The Transition to College: Five Tips for Parents





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By Marie Carr

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Collect This Article

A lot happens between being accepted to college and the first day of class. Now is the perfect time for parents to prepare, get organized and plan ahead. Below are 5 tips for parents with college bound students.

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How to pay a tuition bill you might never see. By now you should have already received and paid the college's first semester tuition bill. Some colleges and universities are still mailing the bill to students at their home address. but most are now electronically posting bills to the student's college account. If you haven't seen the bill, your child will need to access the bill through their electronic college student account, print a copy and give it to you for payment if you are helping with this cost. Students can also grant parents access to this account. It's very important to note that the "date due" is not considered the postmark of the payment but rather the date the monies have been processed through the college financial system. This may take several days with cash payments sometimes taking 2 days.

You don't need to pay for health insurance twice. Read the itemized college tuition bill carefully before paying it. Often there is a health insurance charge that can be opted out of. Contact your health insurance company now to determine if your child will be covered while away at college. If so, ask for a separate insurance card in the child's name or a letter stating that you have coverage. You'll need this documentation to opt out of any

insurance coverage fees that some colleges automatically assess on the tuition bill.

Create a health care proxy. This document can designate you as the health care agent for your college bound student. The HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) requires all adult (or anyone over 18) medical information and records be strictly confidential. As a college parent, this means that you will not be able to voice your opinion to any clinician about your child's medical care should they get sick or become hospitalized while out of town. Without a copy of this form, you will also not have access to their x-rays or other medical records that your child might ask you to procure for them. Your child will need to fill out this form and file it with the appropriate college office and you will need to have an additional copy at home that you can fax to doctors and hospitals.

Create a budget with your student. Now is the perfect time to discuss money management with your college bound child and to understand how your child's college cash account will work. Many colleges and universities now allow students to use their student ID cards as "money cards." As parents you can load an account with a preset amount of money. The card is used like a debit card with washing machines, book stores, convenience stores and even select coffee shops allowing the student to "swipe the card" through their register systems with the cost deducted from the existing account balance. At many colleges and universities, when the money draws down to a \$0.00 balance, the card becomes a "credit card" allowing the student to keep charging – sometimes up to \$1,200 dollars. Students need to monitor their spending and especially this account and be aware of this provision.

Have your child communicate with her new roommate Dorm rooms are small and there is never enough room for everything that is brought in that first day. Have your student and the new roommate communicate and decide ahead of time what items they can share rather than duplicate and possibly not purchase at all. Examples of such items are refrigerators, microwaves, fans and TV. Also remember that computers can serve as DVD players , cell phones are wonderful alarm clocks and most colleges have computer labs scattered on campus with printers where you child can use their "print allowance."

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Transition Tips for Parents

Ten Tips to Help Your Student (and You) Transition

- 10. Stay in contact establish a "regular" time to check in that allows your Scottie time to develop her life on campus.
- 9. Expect Change establishing interdependence is a large part of the college experience. Exploring interests and identity is common during college years and will help your Scottie establish self as a self-actualized adult
- 8. Don't ask them if they are homesick if your Scottie seems homesick talk about ways to get involved and enjoy college life. Homesickness is a natural feeling for college students and will come and go throughout the semester (October is very common). Establishing when your Scottie and you will visit during the first semester can ease anxiety about homesickness.
- 7. Trust them your Scottie is establishing independence and will need to make decision for self.
- 6. Ask questions, but not too many talk with your Scottie about classes, friends, life on campus and what is happening with your family. Open-ended questions that require more than one word answers are best. Establishing a pattern for your conversations early can help keep the conversation flowing.
- 5. Visit, but not too often your Scottie needs to establish her life on campus, help them do this while encouraging some home visits.
- 4. Do not tell them, "these are the best years of your life" while we hope that their college years will be some of the best in their lives, they may not feel that way at that moment and may feel like there is something wrong with them if they do not feel this way. Listening and being supportive of how your student is feeling at the moment will go a long way.
- 3. Use social networking sites to update your daughter on the activities of family members.
- 2. Continue to connect with your Scottie about their academics but never offer to connect with a professor for your Scottie. It is important that your student develop these important life skills.
- 1. Participate in Family Orientation programs you will gain great insight into what families and Scotties can expect from the College, connect with other parents and family members, and meet Agnes Scott College faculty and staff.

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Katerina Rosen

Editor-at-Large, Vanderbilt University



A year ago, I was getting ready to go to college 900 miles away from home. When the day finally came, I wasn't one of those girls who teared up about leaving home for the first time. Instead, I unleashed an entire waterfall of salty tears from my eyes at the airport. Following a perfect summer at home in a suburb of New York City, I didn't feel excited or even amenable to the concept of relocating to the Bible Belt.

Ultimately, I realized that I was either moving to Tennessee or pursuing a career among the plethora of minimum wage positions that became available at the end of summer. The latter not being a viable option, I embarked on a flight to Nashville with my mother who insisted I "give it a chance." To which I retorted, "But, they're all right-wing homophobic, racists down there!"

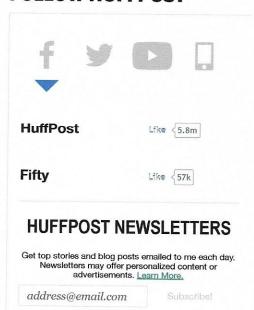
Upon arriving in the world capital of country music, cowboy boots and BBQ, I raised my eyebrows at anyone who dared use the word "y'all" in my presence. I called my parents multiple times per day updating my list of complaints about the South and people from the South. I blamed my parents for everything that ever occurred since they suggested I apply to college down South -- a suggestion that I admittedly never rebuked.

After two months of nonstop complaints about college, my dad finally suggested I have a conversation with a counselor from the Psychological Counseling Center. He had spoken to someone "very, very nice" over the phone, but I had to call and make the appointment myself. "Was she southern?" I asked fretfully. "Yes! You



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have to stop being so judgmental," he said.

Judgmental? I couldn't believe my dad was calling me judgmental -- the worst possible insult. I considered myself a person who embraced people from all walks of life -- gays, lesbians, Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists! I love everyone, but wait a second... I walked around Nashville judging everyone with a southern accent who liked country music and used the word "y'all" in casual conversation as a homophobic, racist, right-wing nut job who no doubt shoots Mexicans on breaks from drinking whiskey and Pabst Blue Ribbon.

Shoot. My parents were spot on. I wasn't enjoying college because of my constant scoffing at... everyone and... everything.

After talking to a lot of other people who took a long time to transition to college, I realized that happiness in college has more to do with oneself rather than one's surroundings. Most colleges are big and diverse enough that everyone can find their niche if they throw themselves into campus culture with energy and an open mind.

In the second semester, I joined a sorority even though I had formerly judged sorority girls as shallow, future housewives. I met ambitious girls from all over the country with both similar and different views from my own, and became fast friends with all of them. I got lots of advice from older girls on courses and career paths. Suddenly, girls all over campus looked out for me.

After putting my raised eyebrows and smirks away, I went from miserable to really happy, from detesting country music to putting Garth Brooks and Alan Jackson on my playlist. I wouldn't consider transferring for anything, and I even thought about staying in Nashville for the summer. I recommend that incoming college students keep an open mind and a positive attitude. My mom was right. "Give it a chance."

Ultimately, these are my tips for parents advising their kids on how to start college off right:

1) Encourage your kids to keep an open mind.

Being close minded at the beginning will close a lot of open doors.

2) Do not criticize their university.

This will only justify any complaints and make the transition harder.

3) Encourage your college student to talk to his or her classmates as often as possible.

Everyone is looking for a friend in their first semester of college, so the fall is a great time to get to know as many people as possible.

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Encourage your college student to get to know his or her professors.

They are really interesting people and an excellent resource. Office hours are a great time for some one-on-one time, and most people don't attend making it really easy to stand out.

5) Point out all the interesting activities like intramural sports, political groups, campus publications and greek life on campus.

Staying active and involved is a great way to meet new people.

6) Help your college student look for an off-campus job if he or she goes to college in a city.

This is a great opportunity to become a part of a new city, plus most college students have plenty of time to succeed academically while also working off campus.

7) Don't worry about the Freshman Fifteen.

Unless fifteen extra pounds will put your college student in the morbidly obese category, don't let fifteen pounds ruin their mood or self-esteem.

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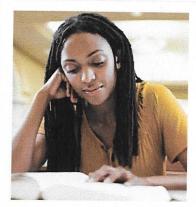


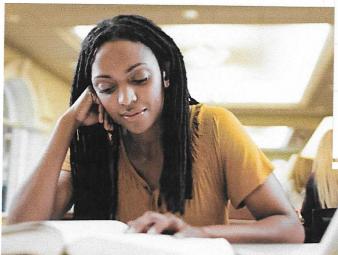




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My son started college a year ago this month. I recall how hard it was to walk away and let him begin his new life without us. The sudden peace and quiet at home, not to mention the eerie neatness, lack of competition for the television, and the increase in shelf life of groceries didn't really compensate for his absence. But this is what parents work toward from their child's first day of kindergarten, right? If you're about to send your own child off to college, pat yourself on the back for a mission (almost) accomplished, and take comfort in knowing that your concerns and your budding freshman's are completely normal -- if somewhat different. In "I'll Miss You Too: An Off-to-College Guide for Parents and Students," mother-daughter team Margo Woodacre Bane and Steffany Bane examine the transition from both sides. Based on their observations, and my own experience, here's how parent and student top fears stack up. Parents most worry about: 1. Losing touch with the student. 2. Forging a new parent-child relationship. 3. The perils of drugs and alcohol and poor judgment. 4. The student's inability to handle 24/7 freedom (read: sleeping through classes). 5. Not being able to let go of knowing what's going on with the child. 6. The student's safety in an unfamiliar environment. 7. Changes in the family dynamic due to the student's departure. 8. Not being able to keep up with tuition and expenses. In contrast, students' top worries are: 1. Not liking the school they chose. 2. Not getting along with a roommate. 3. Parents not trusting them to make good decisions. 4. Missing their high school friends and being homesick. 5. Choosing a major. 6. Not meeting academic standards. 7. Having to deal with constant contact from parents. 8. Money troubles. As my own son gets ready to start his sophomore year, this is my best advice: Repeat to yourself, no news is good news. Then follow your child's lead. Let him or her do most of the calling and texting, listen with a sympathetic ear, offer advice when asked, and get on with your own life as you let your student figure out how to solve problems (mostly) on her or his own. It a guarantee that neither of you will do everything right -- but you'll both learn. For more on the college transition:

- "The Black Girl's Guide to College Success: What No One Really Tells You About College That You Must Know" by Sheryl Walker (Author House, \$17.95)
- "African American Student's College Guide: Your One-Stop Resource for Choosing the Right College, Getting in, and Paying the Bill" by Isaac Black (Wiley, \$18.76)
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