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## Off to College 101 (For Anxious Parents)

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# Off to college 101 (for anxious parents)

For many readers, mid-August will mark a significant milestone — sending a child to college.

For the entering freshman, it is a time of great excitement and anticipation. For first-time college parents, it is a time of pride and joy mixed with anxiety over “letting go” of that beautiful person who has been the focus of your daily life for some 18 years.

If you find yourself in that position, you undoubtedly have many worries rolling around in your mind. Will she be safe? Will he get himself up and to class on time? Will she get enough sleep? Will he have clean clothes to wear? Eat properly? Make friends? Party too much? Manage a checkbook or credit card properly? Be successful in classes? And the list goes on.

As both a parent and an educator, experience has

taught me that most parents worry more about such things than they need to.

Rest assured that your son or daughter will get enough to eat, learn to do laundry and make new friends.

Although it takes longer for some than others, he/she will also learn to manage a checkbook (and/or credit card), get up in time for class and figure out how to balance school, homework, social life and other obligations.

And, when problems arise — be it with academics, a less than wonderful roommate, homesickness, physical illness or emotional distress — you can take heart in knowing that most universities provide a myriad of services to assist those in need.

Most universities also require new freshmen to participate in a “first-year experience” program to help them adjust to college life and make them aware of the multitude of resources and services available to them on campus.

So what can you do as a

parent to ensure your student’s success? Here are a few tips:

- Communicate with your student frequently, but don’t overdo it. In today’s world of instant communication, cell phones, text and instant messaging, it is all too easy to become a “helicopter” parent.

If you regularly find yourself talking with your student multiple times each day, gradually reduce the frequency of communication and temper expectations of immediate replies.

- Help, but don’t routinely rescue. Unless doing so would truly cause harm, allow your student to solve problems and deal with consequences of poor decisions on his/her own.

Among the most important things your student should take away from the college experience is the ability to think critically, prioritize, solve problems, be accountable and deal with a diversity of people, ideas and cultures.

- Encourage your student not to come home every weekend — especially at first. Many university-sanctioned

activities designed to ease the transition to college life, overcome homesickness and build friendships take place on the weekends.

- Don’t push your student too soon into a choice of major. Allow reasonable time to explore options and find his/her true passion. With passion comes the greatest likelihood of success.

- Recognize that grades might not be as good as they were in high school. College is more demanding than high school. Not all students who made the honor roll in high school will be on the dean’s list in college.

- Step in quickly if you see that your student is in academic difficulty. Talk to your student about time management, class attendance and your expectations. Be aware, however, that by federal law, professors cannot discuss grades or performance issues without your student’s written consent.

Contact the university to obtain a consent form and urge (if not require) your stu-

dent to sign it before problems arise.

- Take advantage of newsletters, websites, blogs and parent associations that will keep you informed on university happenings and resources.

- Send an occasional care package. A box from home filled with favorite goodies is always a welcome sight.

The college years will fly by quickly. Believe in your student, the values you have instilled and the transformative power of a college education.

Before you know it, the tears you fight back as you leave your child in strange new surroundings will be replaced by those in your eyes when your blossoming young adult walks across the stage to receive a college diploma.

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