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PART I

Changing Roles

College is a new and exciting adventure. It is also a time of transition for both students and parents. As the college years ensue, your role as a parent and the relationship you have with your child will change. While roles and relationships change, the parent-child bond does not. The bond you have with your child will remain as strong as ever.



New Relationships

New roles and relationships

As a parent, you have watched your child grow from a toddler into a young adult. You have taught, guided, and protected your child, and you've watched him/her go through many developmental stages.

Your college student is now at the critical stage of development psychologists call "separation and individuation." During this stage, children establish an adult identity and assume adult behaviors.

As a college student, your child is expected to be independent and self-sufficient. He/she will nevertheless continue to need your guidance and support. You will still serve as the primary influence in your child's life (mentor, advisor, and confidante), but at a greater physical and figurative distance. Your child may be away at college, but knowing that you are there for advice and encouragement is extremely important.

As your role as a parent changes and your child develops and grows, you and your child will develop a new adult relationship. This adult relationship will be based on mutual respect, shared interests, and the bonds of family.

Communicating with your college student

When your child was living at home, you likely talked every day about what was happening, where your child was going, and what he/she was doing. Now that your child is in college, your communication will change. Although you'll probably be communicating much less frequently, it's very important to keep in touch and to keep the lines of communication open.

► **Cell phones** - Cell phones make it easy for parents to stay in contact with students. Since college students seem to always be “in the middle of something,” it may be best to let your child call you when he/she has time to talk. You may also want to arrange specific times to call. Of course, text messaging allows for quick, short messages and updates.

► **E-Mail** - Even though its popularity has almost been replaced by texting, e-mail is still a great way to communicate with college students. In your e-mails, talk about what's happening at home. Students see their home as a safe haven, and with so many new things in their lives, it's reassuring for them to know that life goes on for everyone back home.

► **Home visits** - Some students go home often. Others return only for major holidays. While you want your son or daughter to always feel welcome at home, encourage him/her to stay on campus as much as possible during the first few months of college. This is when colleges arrange activities to help students meet new people and get acclimated to campus.

► **Visiting campus** - If you plan on visiting your student during a busy college weekend, such as Homecoming or Parents' Weekend, make hotel, airplane, rental car, and restaurant reservations well in advance.

► **Snail mail** - There is nothing better than opening mail from home. Surprise your student with an occasional letter, postcard, or humorous greeting card. A “survival kit” with treats and goodies around midterms or finals is especially welcomed.

Tip: A social networking site is a great way to update your student on the activities of family members.

Tip: To keep abreast and find out how things are going, ask open-ended questions that require more than one word answers, such as “What are you studying in English now?” or “Tell me about your roommate.”

PART II

The College Experience

Every student has a different college experience. Some live at home and commute, whereas others attend a college or university far from home. Situations vary, but all college students have a great deal in common. In this section, you will learn what you can do to help your student make the most of his/her college experience.



College Living

Most first-year college students live on campus in a residence hall, or they live at home and commute.

Living in a Residence Hall

Colleges and universities call a student's on-campus home a residence hall. But for the sake of simplicity, we will stick with the term most students use and call it a *dorm*. Living in a dorm is very much a "rite of passage" for new college students. Many of your student's most enduring college memories will be of dorm life and the friendships developed there.

Roommates

The first and most challenging transition from living at home is sharing a dorm room with a friend, or more typically, a total stranger. Roommates need to make every reasonable effort to get along, and that means making compromises and setting ground rules from the very start. Everything - bed times, chores, the positioning of furniture, noise levels, visiting hours - should be addressed in order to prevent conflict between roommates.

Resident Assistants (RAs)

RAs are upper level students who live among dorm residents. Their job is to enforce rules, provide assistance, and generally ensure that everything operates smoothly on their floor. They are full-time students themselves, usually working as RAs to help finance their education.

RAs are veteran students who know the ropes on campus. They possess useful information about courses, professors, and campus services. RAs can also provide support and guidance when the going gets tough.

Dorm rules

Dorm rules spell out exactly what students can have in their rooms, what they can do, and when they can do it. Encourage your student to read and abide by the dorm rules.

Dorm life

Most college dorms offer a wide range of activities and services. These include dining and cooking facilities, laundry rooms, study lounges, work-out facilities, TV rooms, weekend entertainment, and more. Encourage your student to take full advantage of all his/her dorm has to offer.



Tip: For many students, a big part of adjusting to dorm life is overcoming homesickness and getting used to unfamiliar surroundings. Help your student decorate his/her dorm room to give it a more homey, non-institutional feel.

Living at Home

Although the adjustment is not as drastic as dorm living, students who live at home must also make lifestyle changes. A student's schedule will probably be more varied than it has been in the past, which means that he/she will be coming and going at odd hours.

It's important for students who commute to get involved in campus activities so they feel like they're a part of the college. Students who study and spend free time on campus, participate in activities, and go out of their way to make friends get much more out of their college experience.



Student Activities and Organizations

One of the most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of college is the opportunity to get involved in student activities and organizations. There is no better way for students to meet new people who share their interests and to have some fun.

Here are some examples of the activities and organizations typically found on college campuses. To learn what's available at your college, check their website.

Community Service - Through these organizations, students contribute their time and energy to serve the needs of the neighboring community.

Honor Societies - Superior scholarship and leadership are recognized and encouraged through these associations.

International - Comprised of students of all nationalities, these clubs are available for students who have an interest in other cultures.

Political - These groups are generally associated with a political party or cause (e.g., environmental action, election campaigning, world hunger).

Professional - These organizations are related to a student's major or career. Examples include Pre-Law, Pre-Dentistry, and Accounting Society.

Social - Fraternities, sororities, and other organizations sponsor and organize concerts, speaker series, mixers, and other social activities.

Special Interest - These organizations cover a wide range of topics: Mac Users Groups, Campus Spirit Club, Entrepreneurship Club, to name a few.

Sports/Recreation - Almost any sport may be offered: soccer, Tae Kwon Do, lacrosse, Hacky Sack, softball, basketball, paintball, etc.

Student Government - Here students have the chance to work with faculty and administrators to impact the quality of education and campus life.

"It's really important to be part of a group or to be involved in an activity. On a whim, I joined the Men's Glee Club at the beginning of my sophomore year. As it's turned out, being in the Glee Club has been my most rewarding college experience." Bradley, senior business major



Rules and Regulations

Colleges have rules regarding academic integrity, including cheating, plagiarism, and false citations in papers and essays. Additional rules and policies exist regarding sexual harassment and assault, protests and demonstrations, the sale of products on campus, and much more. Dorms also have rules, as do computer labs, rec centers, and libraries.

Students who violate campus rules or policies may be referred to the school's Judicial Affairs office for disciplinary action. A judicial board comprised of students, faculty, and staff meets periodically to hear cases of alleged misconduct. They recommend sanctions for students found in violation of campus policies.

Most colleges have a zero tolerance policy on drug use. Students who get caught using drugs face sanctions which may include warnings, fines, expulsion from their dorm, expulsion from the university, or arrest. If a student is caught selling, the campus or community police will likely be called in.

Alcohol policies are put in writing and are clear cut. Because of concerns regarding excessive and underage drinking, most colleges work hard to limit the misuse of alcohol on their campuses.

In addition to university rules, communities in or near college towns often rigorously enforce laws regarding alcohol use. Perhaps the most common off-campus violations involve public intoxication and displaying open alcohol containers. Students walking from a bar, Greek house, or apartment are often stopped by police for carrying open containers or appearing drunk. The citation may be compounded for underage students.

Some students mistakenly believe that they are not subject to city, state, or federal laws when violations occur on campus. Not true. The law's the law. Students who break the law on campus can wind up sharing a city or county jail cell with other lawbreakers. Many students have experienced this, and they find it to be one of the most disagreeable and regrettable experiences of their lives.

Tip: Students rarely read their college's Student Code of Conduct. If you have reason to believe that your student is in violation of college rules or regulations, bring these rules to his/her attention, and share your concerns.

PART III

Academic Success

Success in the classroom is not just about studying. It is also about being able to navigate the academic world wisely and efficiently. You can help your student succeed by understanding the importance and the process of academic planning.



Academic Planning

In high school, your student was assigned a school counselor for assistance with course selection and college preparation. In college, it is the Academic Advisor (or Academic Counselor) who provides assistance in academic planning and course selection. *All incoming college students are assigned to an Academic Advisor.*

Unlike the mandatory meetings the high school counselor scheduled with your student, college Academic Advisors won't arrange appointments. This is the student's responsibility. Academic offerings and requirements constantly change and can be very confusing. It is therefore essential that students meet regularly with their Academic Advisor.

Although different colleges operate under different models and procedures, there are typically advisors who serve undeclared students (those who have not designated a major) and departmental advisors who provide advisement for students who have declared a specific major.

Some Academic Advisors are full-time professional advisors who devote 100% of their time to providing academic advice. In other cases, advisement is provided by a professor, instructor, or graduate student.

It is very important that students make regular appointments with their Academic Advisor to ensure that all their academic plans and decisions are sound ones.

Academic Advisors

Students should schedule an appointment with their Academic Advisor as early in the semester as possible. Prior to their appointment, students should read the academic requirements listed in their college catalog, review the General Education and major/minor requirements, and determine if any of the courses they're considering have prerequisite courses.

When students meet with their advisor, they should bring their online degree audit with them. *A degree audit is typically an online analysis that allows students to assess their academic progress and unfulfilled requirements. At many schools it is called DARS (Degree Audit Reporting System) or CAPP (Curriculum, Advising, and Program Planning).*

Students should also bring a list of questions with them. These questions may include:

- ▶ What is a reasonable course load?
- ▶ When should I be taking required General Education courses, courses required for my major, and elective (optional) courses?
- ▶ I read my major's published "minimum requirements" for admission, but what are the realistic competitive admission requirements?
- ▶ I'm not particularly strong in the area of _____. Are there any particularly difficult courses in that subject that I should take during the summer when I have more time to devote to the topic?
- ▶ I'm thinking of taking courses at a two-year college near my home this summer. Will these courses transfer to this college?
- ▶ Which courses can I take pass-fail? How many pass-fail courses can I take?
- ▶ Can I see a list of minors and the courses required for each minor?
- ▶ When do I need to register for next semester's courses?
- ▶ What's the best way to ensure that I get into my classes?



Students should keep a written record of everything they discuss with their Academic Advisor. If they are confused or uncertain, they should schedule a return visit. If they question the accuracy of the information they've obtained, they should ask to speak to the Director of Academic Advising or the department chair.