



October 2007

## 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:

- ▲ 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 rhythm of the new academic year
- ▲ feeling behind in class work and wanting more contact with instructors
- ▲ anticipating mid-terms and questioning their abilities
- ▲ job panic of mid-year graduates as the realization settles in that they will be graduating soon

Is your student taking advantage of campus happenings?

## Tuning in to Campus Life

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 the 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

*"Student engagement is positively related to grades and to persistence between the first and second year of college."*

*- from the 2006 report from the National Survey of Student Engagement*

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 him to balance his academics with some campus happenings. His social life, his sense of belonging—and his grades—will likely thank you!



## Top 5 Ways to Keep Students Abreast of World News

It's really tough for college students to stay in touch with news happening off campus while they are away at school. Although the Internet makes it much easier than it used to be, students often complain that they never have enough time to read the newspaper or peruse headlines. Unfortunately, in today's uncertain times, it's important that students live outside of the "college bubble."

Help your student stay abreast of community, national and world events by:

1. **Clipping interesting stories from your hometown paper and sending them to your student every few weeks.** Pick out stories that relate to his interests, add your own commentary and send them along. Your student will appreciate being kept in the loop about hometown happenings!
2. **Sending out an email with selected clips each week.** This is easier than you think. All you need to do is complete a quick search on the Internet for the top news stories of the week. Then, you can



either scan the articles briefly and provide a quick synopsis with the link to the full story or just include the headline with the link. Put 3-4 stories in one email and send it along for your student to read on his own time.

3. **Watching a weekly TV news show together—from afar.** Select a show that fits your preferences and then make plans to watch it together each week. After the show, talk with each other via phone to share your perspectives and thoughts. If you can't do this weekly, consider watching important shows related to the upcoming Presidential campaign.
2. **Tuning in to NPR.** You can even do this via podcast, which would probably work even better for your student. Select several podcasts together, download them and listen, and then share your thoughts and ideas with one another.
1. **Hosting a conversation dinner.** Invite your student and several of her peers into your home for a home cooked meal and conversation about a global issue. Make this a formal occasion. Just be sure to pick a topic that won't get too heated! If you aren't close enough to make this happen, help your student organize a dinner to happen on campus. Send food her way (or pay for her to order in from a local restaurant). Suggest some conversation starters and let the dialogue begin!

### A Global Resource

Encourage your student to bookmark the Global Incident Map on her computer. This interesting (albeit somewhat scary) resource, located at [www.globalincidentmap.com/home.php](http://www.globalincidentmap.com/home.php), is an easy way to check out world happenings related to terrorism and other suspicious activities, moment by moment.

## Make a Difference Day!

October 27 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](http://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.



# The Influence of Peer Drinking Behavior

It's quite likely that your student has or will come into contact with drinking behaviors this semester. Unfortunately, whether or not your student is choosing to partake, risky drinking doesn't just impact the students who are engaging in the activity.

Consider talking with your student about this "secondary drinking effect" to make sure that he is standing up for his rights as a campus community member too. It can be a tough topic, yet it's important.

Some of the ways that students may be negatively impacted by others' alcohol abuse are:

- taking care of an intoxicated roommate or other student
- experiencing an unwanted sexual advance
- having a loud hallway on nights when intoxicated residents return
- getting into an argument with an intoxicated individual



## Combating the Hazing Issue

In an effort to decrease the amount of hazing happening in sororities and fraternities, 21 national Greek organizations have teamed up to create an anti-hazing hotline that anyone can use to report hazing incidents anonymously.

Individuals who call the toll free number, (888) NOT-HAZE or (888) 668-4293, will reach an automated recording at the office of Manley Burke, a law firm that publishes *Fraternal Law*. The law firm will report alleged incidents to the national headquarters of the appropriate fraternity or sorority no later than 24 hours later. They will also notify authorities when necessary.

If your student talks to you about hazing, you can let him know about this hotline. While reports can be filed anonymously, it's most helpful if the person reporting the incident is willing to provide a name and contact information.

Although hazing has been outlawed in most states, it still occurs on campuses nationwide. Hazing is very difficult to define and more often than not, students are afraid to

report incidents for fear of being "found out." This hotline enables students, parents and others to report incidents of hazing that they become aware of directly to an attorney.

### The Signs of Hazing

It can be tough to get students to talk about hazing. Sometimes, this is because they don't even recognize the activities as hazing. Plus, responses to these types of activities can vary. Some students view them as a personal challenge, while others view them as abuse or harassment.

If you suspect that your student is involved in hazing-related activities, watch for these signs:

- physical signs such as exhaustion, hangovers, increased illness, scars or bruising
- a decrease in performance in school, sports, etc.
- feelings of anger, confusion, anxiety or depression
- avoiding conversations related to the group or the activities they have been engaged in

- not getting enough uninterrupted sleep or study time
- having property damaged

If your student identifies experiencing any of these situations, encourage him to talk with his RA or another staff member on campus. We want to know this information so we can address these behaviors and their community impacts.

Fortunately, most students choose to drink responsibly or not at all. It's those select few, however, who can disrupt the lives of many.

### Learn More ...

Visit [www.collegedrink-prevention.gov/CollegeParents/](http://www.collegedrink-prevention.gov/CollegeParents/) to learn more about drinking on campus.

There are links for:

- What Parents Need to Know About College Drinking
- College Fact Sheet for Parents
- College Alcohol Policies
- Snapshot of Drinking Consequences

It's a great resource!



## Getting into the Midterm Mindset

It's happening. Midterm madness is here. Your student is likely gearing up to demonstrate her knowledge—or lack thereof—on her first set of midterms of the year. You can be more helpful in this process than you think, no matter whether you are close or far.

**Be Supportive.** When talking with your student over the next few weeks, try to remember that she may be stressed to the max. Midterms can cause many students to panic. Reassure her that you just want her to do the best she can and remind her to use her resources. If she is struggling, she shouldn't hesitate to contact her professor for help or to get some extra tutoring on campus.

**Send Some Encouragement.** Now's a great time to put a little something in the mail to let your student know you're thinking about him. A bit of home cooking or a humorous card will do the trick!

**Don't Take Things Personally.** If your student seems unaware of things happening with your family or is cutting conversations short, it most likely is due to feelings of being overwhelmed. Many midterms are given as take home exams, which take a great deal of time to complete. For those happening in class, students are often expected to know everything they've learned up until this point in the semester. Some classes only offer

two opportunities for assessment—midterms and finals. So, you can imagine the pressure he might be feeling to do well.

**Encourage healthy eating and sleeping habits.** This is probably the last thing your student wants to hear, but the reminders are important. Make sure to gently remind your student to eat well and to get plenty of sleep, especially if she wants to be at her best for midterms. A tired student doesn't remember things very well!

**Don't add undue burdens.** Now's probably not the time to tell your student

that he needs to get a job over winter break to help with finances or that his younger sister is struggling with a bully at school. Wait until midterms are over to let him know about the things he can't control—especially if there isn't anything he can do right at the moment to help anyway.

Most importantly, just be ready. Ready to support, ready to talk or ready to back off just a little to offer your student space to do as well as he can. Once midterms are over, everyone can take a deep breath and get back on track. Your support will mean a great deal to your student during this hectic time.



## What's the Class of 2011 All About?

**W**ant to know more about your student and her peer group? Check out the Beloit College Mindset List. The list is published annually in August by faculty members at Beloit College (WI). Its 70 items provide a look at the “cultural touchstones” that have shaped the lives of the incoming freshman class. Perusing the list can help you get into the “mindset” of today's traditional-aged students. Here's a teaser...

For them:

- They will encounter roughly equal numbers of female and male professors in the classroom.
- Tiananmen Square is a 2008 Olympics venue, not the scene of a massacre.
- The World Wide Web has been an online tool since they were born.
- They learned about JFK from Oliver Stone and Malcolm X from Spike Lee.
- “Off the hook” has never had anything to do with a telephone.

Go to [www.beloit.edu/~pubaff/mindset/](http://www.beloit.edu/~pubaff/mindset/) for the complete Class of 2011 Mindset List.

