First-Time Parents of a First-Year Student

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What the Research Tells Us about First-Year Students

New student goals for first year in order of priority:

Make friends and have fun
Become independent
Choose financially rewarding major
Get good grades

*These are sometimes the reverse of parent’s first year priorities.*
“Students who major in these subjects have a 7% less chance of moving back in with their parents after graduation.”
Student’s Adjustment

- Student’s background and level of preparedness
- “College is not an intuitive process” Dean Richard Jones
- The beginning of a new journey HS to College
- First-Year Student as Immigrant (Chaskes, 1996)
- Becoming intentional with learning
Academic Differences

- Overall academic ability is higher (stand out less)
- Much more reading and writing
- Readings may not be discussed in class
- Assume you read the syllabus
- Few opportunities for a grade (midterm and final)
- Extra credit is rare
- Courses go twice as fast
- No bells or hall passes
- Classes don’t meet five days a week
More Differences

• Many new students lack understanding about major - 3 to 4 semesters before immersion
• On their own to manage their time and affairs - financial, social, work, laundry, etc.
• Must learn many sets of rules - residence life, academic major, financial aid, academic policies, etc.
• Learn college resources & location
What Role Should Parents Play in this Transition?

Three Stages of Student Adjustment

• Separation
• Transition
• Incorporation
Separation

- Homesickness – wants to come home on weekends
- Emotional roller coaster - “I like it, I hate it.”
- Personal problems – “I hate my roommate.”
- Confusion – “All the liberal arts majors are interesting.”
Transition

- Finding “your kind” of friends
- Campus begins to shrink
- Discovery daily & weekly rhythm
- Confusion over major
- Finding help and resources
- Begins to practice time management
- Learning to juggle school, work and social life
Incorporation

- Knows academic advisor
- Involved on campus
- Satisfied with major
- Seeks guidance, not help, from parents
- Rowan is “my home”
Stages Vary from Student to Student

SUCCESS

What people think it looks like

SUCCESS

What it really looks like
Parental Adjustment to Child in College

- Financial concerns
- Safety & security
- Adjustment & separation anxiety
- FERPA regulations
  - Opportunity, not an obstacle
  - Parents know their students best!
- Academic terminology
- Family issues at home
- And more.....
What Role Should the Family Play in the Transition Process?

• Know you are IMPORTANT!!
• Be a guide
• Be an active listener and be patient
• Every story has at least two versions
• Rx homesickness = come to visit
• Try, try again: Not “one and done”
Ideas for Getting on the Same Page

Do you share expectations?
- You both list expectations of each other
- Exchange lists and DISCUSS HONESTLY

Suggested Issues to Address
- Money
- Frequency of contact and trips home
- Sharing of academic & other information
- Fears and concerns
- Decision-making
• Many positives to a college degree – keep the end result in mind!
• Complete the FAFSA every year (be sure to meet all deadlines)
• Time to Degree “15 to Finish”
  • Students graduating on time could save tens of thousands
  • Advisors are here to help!
• Same price – 12 vs 17 credits
• GPA is very important!
  • A good GPA creates opportunities – being a RA, studying abroad, graduate school, etc.
• Encourage your student to get involved!
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Thank you!

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