

TRANSITIONAL ISSUES FOR FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS

September

FREEDOM! Your son or daughter will begin to realize the newfound freedom of not having to answer to mom or dad about what hours to keep, when to study and when to socialize. With this comes the need to examine and clarify their personal value systems. Students typically begin to question such areas as alcohol and/or other drug use, morality, sexuality, religion, appearances and social expectations.

REALITY! Reality has set in and he or she may be questioning whether Saint Mary's was the right decision or if they should have stayed closer to home.

Homesickness may be triggered by anything from poor academic performance to meal time to roommate issues. Beware – frequent visits back home will not help your student become adjusted to Saint Mary's!

NEW SKILLS! Your student is probably nervous about his or her classes and is worried that they will be too hard or that he or she won't get the desired grades. He or she may need to develop new study habits and time management skills after realizing their old high school ways no longer are enough to get their desired grades in college.

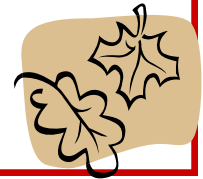


October

STABILITY! Most of your sons and daughters will have found at least one or two friends on campus on whom they can rely. Homesickness begins to subside and your son or daughter will begin to feel a sense of pride in attending Saint Mary's.

PRESSURE! With mid-terms right around the corner, your son or daughter may begin to feel pressure as they notice their study and time management skills (or lack thereof) have a direct impact on their grades.

DISENCHANTMENT! Students sometimes find that their ideal of what they anticipated college would be like is different from the way things actually are.



What can you do?

- * Attend the Parent and Family Day that is being held on Saturday October 6th, 2007!
- * Encourage your student to get involved with campus activities as a way to meet new people and occupy their time.
- * If you feel that they need more on-campus support, urge them to contact the Counseling Center or the Academic Support Center.
- * Set up a call routine so that you can check up on your student (and they can check up on you). Be a non-judgmental sounding board. Encourage, support and listen.
- * Care packages received from family members always put a smile on our students' faces!

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November

QUESTIONING! Depression and anxiety increase because of feelings that one should have adjusted to the college environment by now; students may start questioning about returning for the second semester.

ILLNESS! Changing weather causes colds and poor health. They may start to feel the pressure from missing class due to illness.

FRESHMAN 15! Although students may complain about the food, they often gain weight, known colloquially as the "freshman 15". Although there are plenty of choices, some students have trouble establishing good eating patterns and overindulge in high fat alternatives.



December

JOY! Realization that they have made it through the first semester.

ANXIETY! Anxiety (and sometimes guilt along with the consequences of missed classes, procrastination, unproductive studying and/or not enough time devoted to studying) increases as final exams approach and papers and projects are due.

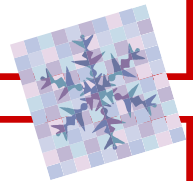
READJUSTMENT! Students who have been on their own for a semester have become accustomed to making their own decisions about where to go and when to come home. As a result, they may find it difficult to readapt to family life. It is often a period of readjustment for parents and other family members as well.



January

REMINISCENT! Students may have a hard time returning after spending time with friends and family over the holidays.

FRESH START! Your son or daughter will need to adjust to their new class schedule. Since students take one month-long intense course, they will need to use their time management skills to accommodate their new work load.



What can you do?

- * Remind them to use the Health and Wellness Center if they are sick or stressed out.
- * Keep your upcoming holiday traditions the same so they have something to look forward to coming home to.
- * Congratulate them and let them know you are supporting them through the end of the semester!
- * Understand that they will need some time and patience when readjusting to living at home again. Be flexible!
- * Help them set goals for the upcoming term if they are unhappy with their grades.
- * Don't get upset if they are excited about returning to college after the break!

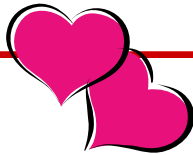
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February

COMFORT! By the time they return for the second semester, most feel comfortable with their new set of friends and have gotten involved with extra-curricular activities.

CABIN FEVER! Students will need to get creative in order to avoid cabin fever caused by rainy and cold weather.

ADVENTURE! Once your son or daughter begins to feel comfortable with his or her new friends, spring break plans may begin to materialize.

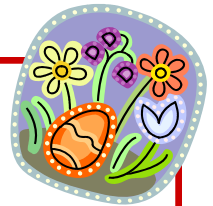


March

CHOICES! Housing deadlines for the following year quickly approach and students will face decisions such as “Who should I live with?” and “Do I want to live on-campus?”

FINANCIAL CONCERNS! With spring break trips approaching and summer jobs on their mind, students may become concerned with the amount (or lack thereof) in their bank account!

PROCRASTINATION! As the sun begins to shine again, procrastination can be especially difficult during the mid-term period.



What can you do?

- * Encourage two-way communication and set expectations for the semester.
- * Allow some time to readjust to the new school schedule but remind your son or daughter that they will need to fine tune their time management skills.
- * Send more care packages for Valentine's Day, Saint Patrick's Day and Easter to help them avoid cabin fever.
- * Help them with their Spring Break plans to ensure safety and security.

April

PEER PRESSURE! As spring break arrives, the pressure to participate in activities surrounding alcohol and drugs could increase.

EXCITEMENT! The end of the semester is in sight and students get excited to celebrate and move on to sophomore year.



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May



GROWTH! It is always exciting to see the changes that your student has made over the past year. Congratulate them and yourselves for getting through the first year of college!

STRESS! Finals and grades bring stress to most college students so this is an important time for them to focus on their goals.

SADNESS! It may be difficult for your son or daughter to leave their new friends and family. Their Saint Mary's community feels like home now and there is a sense of loss as they return home.

READJUSTMENT! It is time for your student to readjust once again to moving out of the dorms and back home.

What can you do?

- * Encourage your student to talk to their professors if they are struggling with their final exams, projects or papers. Having some extra help could motivate your student and give him or her extra confidence as finals approach.
- * Come help them pack up their dorm room! You will be surprised at how much has accumulated in the small room over the past year.
- * Validate the positive work that your son or daughter did throughout the year. Congratulate them on their accomplishments and breathe a sigh of relief that the first year is over!

Information compiled by Kayla Banion

MackKay, Jacqueline and Wanda Ingram. Let the Journey Begin: A Parent's Monthly Guide to the College Experience. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.