Top Ten Tips for Parents & Family Members of First-Time College Students

1 Be aware that there is a great possibility that the first few weeks, or months, will be rough for your student. This is a time that your student will be experiencing a number of changes in his or her life. Transitioning from high school to college is a huge change all in itself. Be supportive of your student’s time of adjustment, and know that it’ll get easier.

2 Stay in touch with your student while they are away. Phone calls, text messages, e-mails, care packages, or even cards for occasions can help to ease the transition.

3 Encourage your student to get to know a diverse group of people, not just in terms of ethnicity, but background, hometown, etc. The diversity of our institution is unique and everyone should take the time to experience it.

4 Talk about financial responsibility with your student. A college life presents students with plenty of spending opportunities. Movies, eating out with friends, clothes, trips - it all adds up. Mutually understood budgets will help your student with spending and saving expectations. Make it clear to your student if you are expecting them to work part-time to help meet college expenses.

5 Try to be considerate of the calendar your student is now experiencing. The first week of the semester, midterms, and especially finals week can bring about different levels of stress. These are also times when your encouragement and care are very important.

6 Remember that it’s okay to visit your student, but don’t surprise them. Your student’s schedule will be filled up with homework, jobs and social activities. Try to inform your student in advance when you are planning a visit. This will allow him or her to plan ahead.

7 Don’t be alarmed if your student has thoughts about changing his or her major. Your student will be exposed to numerous academic areas and career possibilities. It’s common for students to change their major at least once. A change in their major or career path could increase their time for completion of a degree.

8 Encourage your student to become involved in at least one or two student organizations or activities. Involvement in academic organizations, intramural sports, student government, or any of the other organizations our institution has to offer will allow your student to grow academically and socially. Being involved will provide him or her with the opportunity to identify with a group of people on campus, develop outside of the classroom, further investigate career options, develop valuable leadership skills, and gain helpful career-related experiences that will make them marketable when searching for their first job out of college.

9 As a college student, your son or daughter may be keeping different hours than you may be used to. Don’t be surprised if your student expects the same degree of independence when he or she is home. If you respect your student’s expanded sense of personal freedom, he or she will feel more positive about spending time at home.

10 Your student may wish to return home for breaks and vacations, or he or she may want to spend time with college friends. Don’t make assumptions about breaks and where your student will spend them. Breaks will present your son or daughter with the chance to share their new experiences with friends as well as family.