Preparing the family for your student’s first extended visit home

Saturday, October 15 marks mid-semester, a much-deserved break for our students, and for most, a trip home. Whether you have been in daily contact with your student or just exchanged the occasional e-mail, you may discover unexpected changes in your student during their visit. Below are some changes families typically encounter during their student’s first trip home.

They stay up late and sleep in even later. You may find the schedule your student kept during high school is long gone and they have most likely adapted to the life of a typical college student. However, if there are expectations (i.e., family breakfast or appointments), communicate these to your student ahead of time. Don’t expect they’ll be up first thing in the morning, especially the first day of break (they’re usually catching up on lost sleep).

There has been a change in eating habits. This typically coincides with a new sleep schedule some students adopt at college. They may skip breakfast or eat very little, but want a full dinner late at night. Communicating ahead of time when family meals will take place eliminates the expectation that food will be ready 24/7, as it is at college. Another tip: stock the kitchen with their favorite foods (snacks, fruits, popcorn, etc.) so they can munch anytime. Some students’ eating habits may have changed drastically, such as eliminating meat or certain foods for health or ethical reasons. Again, this is often a product of their exposure to new ideas and different lifestyles. If you want to know more about their decisions, ask them about it in a positive, inquisitive way. Whether you agree with the change or not, be sensitive. It is best to support them in their explorations without criticizing or judging.

Their academic major or career focus has changed. Through the many academic and social opportunities at college, they may discover new academic interests. This is completely normal and expected — especially in the first year of college. Many first-year students change their academic major, or at the very least their concentration within a major.

They’re exercising their independence. For almost two months now, they have lived on their own, making their own choices about what to eat, when to wake up, when to study and when to go to bed. While they’re home, first-year students typically continue to stretch their legs and gauge how their new independence will fare with you. House rules should be communicated and changed (if necessary) early on so expectations are known by all parties. This is usually applicable when it comes to curfews and scheduling family time. Also, if new rules are established now, the five-week-long winter break will start off more easily than if rules and expectations are not communicated.

Whether you encounter expected or unexpected changes, be proud of what your student has accomplished. Ask questions. Engage in conversations about all they’re learning and enjoy the time they’re home.

“There is nothing like returning to a place that remains unchanged to find the ways in which you yourself have altered.”

~ Nelson Mandela
Helping your student decide on a career path can be a rewarding, but daunting task. Through proper support, taking time to listen and having patience when they call home to tell you they changed their major (again), students will become that much closer to discovering the career path that suits them best. Every experience, course, accomplishment, and even mistake or failure students encounter can be a learning experience.

With the help of Duke University’s Career Center and the extensive resources available on our campus to help your student in this area, we have compiled a list of ways in which you can be a productive part of this process. In the end, it is up to students to discover their career path, but your assistance will be needed and appreciated.

1. Encourage your student to explore widely. Encouraging your student to take a wide variety of classes is a great start. Students change their minds about many things during their four years of college, including interests, majors and career aspirations. Even the most focused first-years should be pushed to challenge themselves with a mixture of diverse courses. This will position them much better to change their path should they choose to do so.

2. Push them to ask questions. Most eighteen-to-twenty-year olds have a pretty narrow frame of reference regarding careers. Of course they know about doctors, lawyers, educators or engineers but their exposure is otherwise limited. Recommend they ask questions of your friends, neighbors and other members of your community. Through the Brockport Alumni Association and Office of Career Services, The College at Brockport has a wonderful group of alumni who visit campus and are available through a searchable database to educate students about a wide range of careers.

3. Send your student to work. Internships are a great way to build skills and to network. Many employers not only value internships, but they use them as a way to recruit talent into their organizations. Spending at least one summer in an internship will widen a student’s frame of reference and potentially sharpen their career goals. The College at Brockport offers an exploratory program where students can earn credit while they investigate and gain experience related to their career and academic goals. Students in any academic discipline can arrange to take a Brockport Career Exploration Course (or BCEC). For more information, your student may contact the Office of Career Services at x2159.

4. Direct them to resources. The College at Brockport has plenty of resources to support students in this process. Students should tap into advisors, faculty and the Office of Career Services. Be sure your student has investigated all the resources available. In many cases, faculty and staff work closely with undeclared students in their first semester helping them discover new possibilities through a career investigation project.

5. Be a partner in the process. It is tempting for a parent to want to make it as easy as possible for their student to make decisions and become successful adults. A great way to be a career partner is to empower, encourage and help guide, but not direct students. Serve as a sounding board and brainstorm ideas with them. This can be a difficult process, but well worth it when your student finds a satisfying career path in the end.

The five points of advice for parents are used with permission from the author, Kara Lombardi, Senior Associate Director of the Duke University Career Center.

**IMPORTANT DATES**

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<tr>
<td>October 15</td>
<td>Mid-term (1st Quarter Ends)</td>
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<td>October 17—18</td>
<td>Mid-semester Break—Classes Suspended</td>
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<td>October 17</td>
<td>Mid-semester grades posted on Web Banner</td>
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<td>November 4</td>
<td>Last day to withdraw from class without permission</td>
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<td>November 22, 10 pm</td>
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Throughout your student’s academic career they will be faced with a number of decisions that will impact their careers, relationships and future. Choosing a major, decisions about graduate school and involvement in co-curricular opportunities can be both exciting and overwhelming. So can decisions regarding alcohol use. The “good” news is that the vast majority of college students make responsible decisions regarding alcohol. In fact, the majority of Brockport Students, 77 percent, drink between 0 and 5 drinks per week. They also utilize a number of ways to “party smart,” including alternating alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks, drinking one drink per hour, using the “buddy system” and eating before or while drinking (CORE Alcohol & Other Drug Survey, Spring 2011).

The “bad” news is that sometimes the availability of alcohol (bars, parties), the absence of parents/guardians and the desire to fit in can lead to potentially risky drinking decisions. Here are some questions you can use to talk to your students about alcohol use, peer pressure and campus involvement:

- How will you decide whether or not to drink when you go out?
- What will you do if you find yourself at a party with only alcohol to drink?
- Do you know the College policies on alcohol and underage drinking? (www.brockport.edu/policies)
- Are you aware of legal consequences of under-age drinking?
- How are classes? Roommate(s)? Social activities?
- What kind of activities do you do on the weekends? (Late Night with Ellsworth, Recreational programs, Residence Hall programs)
- If you choose to drink, how do you and your friends stay safe?

The first semester of a student’s college experience is very important in developing their identity and habits that they will carry with them until graduation day, and perhaps life. These questions will help you “check in” with your students and create a dialogue on values, expectations and behaviors pertaining to alcohol use.

The College at Brockport takes comprehensive measures to ensure the safety and success of all students. Despite these efforts, some students will experience some “scary” consequences of excessive or binge drinking, including alcohol poisoning, sexual assault, DWI and other legal ramifications. Through a variety of outreach efforts, including classroom alcohol education, residence hall programming, Alcohol Awareness Events, campus-wide programming and campus-wide social marketing, students at Brockport will develop the skills and knowledge necessary to make positive decisions, act as role models for their friends and peers, and know what to do if an alcohol-related emergency occurs in their residence hall or at an off-campus residence.

One night of alcohol use can truly have life-long consequences for college students and can negatively impact career aspirations, health and safety and academic success. We encourage you to take this opportunity and “check-in” with your students and learn more about The College at Brockport’s CONNECT: Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention Program (www.brockport.edu/emsa/biennial.pdf). Should your student need someone to talk to, there are plenty of places on campus where they may seek help.

**Health and Counseling Center:** Provides care for students who are ill, stressed, or just need someone to talk to. Located in Hazen hall, the Center provides information on healthy eating and making healthy lifestyle changes.

**Office for Students with Disabilities:** Offers assistance to students with documented disabilities. Located in the second floor of the Seymour College Union.

**Academic Planning Seminar:** Your student’s APS instructor is their academic advisor. They are an invaluable resource for students and should be one of the first people they speak with should they have an issue or concern.

**Resident Assistant (RA):** Freshman year can be tough, even for the sharpest high school student. Not too long ago, your student’s RA went through their own first year woes. They can help students through the many challenges and new experiences they face.
Family Weekend is just around the corner! Join us November 4-6, 2011

The College at Brockport hosts this annual event to allow parents and families a chance to join their students on campus for a fun filled weekend. From our “Brock ‘N Bowl” night at the bowling alley, to Stuff-A-Bear (or eagle) here on campus, the weekend is a great way to see the College in action.

New this year, we are excited to offer families and students the chance to learn more about opportunities for students to get involved on campus. From our leadership and study abroad programs to on-campus employment, we have invited current students, faculty, and staff to discuss the various opportunities available to our students. Titled the “Engaged Learning Exploration,” Saturday morning will be a chance to learn more, have lunch with President Halstead… all in time to catch the football game.

All students, faculty, staff and family members planning to participate in events throughout the weekend should register online at www.brockport.edu/family. Many events are free, however, to prepare for your arrival, we appreciate you completing the registration form and select the events you plan to attend. Some events sell out or fill quickly—don’t miss your opportunity to participate.

Please contact Campus Life at (585) 395-5646 if you have any questions.

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