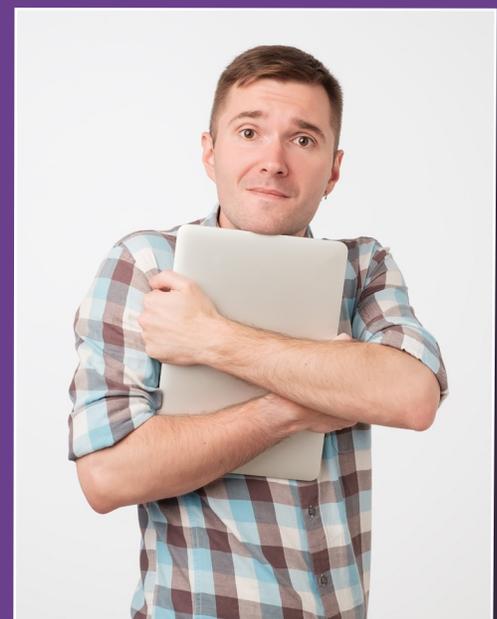
- Prioritize and allocate your time and energy to things that are most meaningful to you
- Seek help from the campus counseling center, an advisor, a coach or other campus partner

Burnout can be addressed successfully, as long as your student takes ownership and accepts help. Otherwise, burnout that's allowed to fester can grow into dissatisfaction, stress and other emotional health concerns.

## 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...

- Things become routine... school finally becomes home
- Pressures to figure out living plans for next year as the room assignment process draws near
- Difficulty getting into study mode
- Missing family and friends at home, and friends who did not return to school
- Cliques become stronger within residence hall communities, student organizations and in classes
- Cabin fever and burnout
- Valentine's Day depression, if not dating or if a relationship is not going well
- Anxiety amidst the job/internship search
- Sophomores facing decisions about declaring a major
- Spring break planning underway





# Choosing a Major

After taking a variety of courses, many students are currently facing the selection of a major. This process can be stressful and a bit agonizing for some students who still don't feel 100% sure about what they want to do. Your support is a *key* element in this process!



## How to Be Helpful

- Listen as your student processes
- Support the exploration of a variety of potential careers – and encourage her to work with the campus career center
- Encourage him to make academics a high priority
- Support building skills and strengths out of class that complement in-class learning

- Identify talents and abilities you have observed in your student and share them with him
- Encourage your student to find her passion and pursue a vocation rather than simply guaranteeing herself a job

## What Do I Need to Know as a Parent/Family Member?

- The majority of college students change their major at least once
- Many career choices today require further schooling
- The career center and academic advisors are helpful resources throughout students' college careers, not just when they're ready to graduate
- Asking intentional questions (see box) can help your student filter through what is often an overwhelming decision
- Earning potential shouldn't be a sole decision-making factor when choosing a major; vocational enjoyment and purpose are also very important
- Shaming students about changing their minds and not sticking with a major does absolutely no good

## Questions to Ask...

- What are your passions? What do you care about and want to contribute to?
- What have some of your favorite classes been? Why?
- How have you performed in these classes? What have you learned?
- What majors rise to the top?
- How do these majors relate to career options of interest?
- What can you see yourself doing with such majors?

- Expecting students to follow in your footsteps or take over the family career "legacy" removes the element of choice, which is critical in helping them learn to stand on their own as an adult
- Promoting internships, job shadowing and mentoring allows students a means to "test" possible majors and career paths

## Financial Aid Deadlines

When applying for financial aid for college or graduate school, students will use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Here are some federal deadlines to keep in mind...

**2020–21 Academic Year.** Online FAFSA forms must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. Central time (CT), June 30, 2021. Any corrections or updates must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CT, September 11, 2021.

**2019–20 Academic Year.** Online FAFSA forms must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. Central time (CT), June 30, 2020. Any corrections or updates must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CT, September 12, 2020.

And consult <https://bit.ly/35NTvWY> for state deadlines, too.

For more details regarding the FAFSA Form, go to: <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa>.



# Making Community Contributions

At this point in the year, some students are knee-deep in community involvement, while others are still trying to figure out their place. A key question to ask your student regarding this is “What could you contribute to the campus community?”

You can help students assess their contributions with a few other key questions, too...

- What are some things you could teach other people? (These can be anything, from sign language to grammar tricks to the rules of basketball!)
- What about your personality makes you a positive community member? (Encouraging, hard-working, challenging the norm)
- What does “community involvement” mean to you?
- What community contributions have you provided thus far?
- How else do you see yourself getting involved in this community?
- What do you hope to show other members of this community?
- What interests/talents/hobbies do you have? How could each be used to contribute to this community? (e.g. You are great at graphic design and could offer to



## Your student can get involved in various ways:

- Attending hall council meetings
- Helping residence hall staff with a program or bulletin board
- Joining the campus newspaper to sell ads
- Forming an intramural basketball/volleyball/ping pong team
- Attending a retreat run by campus ministry
- Participating in a service project with some classmates
- Giving campus tours through the admissions office
- Helping to decorate a campus space for Open House
- Singing with the gospel choir or another campus group

develop a poster series with the study abroad office.)

Encourage your student to talk with a trusted advisor, coach, residence hall staffer or supervisor about positive ways to get involved in the

campus community. It doesn't have to be a huge commitment, especially not at first! Yet, engaging in the community is a proven way for students to feel more a part of things and to feel like they want to stick around.

## What Would You Do if You Knew You Could Not Fail?

A popular question that can lead to insightful conversation between you and your student is...

***“What would you attempt to do if you knew you could not fail?”***

This fascinating conversation starter can lead to exploration with your student into issues including...

- Things they're participating in out of obligation rather than desire
- Confidence or a lack of confidence; what that means in taking risks
- Career goals, interests and passions they'd like to pursue
- Where they'd like to be in five to seven years

