



October 2011

## 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 the rhythm of the new academic year
- Feeling behind in class work and wanting more contact with instructors occurs
- Folks anticipate mid-terms and question their abilities
- People start to show their “true selves” – masks start to come off as students begin to feel more comfortable in their surroundings
- Job panic of mid-year graduates takes hold as the realization settles in that they will be graduating soon

## Helping Your Student Stay Safe Online It's Cyber Security Month

If you're like many parents and family members, you worry about your student's safety in today's virtual world. College students use a wide variety of devices, making them all the more vulnerable to security threats and identity theft. In fact, the 18-24 age group is one of the most susceptible to cyber-related crime. So, your worries are justified. But students can be proactive in keeping themselves safe online. Help your student this month by sharing these “do's and don'ts” with him as a reminder that cyber security should be taken seriously:

### Do:

- Treat people online like you would treat them in person.

### Did You Know?

There's such a thing as “friendly fraud.” And for young adults, it's on the rise. This type of fraud, like stealing passwords, is perpetrated by people known to the victim - such as a roommate, a friend or a relative. Remind your student there is no such thing as being too protective of his personal identity.

- Use social networks as a way to highlight something positive that happened, gather feedback on an idea or advertise campus events.
- Use Facebook privacy settings – they are available because your page *really* shouldn't be a public free-for-all!
- Understand that you can be held responsible for harassing and threatening statements you make or actions you take online and via Mobile Internet Devices.
- Use a secure password and set privacy settings to protect personal information you don't want the world to see.
- Make sure your anti-virus and anti-spyware software programs are working properly.
- Monitor your online reputation regularly.
- Practice common sense when connecting to wireless access points.

### Don't:

- Give out personal information or passwords.

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## Helping Your Student Stay Safe Online

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- Leave firewalls and anti-virus software programs disabled.
- Respond to rude or mean comments – responding gives bullies just what they want.
- Send a message to someone else when you're angry – it's so hard to undo the damage and nearly impossible to erase its history completely.
- Use gossip servers and social networks as a way of gaining negative momentum for a dangerous or hurtful crusade about a campus issue or a fellow community member.
- Post anything you would not want your mother – or a future employer – to see.
- Trust a webcam without a visible recording light—it may still be on.

Students who establish good habits for protecting their identities online now will lay the foundation they need for a safe and healthy future.

### Securing Items

For your student, part of keeping her cyber security in a good place is taking care of her technological tools. Students often think campuses are safe spaces – and they are – but petty crimes do happen. It's not unusual for laptops, iPads and other techy devices to be stolen when they are left behind. Remind your student to keep her physical belongings safe too.

## Midterm Support Being at the Ready

It's happening. Midterm madness is here. Your student is likely gearing up to demonstrate his knowledge – or lack thereof – on his 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 he may be stressed to the max. Midterms can cause many students to panic. Reassure him that you just want him to do the best he can and remind him to use his resources. If he is struggling, he shouldn't hesitate to contact his 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 she 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. Consider waiting 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.



## Planning Ahead with Your Student for Next Term

If your family is like many others right now, you are spending smartly and saving as much as you can. The strain of sending a student to college is tough, especially in this worrisome economy. And it's likely that your student is feeling the financial pressure too. It's smart to start talking about what next term will look like financially now. Consider:

- **Budget Assessment:** How much money is your student spending in a month? Encourage him to keep track during the month ahead so you can get an accurate assessment of what he needs for next term. Keep in mind that students tend to do more social activities in the spring. Not only have they met more people by then, but clubs and organizations tend to be more active then too.
- **Winter Break Plans:** Will your student be working over winter break? If so, now is the time for her to begin putting these plans in motion to ensure she's got the job she needs.
- **Upcoming Expenses:** Ask your student to talk with his peers to find out what expenses to anticipate for the next term. From academic responsibilities to social commitments, he can get a sense for what he'll need from students who've been there before.

Once your student has a sense for what she'll need for next term, your family can determine what you can make happen. Talking now offers ample time to have conversations with financial aid officers and to remind your student to make smart choices about spending.

## Becoming Their Genuine Selves

College offers ample time and experiences for students to explore their genuine selves. Although their daily lives are busy, encourage students to take some quiet moments to think about who they really are. What makes them truly happy? When do they experience pure glee? When do they feel most comfortable? Most talented? Taking some time to assess where they're currently at when it comes to some important aspects of their lives and also where they'd like to go will help them in so many ways.

This type of reflection and self-awareness can give students a place to begin, so they can make intentional choices that'll help them grow. For instance, ask



your student how she feels about herself when it comes to things such as:

- Serving others
- Being a learner
- Knowing what you value
- Developing into someone interested in \_\_\_\_\_ (a hobby, interest, passion)
- Being an informed citizen
- Embracing diversity
- Treatment of others
- Work ethic
- Being a leader
- Being a friend
- Being a sibling
- Being a son/daughter
- Being in a relationship

Encourage your student to add other topics that are important to her, too. Examining these traits now will allow her to set some semester-long goals for the areas she'd like

## Setting Goals

Invite your student to ask herself:

"What two topics would I like to intentionally work on throughout the semester? How will I go about doing this? And what kind of support could I use along the way?"

Then, invite her to talk with you about these goals, asking for advice and support. By saying things out loud, they become more real, and you can help your student realistically work toward becoming her most genuine self.

to focus on. Perhaps she's interested in serving others on a more regular basis by steadily volunteering for the same agency. Or maybe she wants to work on becoming a more informed citizen by reading *Newsweek* on a weekly basis.

Whatever the case may be, it's the taking an honest look at herself that will help your student set specific goals that can help her work toward becoming her most genuine self in the year ahead.





## The Influence of Peer Drinking Behavior

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

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
- Getting into an argument with an intoxicated individual
- Not getting enough uninterrupted sleep or study time
- Having property damaged
- Having a loud hallway on nights when intoxicated residents return

If your student identifies experiencing any of these situations, encourage him to talk with his residence life staff member or another staffer on campus. We want to know this information so we can address these behaviors, as well as their individual and 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.

## What's the Class of 2015 All About?

Want to know more about today's students? 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:

- Ferris Bueller and Sloane Peterson could be their parents.
- As they've grown up on websites and cell phones, adult experts have constantly fretted about their alleged deficits of empathy and concentration.
- Their school's "blackboards" have always been getting smarter.
- American tax forms have always been available in Spanish.
- Women have never been too old to have children.
- Dial-up is soooooooooo last century!
- Most have grown up with a faux Christmas Tree in the house at the holidays.
- When they were 3, their parents may have battled other parents in toy stores to buy them a Tickle Me Elmo while they lasted.
- They're the first generation to grow up hearing about the dangerous overuse of antibiotics.
- Major League Baseball has never had fewer than three divisions and never lacked a wild card entry in the playoffs.



Go to [www.beloit.edu/mindset/2015/](http://www.beloit.edu/mindset/2015/) for the complete Class of 2015 Mindset List.

