



# Navigating your family's transition to college life

A guide for meaningful conversation with your student



## Navigating the transition

The transition to college is vital for incoming students but is just as impactful on families. Campbell University strives to partner with parents and family members to guide students in their first year of college and beyond.

As you prepare for the beginning of the fall semester, you may notice your student experiencing both excitement and apprehension about the upcoming changes. The Department of Student Life compiled discussion topics and prompts you might find helpful as you support your student through the transition to college. These conversations may be difficult or uncomfortable, and we hope this resource assists you with that process.

The scope of the transition to college will be different for each student. While it is not possible to predict a student's first-year experience, there are transition points common for many students. In this resource, you will find a timeline of relevant topics common to different periods of the first semester of college. We encourage you to consider the specific needs of your student and approach these conversations when they are timely for your family.

## Preparing for the start of the academic year

Prior to the beginning of the semester is the ideal time to have conversations with your student about expectations and appropriate boundaries. During this time, students may waiver between emotions of excitement and apprehension of the upcoming change. It is important to provide your student with comfort and confidence in their ability to succeed.

### Evolving family dynamics

- How often should we plan on communicating with each other and through what method? Do you prefer to set a weekly time to speak or send regular texts to check in?
- Discuss how you will communicate with your student about grades, finances, and difficult decisions.
- How often do you expect to visit home during the semester? Encourage students to take advantage of the slower pace of the weekend on campus as a time to catch up on assignments, participate in campus activities, attend athletic events, and explore the surrounding community.

### Managing freedom responsibly

- Campbell adheres to a no drinking or drug use policy for all students. Why do you think the university discourages this behavior? How might drinking and/or drug use impact your college experience?
- Where do you think you will be exposed to alcohol or drug use? How will you react if you find yourself in a risky situation such as this?
- How will you budget your money? For example, how often should you use your meal plan as opposed to eating out?
- Whose responsibility will it be to fund extracurricular opportunities such as joining a Greek organization, playing a club sport, traveling on a mission trip, or studying abroad?

### Embracing new experiences

- It is important to explore new ideas, places, and relationships in your time at Campbell. How will your college experience be enhanced if you take advantage of these opportunities?
- You will encounter peers who believe and think differently than you. How might you learn from them and show respect without compromising your beliefs?

## First six weeks of the semester

The first six weeks are a critical period for first-year students, as they may be experiencing doubt or uncertainty about their decision to attend college. During this important time, Campbell places a strong emphasis on connecting students with each other and the campus community. Remind your student that cultivating meaningful experiences in college requires both time and continued effort.

Revisit your earlier conversations about making friends, managing new responsibilities, and addressing risky behaviors such as alcohol and drug use. Now that students are acclimated to campus, they have more concrete experiences to reference in your discussions. This is also a time when students begin to meet people from a variety of backgrounds. Speak with them about the new perspectives they are hearing in class and in new social settings.



### Relationship building

- Tell me about some of the people you've met so far. You will meet people during college that you will be friends with for life. That does not mean that you will become best friends overnight. Healthy relationships take time to build.

### Appreciating diverse perspectives

- What can you learn from talking with people who think differently than you?
- You might begin to question your beliefs while away at school; how might we help you? It is okay for you to explore your beliefs, and we want to walk with you in that journey.

### Reassuring during stressful times

- Think about a time when you were challenged by your high school responsibilities. How did you manage those? What did you learn about yourself through that experience, and how can you apply those strategies now?
- If you sense that your student is moving from healthy stress to a state of distress, help them recognize healthy coping strategies. A renewed focus on wellness such as exercising daily, getting sufficient sleep, eating a balanced diet, and considering counseling services can reduce stress and improve focus.

### Engaging in campus activities

- What types of activities are you interested in joining on campus?
- How might these activities supplement your learning in the classroom?
- It is important to balance academics with social activities. What does that look like?





## Second part of the semester

As the newness of college life subsides, it is important to encourage students to maintain a sense of grit and resilience. With students feeling more comfortable on campus and less apprehensive about the logistics of college life like course schedules and navigating campus, now is the time for students to try new things. It is important to support them in these endeavors, and even if they don't achieve their desired outcome, help them learn from each experience and continue to seek new opportunities.

### Encouraging students to seek help when they need it

- What resources have you learned about in your first-year seminar that are available to help you?
- Now that you've taken advantage of (*tutoring/meeting with a faculty member/academic coaching/counseling*), how are you applying what you learned? What strategies did you develop from that experience?



### Celebrating successes

- When midterm grades are released, identify the courses where your student performed the best. Prompt them to consider the strategies used in these courses and how they can apply these to more challenging courses. Direct them to complete the Academic Self-Assessment in their Orange Book Student Planner and discuss their reflections of their self-assessment.
- An integral part of the college experience involves pursuing new opportunities. Encourage your student as they try new experiences such as applying for a leadership position, considering study abroad trips, or joining an intramural team.

### Building resilience

- The responsibilities and expectations of college students may seem daunting at times. Success in college is dependent on students' ability to persist through difficulties. Campbell's motto, *Ad Astra per Aspera* or *to the stars through difficulties*, reminds students that the most rewarding experiences are achieved through hard work and dedication.

## Continuing the partnership

Campbell appreciates the partnership developed with families throughout students' college experience. We hope this resource has been helpful in prompting meaningful discussions during your family's transition to Campbell. Campbell is committed to supporting families as you continue to play an important role in your student's life. Please refer often to the resources provided for families:

- [Campbell University Parents Facebook page](#)
- Family Calendar & Handbook
- Family Weekend, September 29-October 1, 2017
- Office of Student Life, (910) 893-1540





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