First-time Parents Of A First-Year Student

Rory McElwee, PhD
Associate Vice President for Student Retention

Rowan University
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What the Research Tells Us about Entering First-Year Students

• New student goals for first year in order of priority
  – 1. Make friends and have fun
  – 2. Become independent person
  – 3. Choose financially rewarding major
  – 4. Get good grades
College ≠ High School

• First-year students actually have to learn a whole new set of values, norms, and expectations.

• The Rowan First-Year Experience is designed to help our new students make a successful transition to college life.
Academic Differences

– Overall academic ability is higher (stand out less)
– Much more reading and writing
– Readings may not be discussed in class
– Few opportunities for a grade (midterm and final)
– Extra credit is rare
– Courses go twice as fast
– No bells or hall passes
– Classes don’t meet five days a week

– Assume you read the syllabus
More Differences

• Many new students lack understanding about major
  – 3 to 4 semesters before immersion
• On their own to manage their time and affairs --financial, social, work, laundry, etc.
• Must learn many sets of rules- residence life, academic major, financial aid, academic policies, etc
• Learn college resources & location
What Role Should Parents Play in this Transition?

– Three Stages of Student Adjustment

• Separation
• Transition
• Incorporation
Separation

- Homesickness – wants to come home weekends
- Emotional roller coaster- “I like it, I hate it.”
- Personal problems – “I hate my roommate”
- Confusion – “All the liberal arts majors are interesting.”
Transition

- Finding “your kind” of friends
- Campus begins to shrink
- Discovery daily & weekly rhythm
- Confusion over major
- Finding help and resources
- Begins to practice time management
- Learning to juggle school, work and social life
Incorporation

– Knows academic advisor
– Involved on campus
– Satisfied with major
– Seeks guidance, not help, from parents
– Rowan is “my home”
Stages are Quite Variable from Student to Student

- Duration of each stage varies by student

- Some learn lessons “the hard way”
Parental Adjustment to Child in College

• Stress Level
  – Financial concerns
  – Safety & security of my student
  – Student’s adjustment to Rowan
  – Family issues
  – Your separation anxiety
What Should My Role Be in the Transition Process?

• You are IMPORTANT!!
• Be a guide
• FERPA an opportunity, not obstacle
• Be an active listener and be patient
• Every story has at least two versions
• Rx homesickness = come to visit
• Try, try again: Not “one and done”
Get on the Same Page

• **Do you share expectations?**
  – You both list expectations of each other
  – Exchange lists and DISCUSS HONESTLY

• **Suggested Issues to Address**
  – Money
  – Frequency of contact and trips home
  – Sharing of academic & other information
  – Fears and concerns
  – Decision-making
Questions?

mcelwee@rowan.edu
www.rowan.edu/atp

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