



a newsletter for parents & families



November 2018

## Getting to Know Faculty and Staff Members

### How students can connect with these important people in their lives

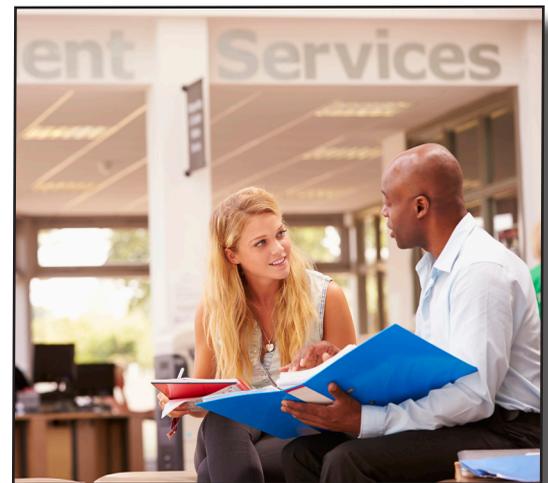
There's often a missed opportunity when students attend faculty office hours or interact with administrators and other staff members. Students may be so focused on "getting down to business" during their conversations with faculty or staff members that they forget to take those important moments to get to know them as *people*, too.

Encourage your student to learn more about the faculty and staff in their lives. These personal connections can lead to students developing mentors, networks and a broader awareness of all the benefits available within the campus community.

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

- Ask how long they've been at the institution and where they're originally from

- Notice their diploma and ask what they liked about attending XYZ University
- 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.")
- Discuss something happening on campus ("Did you see that \_\_\_\_\_ is coming here to speak next month? Who is one of the best presenters you've ever seen?")
- Ask about something that's hanging on their office wall ("That mask is really interesting – where did you get it?")



- Encourage them to talk about the scene featured in a photo displayed in their office ("Where did you catch that massive fish?" or "Those mountains in the photo are beautiful – where was that taken?")
- Notice a book on their bookshelf
- Ask if they have a favorite kind of music or if they've seen any good movies lately

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 on campus. Students need these people in their lives, as educators, challengers and advocates. They are definitely worth the time.

### 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, and be part of your student's developing skill set.



## Resolving Roommate Conflicts

Encourage your student not to be discouraged if a roommate is doing something bothersome. This is inevitable at some point in *any* shared living arrangement. Instead, share these Do's and Don'ts with your student to address situations most effectively.

### DO:

- Bring concerns up right away
- Use “I” statements to describe how you feel
- Avoid generalizing behaviors unfairly with words like “always” or “never”
- Be specific so your roommate understands *exactly* what you need

**For instance, a student could say...**

*“I have a hard time sleeping with bright lights on. Could you please use your desk lamp after midnight instead of the ceiling light?”*

This type of statement is very clear and fair, while using “I” statements to describe and personalize feelings.



### DON'T:

- Drop hints; many people won't pick up on them and you'll get frustrated
- Resort to social media or text messages; be discreet yet direct
- Delay bringing up an important issue; you'll only get more upset
- Bring up a long list of issues all at once and overwhelm your roommate

**For instance, a student should steer clear of statements such as...**

- *“Ugh, I'm so tired, I haven't been able to get a good night's sleep all week.”*

This type of statement is too vague, plus it can be viewed as a bit passive aggressive.

- *“You're always so rude! You don't even care that I haven't slept well for a week!”*

This type of statement is too heated. Plus, it sounds like other issues besides sleep are in the mix. Bottling things up until you explode won't help anyone.

## 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



# 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.

By searching for winter break employment now, your student is bound to have more possibilities than if he waits until December. All the best with the search!

## Going Home Again

Thanksgiving homecomings often stir up a variety of emotions, especially if your student has been living away from home this term. Here are some topics that might come up...

**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 with finals looming soon after Thanksgiving. 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.

No matter what happens during Thanksgiving break, you'll be able to get through by lending a listening ear, a supportive shoulder and a caring heart.





# How Getting Involved on Campus Can Enhance Students' Future Employability

Students who are engaged in co-curricular experiences outside of class – from working on campus events to participating in the multicultural club to doing community service – often develop different skills than they do in the classroom. And research from the National Association of Campus Employers (NACE) shows that these “soft skills” are often what employers are looking for when hiring new college graduates.

“More than 70 percent of employers have consistently identified leadership, teamwork, written communication ability, problem solving, and work ethic as key résumé attributes,” writes Mackes in the book *Engagement and Employability: Integrating career learning through cocurricular experiences in postsecondary education*. “Teamwork, verbal communication skills, and problem solving are the skills employers consider important for success.”

In the same book, Kruger and Peck write, “The alignment between these skills and the kinds of learning outcomes already pursued in student affairs is clear. The data are compelling and suggest that a myriad of experiences are embedded in co-curricular learning that can help develop (these) skills.”



“I assumed the most important and memorable academic learning goes on inside the classroom, while outside activities provide a useful but modest supplement. The evidence shows the opposite is true: learning outside of classes, especially in residential settings and extracurricular activities such as the arts, is vital. When we asked students to think of a specific, critical incident or moment that had changed them profoundly, four-fifths of them chose a situation or event outside the classroom.”

– Richard Light, author of *Making the Most of College*, 2001

## Benefits of Co-curricular Involvement

So, getting involved in activities outside of the classroom can be good for your student – and for his/her employability once graduation comes around. Here are five critical skills that employers look for and how students can acquire them through campus involvement...

### 1. **Planning Complex Projects.**

This skill is inherent in students who coordinate group events, advance their group’s cause or who make sure that fellow group members enjoy their experience. By planning projects, students practice their time management, budgeting, volunteer management and risk assessment skills. They also learn to balance their academic, personal, work and family commitments.

2. **Selling and Influencing.** By getting involved, students gain leadership skills where they regularly influence other people.

3. **Decision Making and Problem Solving.** When student leaders set goals, evaluate their group’s effectiveness and seek collaborative solutions to certain issues, they are practicing critical

thinking, which is key when making decisions and solving problems.

4. **Communication.** Employers view communication – both verbally and in writing – as essential skills. They’ll be developed in class, while co-curricular experiences can help students refine their communication abilities, as they lead meetings, write for campus publications and speak persuasively about subjects that mean a great deal to them.

5. **Teamwork.** Campus involvement provides numerous opportunities to operate as a member of a team, from working on event logistics to being part of an intramurals team to group projects. Learning to work with others to achieve shared goals is a highly desirable skill among potential employers.

These are all important things to take into consideration as students make choices about how to spend their time. Balancing in-class and out-of-class learning can help them develop the knowledge and skills that future employers will find attractive.

**Source:** “The Value of Engaged Students,” NACE, 8/1/17