



a newsletter for parents & families



GEORGIA'S PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY

University Housing

January 2019

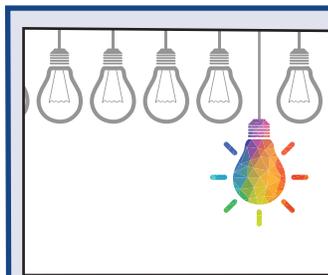
## Recommitting to Academic Success in a New Year

Receiving grade reports over the holiday break can be a pleasant surprise for some students while serving as a wake-up call for others.

The resolve to do better academically, however, is likely on most students' minds. As they look to the term ahead, there are some simple strategies they can undertake to recommit to their academic success...

### Use Those Office Hours.

Talking with professors during their office hours is a sure way to become known as a student who cares. The information exchanged can be helpful, of course, while students' presence signals that they want to do their best.



"The capacity to learn is a gift; the ability to learn is a skill; the willingness to learn is a choice."

– Brian Herbert

### Work in More Study Time.

Chances are that your student may not be putting in enough devoted study time. Help him look at his schedule for the spring term and carve out good chunks of time when he can concentrate and prepare.

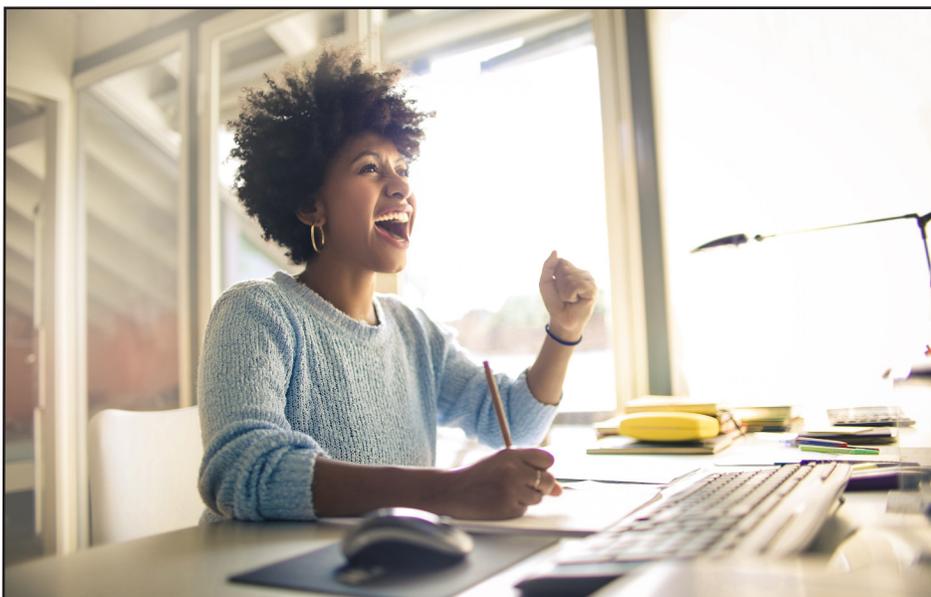
**Get Enough Sleep.** Students' concentration is impacted by poor

sleep, as is recall and more. So, instead of leaving academics to the last minute and pulling all-nighters, your student will be *much* more effective by getting good, quality sleep.

**Tap Into Campus Services.** If your student gets anxious about taking tests, needs help writing papers, could use some tutoring assistance or isn't sure where to turn with her academic needs, the good folks in the counseling center, learning center and more can provide help.

**Be Well-Rounded.** Focusing on academics doesn't mean your student needs to sequester himself away, doing nothing but studying. The most successful students are those who are involved both in *and* out of the classroom.

Recommitting to academic success can be empowering for students, as they take their learning into their own hands.





# Boosting Creativity!

Everyone has creativity within them and it comes in multiple forms. Students can train their brains to be more creative. So, consider encouraging students to think in different ways and tap into new areas of their brain by doing things like...

**Remembering That Creativity Comes in Many Forms.** Whether it's identifying a quicker route to class, figuring how to combine foods in the dining hall to eat healthier or writing a new song, it's all creative thinking in action!

**Paying Attention to Creative Thoughts.** The subconscious mind tends to give us more of what we pay attention to. So, if you ignore the creative aspects of your life, you're telling your mind that you don't think they are important.

**Consciously Noting When You Are Creative.** Look for opportunities to be creative and you'll notice that you are more creative than you think you are.

**Challenging Assumptions.** Who says things must be a certain way? Find ways to come up with creative solutions and ideas when you can.

**Using the "Random Presentation" Technique.** This involves randomly choosing anything around you and asking yourself how it is connected to a problem you are trying to solve.

**Coming Up with Creative Solutions by Asking Yourself and Others, "What if it was...?"** The "it" is the problem in this case. Insert any idea generating words (which are usually adjectives) into the "... " and see what you can come up with!

**Emphasizing Process Rather than Product.** By doing this, you often end up somewhere you didn't expect!



**Posting Inspirational Messages and Images All Around Your Workspace.** If you feel good, you'll be more likely to give your mind permission to think in new and innovative ways.

It's so much easier to be creative than most people think. Help to get your student's creative juices flowing with these tips – and more!

## Seasonal Student Issues

Here are a few things your student may be experiencing this month...

- Feelings of happiness/restlessness from break
- A resolve to do better academically
- Renewed interest in classes and activities
- New leadership skills starting to emerge
- Unwanted weight gain from the holidays
- Cold/winter weather blues (in some areas)
- Not many social activities scheduled
- Possible roommate changes
- Anxiety and uncertainty for those who just transferred in
- Contentment being back with friends after time away during break





## Promoting a Money-Saving Mindset

Now that the holidays are done, it's likely that your student needs to head into the new year with a money-saving mindset. Here are some tips to pass along...

**Update the Resume.** Have an updated resume ready to apply for any scholarship/grant at any time. Being prepared can lead to free money!

**Say No to Credit Come-ons.** Don't sign up for "free" credit card offers – many credit companies prey on college students, leading to deep debt that can take a *long* time to undo.

**Maximize Meal Money.** Maximize your campus dining plan rather than opting for costly takeout. Learn about initiatives in place to meet scheduling needs without shell-ing out additional money.



**Do Free Stuff.** Check out free and low-cost programs on campus sponsored by the student activities office, academic departments and many others. There's a wealth of great affordable stuff right here!

**Be Closet Conscious.** Take good care of clothes so they don't have to be replaced as often. Don't scald them in the dryer. Hang up delicate items to air dry. And try to steer clear of dry clean-only items when possible – caring for them can get costly!

**Track Cell Phone Use.** Watch your data plan. Determine if you're on the smartest plan

**Cut Restaurant Bills.** Don't order drinks and dessert when you go out to eat. It'll likely cut costs almost in half.

Being smart about money choices is an important habit for students to get into now. Help them look for options and determine wants vs. needs as they head down the road to a positive financial future.

## Valentine's Day: A Time of Mixed Emotions

The New Year has barely begun, yet stores are already dotted with red and pink cupids, lacey hearts and lovey paraphernalia aplenty. It can only mean one thing... Valentine's Day is almost upon us.

This can be a tough time of year for some students, as they choose to focus on not having a partner or the difficult times they're going through with a current partner, rather than the love that *is* in their life.

You can help by reminding them about the various "loves of their life," including...

- **Pets** – A photo of a student's favorite furry friend may be just what he needs to get him out of a "woe with me" funk!
- **Friends** – Encourage her to spend time with good friends as a reminder of how lucky she is.
- **Siblings** – Drawings, phone calls or funny texts from brothers and sisters can be great distractions.
- **You** – In your own way, let your student know how much you love him. It can really make a difference, especially during this cupid-happy time of year!

And realize that, despite your best efforts, your student may still feel lonely and depressed this Valentine's Day. If you sense that she isn't handling it well and that it's more than a "passing thing," encourage her to visit the campus counseling center, where she'll find good folks who love students and want to help them live happy, healthy lives.





# Developing the Lifetime Skill of Cultural Competence

Being able to work with people from a variety of cultures is not only a life-affirming skill, it's also a talent that prospective employers highly value. It's about understanding and appropriately responding to the unique combination of cultural variables that people bring to our interactions.

Luckily, there are plentiful opportunities to develop cultural competence on campus. Here are some skill-developing actions that your student can take...

**Getting to Know Their Community.** What ethnicities, races, religions and more are represented on campus? What languages are spoken? Instead of using anecdotal evidence, based solely on who they interact with, students can tap into campus demographic information. This will help them focus their cultural learning opportunities to intentionally learn about different groups through campus events, reading and engaging with others.



**Knowing Their Cultural Identities and Beliefs.** How aware are students of various cultural issues, from accents to actions? What do they believe? How do these things influence their view of other cultures? Putting in some self-work to enhance their self-awareness can help identify the areas where they may need additional work.

**Learning to Engage Beyond the Surface.** When interacting with people from different cultures than theirs, do students keep the conversation polite and superficial? Being respectful and not “grilling” someone makes sense. However, as the time feels right, they can learn more through simple questions about things like what other people are involved with, what they like to do, what they're reading, how they celebrate, what they hope for, what challenges they face and much more.

Cultural norms can impact so much, from communication styles to familial roles and everything in between. Becoming culturally competent requires us to be humble and take a hard look at what we *don't* know, while being open to continuously learning. It helps us be more open, understanding and aware members of the increasingly global workforce and society. Becoming culturally competent can make our worlds *much* larger and richer.

**Sources:** *The ASHA Leader*, Nov. 2014; ASHA Cultural Competence Checklist, 2010

## A Cultural Competence Checklist

This checklist can help students track the efforts they're making to increase their own cultural competence by taking advantage of various learning opportunities and engaging with others. This is just the tip of the iceberg, so they can certainly add their own cultural competence goals, too!

- Have a conversation with someone about their background
- Share details about my background when someone asks
- Volunteer to help with an event that supports a diverse group
- Attend a campus program focusing on a culture I know little about
- Learn a few words in another language
- Participate in a rally or march in support of a group's rights
- Respond if someone says something offensive about another culture
- Be open to feedback about my own cultural approach
- Learn a cultural art form such as dance, writing, painting, music, etc.
- Go to a museum to see a cultural exhibit
- Watch an educational documentary or movie and discuss it afterward
- Eat a type of cultural food that I've never tried before
- Read a book to learn more about a different culture
- Learn about family structures within a different culture
- Find out how gender roles play out within a different culture