



a newsletter for parents & families



February 2017

Helping Students Choose a Major

Many students are currently facing the selection of a major, after taking a variety of courses. This process can be stressful and a bit agonizing for some students who still don't feel 100 percent sure about what they want to do. Your support is a *key* element in this process!

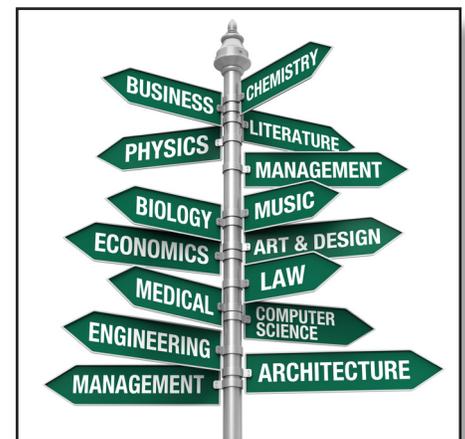
How to Be Helpful

- Listen.
- Support the exploration of a variety of potential careers – and encourage your student to work with the campus career center.
- Encourage him to make academics a high priority.
- Support her also building skills and strengths out of the classroom that complement her in-classroom learning.

- Identify talents and abilities you have observed in your student and share them with him.
- Encourage your student to find her passion and pursue a vocation rather than simply guaranteeing herself a job.

What Do I Need to Know as a Parent/Family Member?

- Be aware that the majority of college students change their major at least once.
- Recognize that many career choices today require further schooling.
- Encourage your student to visit the career center and an academic advisor regularly.
- Ask intentional questions to help your student filter through



what can be an overwhelming decision.

- Don't...
 - Push earning potential as a sole decision-making factor.
 - Chastise your student about changing his mind and not sticking with a major.
 - Push "occupation specific" degrees over a liberal arts degree – both can serve your student well.
- Be careful not to expect your student to follow in your footsteps or take over the family career "legacy."
- Promote internships, job shadowing and mentoring as a means to "test" possible majors and career paths.

Question to Ask...

- What are your passions? What do you really care about and want to contribute to?
- What have some of your favorite classes been? Why?
- How have you performed in these classes? What have you learned?
- What majors float to the top?
- How does this major(s) relate to career options of interest?



On-Campus vs. Off-Campus: Things to Think About

Where will your student call home next year? It's room selection and apartment-looking season, as students determine whether they will live on- or off-campus.

To help with these decisions, here are some things for students to take into consideration...

- When and where will your student have classes? Will living off-campus make it more difficult to get to those early morning or night classes?
- What is your student involved in? Will it still be doable to be that involved if he lives off-campus?
- What about transportation? Will a car be in the equation?
- What about work? If the job is on-campus, will your student be able to find parking and get to work on time?
- Who will your student live with?
- What about eating options? Will your student get enough nutrition if she is cooking for herself, without a meal plan?
- What about summer storage? Will that be available?
- When does a lease run? Will your student be paying for time that he won't be living there? If so, how will that be handled?
- What costs are involved with housing, transportation, food and more? How do these balance out when comparing the realities of on- and off-campus living?

Let your student know that there are plenty of people to answer his questions as he weighs the pros and cons. Where to call home is an important decision that impacts his life in many ways.

This Summer...

It's chilly, there may be mittens involved and summer seems *so* far away. Well, as the academic year gets rolling, it really isn't that far off. And students have some key summer situations to figure out before time runs out!

For instance...

- What intentional job or internship experience will they take on?
- Where will they spend the summer?
- If it's not at home, where will they live?
- If it is at home, what rules will be in place?
- Will they need to take classes to make up a bad grade or keep up with requirements?
- What will they need to do financially to keep things on an even keel?
- Are there other things they can do during the summer to help themselves grow academically and/or career-wise (e.g. helping with a research project, volunteering for a particular agency, connecting with local alumni, etc.)?

Help your student consider these and other summer options as she plans ahead in intentional, smart ways.



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:

- Things become routine... school finally becomes home
- Pressures to figure out living plans for next year as the room assignment process draws near
- Difficulty getting into study mode
- Missing family and friends at home, and friends who did not return to school
- Vocational choice/internship search causes anxiety
- Cliques become stronger within residence hall communities, student organizations and in classes
- Cabin fever and burnout
- Valentine's Day depression, if not dating or if a relationship is not going well
- Sophomores facing decisions about declaring a major
- Spring break planning underway



Discussing Healthy Relationships

During February's Relationship Wellness Month, talk with your student about what a healthy relationship looks like. It doesn't matter if you're talking about the love of your student's life or a good friend. The basic tenets of healthy relationships are the same, regardless! Consider using this acronym to get the conversation started:

Signs that a Relationship is Healthy...

Vitality. In a healthy relationship, both individuals have the opportunity to grow, explore areas of interest to them and live life to the fullest.

Acceptance. It's nearly impossible to change another person. In a healthy relationship, both partners accept the good and the more difficult parts of one another.

Love. This goes without saying! But, it's important to note that love is intimacy, friendship and respect – not possessiveness, obsession and manipulation.

Emotion. Relationships are emotional roller coasters, there's no doubt about it. Sometimes you'll face uphill battles and sometimes you'll feel like you're coasting downhill.

Natural. In a healthy relationship, partners aren't pressured to do things they don't want to do. If something doesn't feel right, it's quite likely that it isn't. You should never feel intimidated or put down by the person who supposedly loves you.

Trust. It's much easier to be vulnerable when you trust someone wholeheartedly. And this vulnerability is so important in achieving an authentic relationship built on honesty and openness.

Interdependence. In a healthy relationship, partners aren't dependent on or independent from the other, and both have their own positive identity.

Nourishing. A relationship should make deposits in your emotional bank account, not withdrawals. Healthy relationships are those that make you feel good about yourself.

Effervescence. If you're not feeling excited about your relationship, something is wrong. Although relationships are hard work and take a great deal of compromise, if you've tried this and you're still not feeling excited, it might be time to evaluate why you're feeling the way you are. This is okay! Sometimes you just need to take



stock to realize all that you have. But sometimes, it may be time to part ways. If this is the case, stay true to yourself and be as honest as you can.

Now's the time to get the conversation started. Show your student that you care about his emotional well being by encouraging him to take a close look at the relationships he has to determine how healthy they are.

Spread the Love!

So, Valentine's Day is fast approaching and, for some students, this can be a day of ecstasy while others find it to be one of agony!

It's important that students know there is *nothing* wrong with them if they aren't currently in a relationship. And for those who are coupled up, they need to make sure they are happy and healthy, instead of losing themselves in a relationship.

These relationship topics are very real in students' lives. Let them talk with you, if they choose, to get things off their chests. Realize, however, that they're not always looking for advice! Sometimes, it's just about having a listening ear available when they're feeling at the height of emotions.

If you suspect that your student may need some additional help handling relationship issues, remember that the campus counseling center specializes in these areas. The folks who staff these centers *want* to work with college students, plus they really have a handle on the issues they're facing. Encourage your student to seek out support – it's everywhere on campus!

And foster a bit of self-love, too, by letting your student know that you think he is a good egg. Ask siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends to chime in, too! We all need to be reminded that we are loved and appreciated. Happy Valentine's Day!



Contending with Burnout

Is your student feeling overwhelmed and under-motivated? If so, he may be experiencing burnout, which can show up as a feeling of emptiness, having trouble finishing simple tasks, or feeling irritable, overworked and over-stressed.

What Causes Student Burnout?

Burnout can come about as a result of...

- Unrealistic expectations and goals
- Trying to be too many things to too many people
- Working in unethical and unwelcoming environments

- Giving 75% to all things, rather than 100% to a few things
- Being part of an organization that is incongruent with your values
- Feeling trapped in a particular role
- Responsibilities and tasks that are boring and not challenging

How to Battle Burnout

Here are some strategies to share with your student...

- Look for new challenges that will be meaningful to you

Stress vs. Burnout

Although they sound the same, burnout and stress are different. One specific difference is your own awareness. People typically know when they are feeling stressed, but burnout can sneak up on you... sometimes taking weeks and months to surface.

- Get enough sleep to recharge your body
- Eat balanced meals and get physically active
- Prioritize and allocate your time and energy to things that are most meaningful to you
- Seek help from the campus counseling center, an advisor, a coach or other campus partner

Procrastination can be a sign of burnout. If your student finds herself consistently providing excuses for not completing tasks, showing up on time or living up to her own personal standards, it may be time for her to assess if she's in the middle of burnout!

Teen Dating Violence Awareness

February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, more than 1 in 10 teens who have been on a date have also been physically abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Teen dating violence is defined as physical, sexual, psychological or emotional violence within a dating relationship, including stalking, according to the Centers for Disease Control. It can occur in person or electronically and might occur between current or former dating partners. Words used to describe teen dating violence include:

- Relationship abuse
- Intimate partner violence
- Relationship violence

- Dating abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Domestic violence

Unhealthy relationships can have severe short- and long-term effects on students, such as:

- Depression and anxiety
- Unhealthy behaviors, such as tobacco, drug and alcohol use
- Involvement in antisocial behaviors



- Thoughts about suicide

More information and resources can be found at: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teen_dating_violence.html.

Talking about this issue with your student now can help ensure that he or she doesn't become the victim or perpetrator of dating violence. And, if your student has already experienced dating violence, our campus counselors can be a big help as he/she deals with the fallout in healthy ways.