



Office of Student Affairs Boyden Hall Rm. 106

October 2010

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:

- ▲ first year students begin to realize college life is not as perfect as they were expecting it to be
- ▲ diversity issues become very apparent as students begin interacting with others who are very different from them
- ▲ conflicts between friends—both new and old—can occur as students settle into the rhythm of the new academic year
- ▲ feeling behind in class work and wanting more contact with instructors
- ▲ anticipating mid-terms and questioning their academic abilities
- ▲ people start to show their "true selves"—masks start to come off as students begin to feel comfortable in their surroundings
- ▲ job panic of mid-year graduates as the realization settles in that they will be graduating soon

Tuning in to Campus Life

Is your student taking advantage of campus happenings?

Now that your student has been in school for several weeks, it's time to take stock of his level of involvement in campus happenings. Do you get the sense that your student is taking advantage of all that college life has to offer? From academic to social to artistic to athletic, we promise that there is plenty to choose from!

Some Questions to Ask

You can gauge your student's level of involvement on campus by asking the following questions:

- What are some of the events that have been happening on campus lately?
- Have you done anything fun in the last week?
- What kinds of events are being sponsored in your residence hall?
- Are there any major speakers or performances visiting the campus this semester?
- How are the athletic teams doing?
- Where are your favorite places to hang out on campus?
- What kinds of events are going on in the local community?
- What's the best way to find out about campus happenings?

By chatting about this topic, you'll let your student know that you care about more than just how he does academically. Participating in things outside of classes will enrich him intellectually, physically and spiritually. Encourage him to read flyers, peruse the campus newspaper and website, attend hall events, and visit the cool nooks and crannies on campus. College is all about trying new things. He's got to get out there and explore in order to reap the benefits.

Involvement=Academic and Personal Success

Research shows that students who engage in campus happenings, whether it's joining an organization or attending campus events, often feel more a part of their school. They also learn to juggle more, leading to increased academic success. So, instead of warning your student away from out-of-class involvements, consider encouraging her to balance her academics with some campus happenings. Her social life, her sense of belonging—and her grades—will likely thank you!

The Study Abroad Possibility

Chances are that your student is hearing chatter about study abroad opportunities. This is a difficult decision for students. Should I go or stay? Whatever you and your student decide, make sure it's the right decision for your student. Here are five great reasons for students to study abroad:



1. International experience offers a one-of-a-kind structured opportunity for students to explore a new country with their peers, while engaging from both an intellectual and a social perspective.
2. International experience helps students truly understand what it means to be a citizen of their own country, while gaining new world perspectives and exploring different belief and value systems.
3. International experience is an impressive resume note, especially in today's competitive job market and global society.
4. International experience helps students gain fluency in another language, as they are immersed in the culture. Living abroad can also help them satisfy college language requirements.
5. International experience can help students gain self-confidence, self-reliance and independence. Living abroad requires the development of certain life skills students can't nurture without this unique opportunity.

Be sure to encourage your student to talk with folks on campus—there are plenty of resources available to help you in making this big decision.

Current Top Study Abroad Destinations

Open Doors 2009, a report on international education published annually by the Institute of International Education, lists the 25 most popular destinations for U.S. students studying abroad as:

United Kingdom	Italy
Spain	France
China	Australia
Mexico	Germany
Ireland	Costa Rica
Japan	Argentina
Greece	South Africa
Czech Republic	Austria
India	Ecuador
Chile	Brazil
New Zealand	Israel
Netherlands	Switzerland
Russia	

According to Open Doors 2009, the leading fields of study of Americans studying abroad are the social sciences (21.5% of those studying abroad), business and management (20%), humanities (13%), fine or applied arts (8%), physical/life sciences (7%), foreign languages (6%), health sciences (4.5%), education (4%), engineering (3%), math/computer science (2%) and agriculture (1%).

Source: <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/>

Make a Difference Day!

October 23 is Make a Difference Day. This annual event, held on the fourth Saturday of every October, is a time to embrace difference making. Check out the Make a Difference Day site at www.usaweekend.com/diffday/index.html for ideas and more information. In the meantime, you can make a difference today! Consider calling or writing your student to tell him the difference he has made in your life. It may sound corny, but we bet you'll catch your student off guard...and probably make his day!

You can also encourage your student to take a moment to drop a line to the people who've made a difference in his life. Chances are, he's had teachers, coaches, family members or mentors who've helped him get to where he is today. Taking stock of where we've come from, and those who've provided support and direction along the way, is a humbling and meaningful experience. Plus, doing so will make your student feel really good in the process.

5 Halloween Tips Your Student Will be “Goblin” Up!

Halloween is a busy time on college campuses. Students really get into the “spirits” of the holiday. Here are 5 tips you can share with your student so that a frighteningly good—and safe—time can be had by all!

1. **Decorations**—Check into fire codes before you and your friends go hog wild with the fake cobwebs and hanging witchy-poo from the ceiling. You can do some mighty cool decorating while still staying within the safety parameters.
2. **Costumes**—Team up with others to create community costumes, like being gumballs in a huge gumball machine (you can roll out the entrance when folks toss pennies at you!) or a pod of penguins, waddling in unison while decked out in your black and white finest!
3. **Vandalism**—Some students look at Halloween as an excuse to vandalize things, keeping with the “mischief night” tradition, from toilet papering trees to breaking lounge furniture. Avoid this fun, as it can lead to some hefty fines and judicial sanctions. Kindly keep the housekeeping staff in mind too—they should not have to clean up anyone’s Halloween mess!
4. **Safety**—Again, Halloween is often seen as an excuse to go nuts. Add in mysterious costumes and it can get even spook-



ier. Remind your student to keep her wits about her if she chooses to attend a party, to travel with trusted friends, to not be alone with vampires she doesn’t know, and to really look out for one another.

5. **Events**—Get involved with some fun Halloween activities, like inviting local kids to trick or treat door-to-door and then

doing crafts with them in the lounge. Or have a Halloween Hoedown, complete with bobbing for apples, a hayride and a Monster Mash dance.

Halloween has become one of the most popular holidays ever! You can help ensure that your student has a safe, treat-filled time, without the tricks that can spoil things.

The Mid-Term Check

Mid-terms are right around the corner. Is your student ready? Here are some questions you can ask your student to help ensure she is on the right track:

- How do you like your classes? Which one is your favorite and why? Which one is your least favorite and why?
- Have you found a comfortable place to study and learn?
- What kinds of things distract you when studying? What kinds of things can you do to limit your distraction?
- How are you keeping yourself motivated and inspired?
- Have you been able to get into a comfortable sleep routine?
- What study, writing and test-taking tips have you found to be helpful to you?
- Are you able to get work done in your room or is the hallway too loud? If it’s too loud, have you talked with a residence life staff member about your concerns?
- Are you keeping a calendar of important academic dates such as pre-registration and registration, majors fairs, assignment due dates, and mid-terms and finals?

Be sure to ask these questions from a caring place, so your student doesn’t feel like she is being judged. But, it’s important to ask. Sometimes, asking these types of questions can help students make the changes necessary to get into a better academic groove. If you do believe your student could benefit from taking advantage of campus services to help her better manage her academic pursuits, don’t be afraid to make this suggestion. Students are likely being reminded of the services that are available on campus as they prepare for mid-terms, so it won’t be the first time she’s heard it.



Talking With Your Student About Effective Confrontation

Research has shown that confronting peers can be tricky for today's generation. As your student and his peers settle into the school year and get more comfortable with one another, it's likely that some conflicts will occur. When you get that phone call that a conflict is brewing, you can help your student see the many benefits of confrontation, especially when it's done well. Consider sharing the following with your student to ensure he is as effective—and comfortable—as possible when confronting his peers this year:

- Reframe your thinking surrounding confrontation to the idea of "carefronting." "Carefronting" an incident involves considering the individual's feelings and role in the situation. It also involves demonstrating a level of care during the confrontation, no matter what the circumstances.
- Remember to be sincere during confrontations. Sincerity can be demonstrated by asking questions that can help you understand where the person is coming from in his thinking. This can also let the person know that he is important to you regardless of the scenario.
- Keep in mind your non-verbal communication when addressing incidents. Consider:
 - Tone of voice: using a calm, soothing tone rather than sarcasm or anger
 - Rate of speech: speak more slowly so the situation isn't escalated, rather than with fast-paced speech
 - Vocal inflection: speak as if you are having a conversation rather than lecturing
 - Body posture, hand gestures and facial expressions: keep

your body relaxed, arms at your side and a positive look (not a smirk) on your face

Eye contact: make sure you are not looking away, but also not staring at him

- In the heat of the moment, it's sometimes easy to forget that this interaction could affect the way that you and the person interact for the rest of the year or longer. You can see why it is important to treat the individual with respect and most importantly, care.

- Once the confrontation is over and you and the person have come to a solution, move forward. Now's the time to rebuild the relationship, not rehash the conflict time and time again.

As you well know, conflict is a natural part of life. Conflict itself can be really positive in that it helps people grow. It's our reactions to conflict that often cause the most problems. Reminding your student of the tips shared above can help him be successful this year.

Missing the (Furry) Loved Ones

For some students, one of the hardest things about being away is missing their animals. From dogs and cats to horses and goats, our furry companions provide us with love, devotion, humor and friendship. It can be hard for students to fill that void while they are away from home.

What You Can Do

Recognizing the struggle your student may be facing means that you are validating her feelings. Just allowing her to talk about her feelings without feeling like they are dumb or strange will help her work through this aspect of being homesick. You can also keep your student in touch with her animals with the following ideas:

- Send a postcard or an e-card each week from the animal to your student. Head to www.smilebox.com for a free resource to create these cards and lots more including slideshows and scrapbooks that you can send online or through the mail.
- Facebook offers free applications called "Dogbook," "Catbook," "Horsebook" and even "Ferretbook" (plus others too). You can use these applications to create a profile for your favorite animal. Once you've created it, your "animal" can post messages, share photos, friend others and more. This is a great way for your student to stay in touch with her pet.
- If you are close enough and the animal is small enough, surprise your student with a visit. You may not be able to bring the animal into the residence hall, but outside on campus grounds or a local park could work.
- Start an online photo album and post new pictures of the animal each week so your student can see the latest and greatest.
- If the animal will cooperate, get a print of his paw (or hoof or foot) using washable paint. Put his name and the date on it. Then, frame it and send it to your student as a keepsake.

Missing one's animals can be tough on students...especially if there aren't any on campus. Help fill the void with creative expressions of endearment from your animals to your student this year.

