



Dear Parents,

Your student's college years are among the most formative and challenging years of his/her life. College offers many opportunities for personal, intellectual, physical, and spiritual growth. It's a period of self-discovery, and a time for taking charge of one's life. College students assume new responsibilities and overcome new obstacles. They also develop lifelong friendships and many fond memories.

This book provides numerous tips, hints, and recommendations on how you can help your child have a successful college experience. With you as a mentor and coach, your student will achieve success in college and beyond.

Alan Farber, Ph.D.

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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. During these next few years, 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've watched your child grow from a toddler into a young adult. You have taught, guided, and protected your child, and you've seen him/her go through many developmental stages.

Your college student is now at the critical stage of development that 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 available for advice and encouragement is extremely important.

As your role as a parent changes and your child develops and grows, you and your son or daughter 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 important to keep in touch and to keep the lines of communication open.

To keep abreast of how things are going, ask open-ended questions that require more than one word answers, such as "What are you studying in English?" or "Tell me about your weekend."

► **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, texting allows for quick, short messages and updates.

► **Email** – Even though its popularity has almost been replaced by texting, email is still a great way to communicate with college students. In your emails, 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 academic breaks and 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, airline, 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 always appreciated.

The helicopter parent

College administrators began using the term “helicopter parent” in the early 2000s when they noticed many parents being overly involved and “hovering” over their students. Helicopter parents earned notoriety for practices such as:

- ▶ writing college admissions essays
- ▶ selecting courses and registering for classes
- ▶ complaining to professors about their student’s grades
- ▶ calling each morning to wake their student up for class

For parents who have been actively involved in their children’s lives, it can be difficult to “let go.” Parents, however, must determine what constitutes a healthy level of involvement. If your inclination is to “hover,” ask yourself if what you are doing is productive assistance, or if you are fostering dependency and preventing your child from becoming a responsible, self-sufficient adult.

Parental rights – a word about FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) is a federal law intended to protect the privacy of student educational records accumulated from early childhood through college. FERPA provides parents with certain rights with respect to their child’s K-12 education records. *However, once a student reaches the age of 18 or enters college, the rights previously held by the parents transfer exclusively to the student.*

Parents need to realize that payment of a student’s tuition does not, by itself, give them the right to access their student’s records. Ordinarily, parents obtain information about their child’s records directly from their child. Parents can obtain information from the college only if their child has provided the college with written instructions to do so.

FERPA makes four guarantees to college students: 1) the right to inspect and review education records; 2) the right to seek to amend education records; 3) the right to have some control over the disclosure of information from those education records; 4) the right to file a complaint against an institution for the alleged violation of these FERPA rights.

For more details about FERPA, visit your college’s Records and Registration (or Registrar) webpage or go to the U.S. Department of Education’s website (www.ed.gov).

Students returning home for visits and school breaks

While you will probably be excited to have your college student come home for a visit, be aware that these stays may present unique challenges. College students have grown accustomed to considerable freedom and autonomy. Before your child comes home for a visit, discuss house rules, responsibilities, and expectations regarding curfews, chores, and borrowing vehicles.

Students generally go home for short visits to reconnect with family and friends, to “recharge their batteries,” and maybe for some home cooking. After a visit home, students typically return to campus eager to take on the challenges and opportunities that college presents.



College as a Microcosm

Colleges go to great lengths to ensure that students can obtain most of the goods, services, and support they need without ever having to leave campus. If you take a good look at a college campus, you will see that it's a microcosm of the “real world.”

Like your city's police department, Campus Security enforces rules and laws. Dining facilities are comparable to restaurants and cafes. Residence halls are “home,” and the Health Center is akin to a doctor's office or urgent care medical facility. The Counseling Center is the campus mental health facility, and college recreational centers are like your local YMCA, health club, and park district.

Colleges can have libraries, post offices, laundries, bookstores, convenience stores, ATMs, sports arenas, theaters, and concert facilities. Campus religious organizations offer services and support similar to local churches and synagogues, and fraternities, sororities, and other social and service organizations are not unlike the Rotary, Elks, Lions, and Knights of Columbus.

Students are likely to never again have this many activities and services so readily available!

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 most 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 in a residence hall on campus, 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 involve 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—the positioning of furniture, noise levels, visiting hours, bed times, and chores—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 the 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 experienced students who know the ropes. They possess useful information about courses, professors, and campus services. RAs can also provide support and guidance when the going gets tough.

Dorm rules

All dorms have rules that 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 often 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 the dorm has to offer.



Tip: For many students, a big part of adjusting to dorm life is getting used to unfamiliar surroundings—and overcoming homesickness. During the move-in, 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 spend their 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



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 also have some fun.

Here are some examples of the activities and organizations typically found on college campuses. To learn what's available at your student's 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 various nationalities, these clubs are ideal 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 social organizations sponsor and organize concerts, speaker series, mixers, and other social activities.

Special Interest – These organizations cover a wide range of topics: Chess Club, Campus Spirit Club, Entrepreneurship Club, to name a few.

Sports / Recreation – A wide variety of sports are generally offered: soccer, Tae Kwon Do, lacrosse, softball, Ultimate Frisbee, rugby, etc.

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

Greek Life



If a college has social fraternities or sororities, students may want to consider “going Greek.” In the U.S., about 10% of all four-year college students join sororities or fraternities. Some colleges have no Greek organizations, while others have a large and active Greek presence on campus. All the chapters at your student’s college will be listed on their website.

The primary reason students go Greek is for a sense of belonging. Students should, therefore, select a sorority or fraternity the same way they choose their friends—it should be a good fit. Some fraternities and sororities have residential houses on or near campus. Members often live in the houses; however, many members live in dorms or off-campus.

Schools typically have a formal recruitment process called “rush.” Any student can rush, but since membership is by invitation only, not every student can “pledge.”

All Greek organizations have GPA requirements, and many require that members perform community service. Since a student’s primary concern should be academic success, students should ask about the average GPA for each house they are considering. Houses with higher GPAs undoubtedly place a greater emphasis on academics.

As with all significant life decisions, students should gain as much information as possible prior to committing to a fraternity or sorority. They can learn about Greek life on their campus by talking to fellow students, participating in the rush process, meeting as many fraternity and sorority members as possible, and asking themselves the following questions:

- ▶ Are these the kind of people I typically like being around?
- ▶ Are the activities they participate in the kind I’ll enjoy?
- ▶ If there’s a house, is it an environment I will be comfortable in?
- ▶ Do I have the time and the money to be a member?
- ▶ Will membership help or hinder my academic and career pursuits?

Campus Services



"When I started here I didn't know what was available to me besides the library and rec center. Once I made the effort, I found out that there are all kinds of services—and now I use almost all of them." TJ, senior

Many college students either don't know what services are available, or they know, but don't use them. Campus services are voluntary, so it is up to the individual student to contact or visit them.

One very valuable role that you, as a parent, can play is "Purveyor of Information" or "Resource Person." Familiarize yourself with the college's many services via the school's website. When you visit, make arrangements to learn more about the services of particular interest to your student. You will then be able to make a timely and accurate referral if your student reports a problem or concern.

Here are some of the services many colleges offer. Check your college's website for a full listing.

Academic Advising – Advisors are available to assist students with academic planning, course selection, and requirements for graduation.

Career Services – Career counselors provide assistance with selecting a major, planning for a career, and preparing for graduate/professional school. They also help students obtain internships and part-time or full-time jobs.

Computer/Information Technology Help Desk – The IT Help Desk offers assistance with online, software, and hardware concerns. Most colleges also have Computer Labs where students can complete assignments, print documents, and find answers to tech-related questions.

Counseling Center – Qualified helping professionals are available to address any personal concern students may have. The information students share is kept in strict confidence.

Disability Services – Colleges provide assistance, accommodations, and services for students with learning or physical disabilities. If your student had an IEP in high school, visit Disability Services and request appropriate accommodations and/or services.

Financial Aid / Bursar – The Financial Aid office provides information on scholarships, grants, loans, and work-study programs. The Bursar does the billing and collection of tuition, fees, and other college charges.

First and Second Year Programs – Many colleges offer specialized services to first and second year students. College administrators are well aware of the adjustment issues faced by new students, and they make a concerted effort to assist students with the transition to college life.

Health Services – Doctors, nurses, nutritionists, and other health professionals are available for health-related questions and concerns.

Learning Centers – These centers provide academic support programs to promote student achievement. Staff members assist students with class assignments, note taking, textbook reading, and more. They conduct workshops on study skills and test preparation, and may also offer tutoring.

Libraries – There is nothing quite as valuable to a college student as a well stocked and well staffed library. Reference librarians are experts at locating hard-to-find resources and materials, and libraries have it all – print books, audiobooks, online databases, and periodicals (i.e., newspapers, magazines, journals).

Students often find that an out-of-the-way area of the library is an excellent place for quiet, uninterrupted study.

Parent / Alumni Organizations – Many colleges offer students the opportunity to network with alumni and/or parent volunteers.

A parent group is an ideal way for parents to stay abreast of campus happenings, interact with fellow parents, and provide input.

Recreation Center / Intramural Office – There is no better place on campus for students to get in shape, have fun, and meet new people than the Rec Center. Depending on the breadth of programs offered at the college, students may be able to join an intramural team, participate in a yoga class, learn to line dance, go swimming, lift weights, and more. Many colleges also plan excursions and rent outdoor equipment for camping, hiking, kayaking, and other activities.

Registration and Records – This office provides and maintains student records. Students should call or visit if they have questions or concerns about changing their contact information, graduation information, requesting a transcript, or transferring credits from another school. Registration and Records may also be able to help students with schedule changes, course registration, auditing a course, and independent study.

Religious Organizations or Campus Ministry – Most schools, whether secular or associated with a particular religion, provide religious and spiritual support. Many college religious organizations also provide social activities and opportunities for community service.

Service Learning – Many schools have a program dedicated to integrating community service with course instruction. Volunteer opportunities may include tutoring local school children, assisting the elderly or homeless, improving and protecting the environment, staffing crisis lines, and more.

Student Services / Affairs – Many of the aforementioned offices and departments fall under the umbrella of Student Services or Student Affairs. If your student has a concern or question and doesn't know who to ask or where to go, the Student Services office is a good place to start.

Study Abroad – Sometimes called International or Global Education, this program arranges study abroad opportunities for a semester, school year, or summer. Students should gather information early in their college career and coordinate all study abroad plans with their Academic Advisor.

Colleges employ hundreds of professionals to support the academic, career, personal, physical, and spiritual development of their students. Encourage your student to make full use of these excellent resources.

Money and Finances



“You don’t need to have a lot of money to have a great time in college. You just have to budget your money and be smart.” Maria, junior

The average student graduates with over \$20,000 in education debt. Many students also run up outrageous credit card bills on non-educational spending during their college years.

Discuss finances with your student and clarify who pays for what. To encourage “fiscal responsibility,” have your student do the following:

- ▶ Establish a weekly budget and stick to it.
- ▶ To avoid incurring debt and running up charges, use a debit and school cash card rather than a credit card.
- ▶ Save money on entertainment by taking advantage of free and inexpensive campus events (concerts, films, sporting events, speakers, theater productions).
- ▶ Buy used textbooks online, from other students, or at the college bookstore. Many college bookstores now offer discount book rentals as well.
- ▶ Take advantage of “student discounts” at movie theatres, retailers, and online shopping sites.
- ▶ Get a checking account that does not incur ATM fees. Withdraw cash in small increments.
- ▶ Take full advantage of the school’s meal plan, and avoid spending money on extra meals and snacks.
- ▶ Continue to apply for local, state, and national scholarships. For information, check with the Financial Aid office.

Tip: Make sure your student knows how to read and reconcile his/her online bank statement.

Rules and Regulations



Colleges have rules regarding academic integrity. These rules cover cheating, plagiarism, and false citations in papers and essays. Additional rules and policies exist regarding sexual harassment and assault, the sale of products on campus, and much more. 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 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 the college's rules, communities in or near college towns often rigorously enforce laws regarding alcohol use. 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. This is false. The law is the law. Students who break the law on campus can wind up sharing a city or county jail cell with other lawbreakers. Students who experience this find it to be one of the most unpleasant 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 requires navigating 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 an Academic Advisor.*

Academic Advisors

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.

Most colleges have departmental advisors who provide advisement for students who have declared a specific major. Colleges also provide advisors to work with undeclared students (those who haven't yet chosen a 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 of their academic decisions are sound.

Students should schedule an appointment with their Academic Advisor as early in the semester as possible. Prior to their appointment, students should go over the General Education and major/minor requirements listed in their college catalog.

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).*

Questions to ask advisors



- ▶ What is a reasonable course load?
- ▶ When should I be taking my required General Education courses? The courses required for my major?
- ▶ Can I get into the major I want? Are there admission requirements?
- ▶ I'm not particularly strong in the area of _____. Is there a particularly difficult course in that subject that I should take during the summer, when I have more time to devote to it?
- ▶ 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 am I allowed to 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 record of everything they discuss with their Academic Advisor. If they are confused or uncertain about anything, 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 of the academic program they're asking about.

Honors and Scholars Programs

Many colleges invite high achieving students to voluntarily enroll in an Honors or Scholars Program. These programs provide challenging honors courses and a variety of unique activities and opportunities (e.g., priority scheduling, honors housing).

Registering for classes

Colleges publish a Schedule of Classes that includes the registration schedule. Students are typically given a registration date (or range of dates) according to the number of hours they have completed. Some classes fill up quickly, so students should always register at the earliest possible date.

Selecting the right courses is important, but so is the way courses are scheduled. When registering for classes, students should avoid taking too many particularly difficult or time-consuming classes during a single semester.

Tip: If the college offers a “University 101” or “College Success” course or seminar, urge your student to take it. Students learn valuable college success tips, and research shows that enrolled students get higher grades and have lower drop-out rates.

Withdrawing from a course

It’s not uncommon for students to realize that they need to withdraw from a course mid-semester. Before doing so, students should consult their college catalog and meet with their Academic Advisor.



Before withdrawing from a course, students should know the answers to the following questions: What is the college or department’s policies about withdrawing from classes? What are the withdrawal deadlines? Will any or all of their tuition be remitted? Are there limits as to how many classes they can withdraw from over the course of their college career? And this is especially important—will reducing their course load affect their financial aid?

Students who anticipate withdrawing from a course should not wait until the last minute. They may not be able to get the signatures or paperwork completed by the deadline.

Academic probation

All colleges have academic standards that students must meet in order to stay enrolled. Students who let their grades fall below a certain point are generally put on academic probation. Most colleges require that students on probation bring their grades up by the end of the following term—or risk being dismissed from school.

Insist that your child share his/her grades with you at the end of each term. *Remember, colleges communicate with students regarding classes and grades, not parents.*



Academic honors

Students who achieve high grades during a particular academic term make the Dean's List. Upon completion of a baccalaureate degree, students who have outstanding academic records may graduate with honors: cum laude, magna cum laude, or summa cum laude.

Graduating in four years

A typical 120 hour college curriculum is designed to take four years to complete (15 hours x 8 semesters = 120 hours). The majority of students who earn a bachelor's degree, however, do not graduate in four years. There are a number of reasons for this. Students may enroll in programs that take more than four years, they may transfer to another college where some of their credits don't transfer, or they may switch majors and have additional required coursework. Sometimes students find they need to take a semester or more off for health or personal reasons, or to work full-time.

So how important is it to graduate in four years? If finances are tight, then of course it's preferable for students to graduate in four years or less. However, it is critical that students graduate *well* rather than graduate quickly. It is counterproductive for students to rush through college if that prevents them from garnering the skills and credentials necessary to enter the work world or graduate school.

In an attempt to graduate in 3 or 3½ years, some well-meaning students take very heavy course loads, only to find that their grades suffer, or that their lack of work experience, student leadership, and community service hinders their post-baccalaureate pursuits. *Students should create an academic and career plan that balances expediency and thoroughness.*

Choosing a Major



Four-year college students typically have until their sophomore year to declare a major.

Majors

An academic major is an in-depth study of one discipline or subject. Students generally take about eighteen 3-hour courses (approximately 50–60 hours) in their major. Students then typically take another 60–70 hours of general education and elective coursework.

Major requirements

Colleges have different requirements regarding admission to certain majors. Make sure your student understands your school's policies regarding any major he/she is considering. Here are three possibilities.

Open Admission – Any student can declare these majors at any time.

Minimum Admission – Certain courses and/or a certain number of credits must be completed before students can declare these majors. The department may also require minimum grades in prerequisite courses or a minimum overall GPA. While there may be an application form and an application deadline, a student who meets the stated requirements will be admitted to the major.

Competitive Admission – The completion of prerequisites does not guarantee admission to these majors (also called “impacted majors”). Admission is based on grades, but may also be based on test scores, portfolios, auditions, interviews, and/or letters of recommendation.

More about majors

Colleges offer majors within departments such as Education, Business Administration, Arts and Sciences, Engineering, and Health and Human Services. An Interdisciplinary Major is comprised of courses from several different programs of study. The number of majors offered by a given college varies according to enrollment.

One way of categorizing majors is in terms of whether or not they are intended to prepare a student for a specific career. Career-oriented majors include Architecture, Engineering, Education, Accounting, Nursing, Commercial Arts, Information Technology, and Social Work, to name but a few. Although students in these majors have other career options upon graduation, they will most likely pursue a job directly related to their career-oriented major.

A great many college majors are not intended to prepare students for a specific career. These majors are often categorized as Humanities (e.g., English, Foreign Language, History), Life or Physical Sciences (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Physics), or Behavioral Sciences (e.g., Political Science, Psychology, Sociology). These majors provide students with a well-rounded education, and many of the skills required to pursue a wide variety of careers.

Many occupations can be pursued directly after completing a 4-year degree. Others (including law, college teaching, and many social service and health-related jobs) require post-baccalaureate study (i.e., two or more years of graduate or professional school). Some college graduates transition into graduate study immediately upon completing their bachelor's degree. Others work for a number of years prior to entering graduate school.

Minors

Students must declare a major, but minors (one or more) are optional. A minor typically consists of 6-8 courses (or 18-24 hours) in a program outside a student's major. The purpose of a minor is to provide supplementary knowledge and credentials.

It is ideal if a student's minor complements his/her major by providing additional career-related skills and know-how. Because there can be great value in being bilingual, a foreign language minor is a popular and practical option. Likewise, a minor in English, Business, or Computer Science provides valuable work-related skills. However, students should consider a minor in any topic that interests them.

Professional advice

A student with a toothache goes to the dentist. A student needing glasses sees an optician. Students uncertain of their major or career plans should meet with a college career counselor. *With thousands of careers available, getting professional advice is the smart thing to do.*

PART IV

Health and Safety

College success requires taking care of mind, body, and spirit. Encourage your student to make healthy choices and to live a balanced life.

Students typically trust the health information provided by their parents. Sit down with your student and discuss your concerns and recommendations regarding a healthy lifestyle.

Health Tips



Review the basics

College students know what they need to do to stay healthy. It is, nevertheless, a good idea to periodically review the following basic health tips:

- ▶ eat a well-balanced diet
- ▶ drink plenty of water
- ▶ get sufficient sleep
- ▶ exercise regularly
- ▶ take time to relax
- ▶ practice safe sex (or better yet, abstain). They've heard it before, but it's worth repeating—abstinence is the only 100% effective means of preventing sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy.

Drinking and drug use are also issues that should be discussed. Emphasize that drinking, drug use, and smoking increase the likelihood of illness and academic underachievement. The first year of college is sufficiently stressful—students shouldn't add physical illness and risky behavior to the mix.

Review your college's health care services

Students typically have little or no interest in their college's Health Center prior to their arrival on campus—so take a few minutes to review the services with them.

Sit down with your student and check out the Health Center's website together. Find out what services are offered; note which immunizations are required prior to arrival, and which are recommended upon arrival (e.g., flu shots).



Upon acceptance to the college, your student's Admissions Packet will include a Required Immunizations and Screenings form. Have this completed by your local physician and submit it to Admissions well in advance of classes. A "hold" will be placed on your student's class registration until that form is submitted.

Gather and record your student's medical history

Create a record that includes all surgeries, immunizations, allergies, prescription drugs, blood type, etc. The college Health Center will request this information. Your student should also keep it handy in case he/she needs to visit a doctor's office, clinic, or Emergency Room.

Discuss health insurance

Explain your student's health insurance coverage to him/her. Students generally don't know or care about this, but it's important for them to understand their coverage. Explain the concept of "co-pay," and discuss the fact that a co-payment may be needed in order to get lab work completed or a prescription filled.

All colleges offer an affordable student health insurance plan through an outside insurance provider. Some parents, however, prefer to continue their student's coverage through their family's plan. You would be wise to carefully review both plans to determine the optimal coverage for your student. Be especially cautious about family plans if your student is attending college out of state.

Make sure that your student realizes the importance of always having a current insurance card in his/her wallet or purse.

Send your student to school with a first aid kit

What you include in this first aid kit will depend on your student's medical history. The kit could include pain relievers, antiseptic skin cleanser, antibiotic cream, cough suppressants, band-aids, decongestants, allergy medications, etc.

Schedule appointments for hometown health care

Students typically continue to use their hometown health professionals for routine, non-emergency visits. For this reason, you would be wise to schedule dental cleanings, eye exams, and physicals when your child is home for academic breaks and summer vacation. Schedule these well in advance.

"My daughter didn't really miss home until she got sick. When she got the flu last year, no one fixed her meals, she had a hard time sleeping during the day in the dorm, and she got behind in her classes. She found out that when you're sick at college, there's no TLC. After that experience, she vowed to take better care of herself so that she'd stay healthy."

Vicki, mother of a college sophomore



Managing Stress



College can be stressful. New surroundings, new people, more reading, longer assignments, harder exams, fitting in, making sense of it all.

As a parent, you need to realize that it is normal for college students to be stressed out at times. When your student seems to be under stress, provide support, and know that students often just want someone to listen. As you listen, you can, of course, make suggestions. For example, if your student is taking on too much, you can encourage him/her to drop or delay a few activities that are particularly stressful or time consuming. Be aware, however, that in most cases, students aren't looking for solutions from you. They just need a sympathetic ear.

"When my son was in college, he would call when he was feeling lonely or overwhelmed. He would talk, I would listen, and then he'd say, 'Well, I gotta go.' Invariably, the next time I talked to him, things would be fine. After awhile I realized that once he had a chance to talk things out, he'd feel better and be ready to move on." Carol, parent of recent graduate

If your child seems stressed out, encourage him/her to talk about what's going on. Students who are concerned about a class should be encouraged to meet with their instructor. If there's a dorm problem, students can get help by talking to their RA. Students who seem overwhelmed should be encouraged to see if something can be dropped or rescheduled.

If your student is dealing with issues such as depression, homesickness, anxiety, alcohol or drug abuse, encourage him/her to schedule an appointment at the college's Counseling Center. Assure your student that these centers are staffed with professionals and that all information will be kept confidential.

"College can be stressful, and it's important to have a way to unwind. My girlfriend does yoga, and I work out at the rec center." Miguel, sophomore

Staying Safe



Some parents are under the impression that college campuses are safe havens. Despite all reasonable efforts to maintain a safe environment, crime occurs on campuses, just as it does in your home community. Students, however, can drastically reduce their chances of being victimized by crime by exercising common sense, and by avoiding or reducing their intake of alcohol.

Studies reveal that 80% of campus crime is student on student, and that alcohol is involved in 90% of college crime. Students need to exercise the same caution throughout campus as they would anywhere else.

In the residence halls

Students should lock their doors and first floor windows when they're out of their rooms. Have them take photographs of valuable items and check with your insurance agency about theft, loss, and damage coverage for your student's items at college.

Tip: Students should never leave textbooks unattended at the library, in a classroom, at study tables, or elsewhere. Given their high cost and the ease of resale, textbooks are a favorite theft item.

Parties and gatherings

Most sexual assaults involve alcohol or drugs and are perpetrated by fellow college students. Remind your student to take basic safety measures, such as remaining among groups of friends. Student should also avoid open containers/cups, as this is how date rape drugs are often administered.

On and near campus

Students are urged to travel in groups at night, and to avoid poorly lit portions of the campus. Some schools have escort services for students walking across campus at night. Students should use these services—and program their cell phones with the Campus Security number.

Campus police and public safety

Uniformed and plain-clothed officers serve and protect your child's college 24/7. They help maintain a safe campus environment, enforce the law, and provide assistance to students, faculty, and staff. They often walk and bicycle across campus, and cruise in patrol cars. At many colleges, selected campus areas are monitored via camera surveillance. Students should not hesitate to contact the campus police if they have concerns regarding their safety.

Tip: Have your student enter two or three ICE (In Case of Emergency) contacts in his/her cell phone. These contacts should read something like "ICE–Mother–Janice Smith."



PART V

Career Preparation

You want your student to have a great college experience *and* prepare for a rewarding career. Getting “real world” work experience while in college is a great way for students to prepare for their future.

Working While in College



It is seldom a good idea for first year students to work at a paid job, unless they absolutely need the money.

First year students have their hands full with challenging academic demands, and they also need time to assimilate to college life. Once students learn the ropes and get acclimated to campus, they might want to secure part-time employment. But this should never be done at the expense of their number one priority, doing well in their classes.

If and when they seek paid employment, college students have these options: on-campus jobs, off-campus job, or internships.

On-campus employment

One advantage of on-campus employment is convenience. Hours are flexible and jobs are available all over campus. Students typically work between 5-15 hours per week.

Because on-campus jobs are often hard to come by, students should apply early and apply everywhere. Students who want to work on campus may qualify for a work-study position based on their family's income level. The Financial Aid Office can provide information regarding your child's eligibility.

Off-campus employment

Off-campus jobs are most often in the service sector at retail stores, restaurants, or business offices. Getting to and from the job may be a hassle, and the hours are likely to be less flexible than an on-campus job. The pay, however, may be higher. *Again, it is ideal if the job relates to your student's future career.*

Off-campus internship

Internships give students an opportunity to obtain relevant work experience prior to graduation. Internships are a great way for students to get an inside look at a particular occupation, organization, and industry. They also help students determine if the career they're considering is right for them. Since many companies use their internship program as a means of screening prospective full-time hires, internships often turn into job offers.

What exactly is an internship?

An internship is a part-time or full-time position offered exclusively to college students. It is the ideal way for students to test drive a tentative career and derive real-world work experience. Not all internships are created equal, however. Some organizations use internships as a means of hiring "cheap labor" to get mundane tasks completed. Students should seek organizations that have a well-developed internship program that provides training, supervision, and challenging work.

Are paid or unpaid internships more valuable?

The value of an internship lies in the responsibilities students are given, the quality of the work they do, and the skills they derive from the experience. It's all about the quality of the experience, not whether it's called an internship, job, or volunteer experience.

Can students get academic credit for an internship?

Maybe. Students should check with their academic department to determine if they offer an internship course and/or grant academic credit.

How do students go about getting internships?

Students should visit Career Services. They often conduct Internship Fairs and post internships on their online job sites.

Summer Options



Students on a four-year plan have three summers prior to graduation. Here are a few ways that students can make the most of their summers.

Get a job or an internship

For students who work over the summer, it's ideal if the position relates to their field of study. This may be a part-time or full-time job, or a paid or unpaid internship. For example, business majors should try to get a job in retail, office administration, or hospitality. Education majors can gain valuable experience at a day care center, or by working as a camp counselor, sports coach, or tutor.

"My internship at a TV station last summer made me realize that I had chosen the right major and career. I love college, but now I'm also looking forward to life after college." Lauren, senior

Take one or more college courses

Students may be wise to take a particularly difficult course over the summer. Those who wish to enroll in courses at a college other than the one from which they are seeking their degree need to meet with their Academic Advisor to make sure the credits will transfer.

Study abroad

Students who would like to study overseas should check with their Study Abroad office to determine if there are any summer programs that fit their schedule, major, career interests, and budget.

Do volunteer work

When possible, students should devote a part of each summer to volunteering and/or doing community service activities. Students are likely to gain a great sense of satisfaction from such work—and it looks good on resumes and graduate school applications.