What Every Freshman Needs to Know before Starting College

These are examples of traditional areas students and their families communicate about in preparation for their first year of college. The Offices of the Dean of Student Life has compiled an additional list of everyday activities that first year students should not only be aware of but also should receive guidance and practice before leaving.

- How to find a doctor, get a prescription filled, and use medical insurance
- How to telephone a professor, teaching assistant, advisor, or administrator and make an appointment to meet
- How to negotiate a roommate conflict
- How to use the college catalog and academic advisor
- Understand that students are responsible for their learning
- How to manage money, balance a checkbook, live within a budget, understand the hazards of credit card debt, and pay bills
- How to learn, live, and work with people from different backgrounds
- How to assertively pursue a complaint or concern about a living situation, grade, purchase, etc.
- How to choose foods, either at the grocery store or in the dining hall, that will provide a healthy, balanced diet
- How to recognize the warning signs of depression, anxiety, and loneliness
- How to live by the basic rules of life: pick up after yourself, treat others as you would want them to treat you, etc.
- Understand that college students are held responsible for their behavior. Behavior that may not be intentionally harmful and behavior that was tolerated at home or in high school will be examined in relation to expectations the University has of college students
- Students do not receive warnings; they must learn the rules to avoid a possible violation

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What Other Family Members Want YOU to Know

We asked family members registered on our parent listserv for advice and tips for new family members. Here’s what they had to say: Encourage your student to stay at school thru at LEAST the first month to help adjust with the homesickness...if they give in and come home too soon, just makes it worse on them for adjusting. Write them letters (the old fashioned way, in the mail), send care packages and talk to them periodically on the phone, but don’t let them come home too soon (no matter how “mean” they think you are for it).

Karen Collins ‘88, mother of Cody Collins ‘12

If your fish is a Cadet..... be sure to attend a home football game. In particular, you want to visit your fish’s dorm before march-in. You will have an opportunity to see your fish’s outfit conduct inspection and see the life your cadet has been living.


I think one of the best things we did for our Freshman is to advise him to take a fairly light load for his first semester and to take courses that he was strongest in academically. In this way he was able to ease into all the adjustments of studying without being completely overwhelmed and stressed out. We also encouraged him to attend the MSC open house and find a place to be involved. He did join an organization, which for him was really pushing him outside of his comfort zone as he didn’t know any one else in the group. He only joined one group so that he again would not be overwhelmed time wise and would still have time to devote to his studies (this particular organization only required a few hours a week.) It really paid off because he made a 4.0 for his first semester! This has given him such a confidence boost. And while we don’t expect that he’ll make this every semester, he now knows it is entirely possible to do so!

Lisa Lock, mother of Blake Lock ‘12