Putting Summer Plans in Place

The end of the term is near, as students try to determine what comes next. You can help by serving as a sounding board while options are considered…

What Will Fill the Time? Perhaps your student is taking on an internship or a summer job that’s in line with her anticipated career. Or she may be working on campus, doing service or taking on a job to pay the bills. Discuss the options in order to help your student determine where to focus her energies.

What about Classes? Does it make sense for your student to take classes this summer, either on his campus or at a local school? Explore this possibility together to determine if this is the best use of time and resources.

Where is the Break? Students do need to take a breather after a busy year of school, work, involvements and more. It’s important to help your student carve out some intentional down time in order to recharge her batteries. She’ll need it!

What Role Do Finances Play?
The reality of summer dreaming is considering what kinds of funds need to be raised in order to make next term possible. Talk honestly with your student about his expected contributions and how he’s planning to make that money over the summer.

Summer goes quickly and being intentional with this time can help your student meet her goals and make the most of it all.

Summer Considerations
Other things to consider include…

- Family Obligations – What does the family expect of your student and what does he expect from you? Talk now before misunderstandings and hurt feelings can take hold.
- Tracking Deadlines – When do classes begin again, when are bills due, etc.? Get those dates on the calendar now so you all have some deadlines in mind.

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:

- Some students lose their motivation for the final push
- Spring fever hits and problems arise as students become restless
- Anticipating the end of the year
- Frustration and confusion develop because of class registration
- Papers and exams are piling up
- Summer job panic
- Feeling like they are no longer accountable for their actions – may turn to vandalism
- Sexual assault increases
- Concerns about moving home for the summer
Celebrating the Sibling Connection

Oh, brother (or sister)! National Sibling Day is April 10th. Here are some ways for college students and their siblings to stay connected:

**Go on a “My Life” Photo Shoot – with a Special Guest!** Your college student can go on a “photo shoot” of her life at school, incorporating a certain stuffed animal or other small item into each picture. Then, when she sends them, her sibling can look at each photo, trying to find the small item. And the sibling at home can do the same for her sibling at college!

**Do a Tune Share.** Siblings can share good music with one another by swapping playlists. They’ll stay connected and learn more about one another’s developing musical tastes.

**Attempt the Great Postcard Pass.** Since it’s great fun to get “real” mail, encourage siblings to share wacky postcards with one another, from local sites to ones that they make on their own. You can give each sibling a book of postcard stamps to help facilitate this process.

**Plan-a-Date.** Encourage the younger sibling to plan a special day to share with his college sibling this summer. It might be going to a water park, taking a hike, visiting a friend or whatever. This will give them both something to look forward to!

**Swap Continuous Stories or Drawings.** One sibling can start a story online and then email it to her sibling to add her own twist. This can go back and forth for a long time and will result in something mighty interesting! Or siblings can swap an ongoing drawing instead.

**Book It.** Siblings can read the same book in their respective places so they can then compare notes. Or an older sibling can read favorite kids books on a CD or online so younger siblings at home can enjoy bedtime stories from afar.

**Send Monk-E-Mail.** They can send goofy monkey emails for free through www.careerbuilder.com/monk-e-mail/. It’s a hoot!

**Share a Knick-Knack.** A very fun connection is finding a crazy item, like a paper mache head or a wacky knick-knack, which siblings can stealthily swap with one another when they least expect it. For instance, it might end up in a visiting sibling’s suitcase one time while another instance may see it left in a glove compartment or sent through the mail.

**Send Handprint Hellos.** Encourage siblings still at home to trace their hands monthly and write one thing they did that month in each finger space. Then it can be sent to the college sibling to keep him up on activities at home. Your college student may want to return the favor, too!

Staying connected doesn’t have to be hard and it’s vitally important for siblings to still feel like a part of one another’s lives. Hopefully some of these ideas will spark that connection!
Room Checkout: It’s Right Around the Corner!

If your student lives in the residence halls, he or she will be going through the room checkout process before leaving. Since that time is right around the corner, here are a few tips to share with your student to ensure that the process is smooth as can be.

Find Out Important Information. Students need to take responsibility for finding out important checkout information, reading flyers and attending meetings. Encourage your student to ask residence hall staffers if he’s not sure what to do.

Keep Move-out on the Radar. The checkout process isn’t optional! Everyone must comply with hall policies or else an improper checkout charge will likely occur. Ignoring the process just makes things messy – and expensive.

Connect with Your Student Staff Member. Students need to plan when they will check out, once they’ve examined the final exam schedule. Encourage your student to connect with her student staff member to make a check out appointment ahead of time.

Also Consider…

- **Transportation.** How will your student get to her summer destination? In her own vehicle? Will you borrow a truck or van to pick her up? Or maybe another mode of transportation makes most sense.

- **Storing Belongings.** Most residence halls don’t allow students to store items over the summer. So, if your student is moving off campus, can he leave some bigger items – carpets, furniture, etc. – in that space, even if he isn’t yet paying rent? Or will you need to rent a storage space?

- **Containers.** Boxes, trash bags and other containers are often at a premium during the end of the year. Make sure your student is well-equipped to start packing so the search for materials doesn’t need to happen on the actual move-out day! Consider using suitcases and duffel bags, too.

- **Stuff Disposal.** It’s important that students find out how to discard and recycle unwanted items within the halls. They can’t just leave items in their room or the hall, so encourage your student to talk with residence hall staff ahead of time.

- **Saying Goodbye.** Saying goodbye to friends and moving on can be emotional for many students. Be prepared that move-out day won’t be all about the tasky things – it’ll likely involve seeking out friends, meeting parents and more.

This is most respectful of the staffer’s time, as well as making the process much smoother for your student.

Get Cleaning. That sticky rug tape residue, the dust bunnies behind furniture and more need to be cleaned up before your student checks out. Nobody else is going to do it! He can ask student staff members or the cleaning staff about cleaning supplies. Just make sure he understands that, not only is leaving a filthy room disrespectful to the kind cleaning staffers, it is irresponsible and costly, too.

Put Things Back. Any furniture that was moved into the closet needs to be put back on the floor. Walls and doors need to be cleaned up. Drawers need to be emptied. Considering all of these “little things” can ensure that your student leaves her room as good as she found it.

Look at What You’re Signing. Once the room condition has been assessed, your student will probably be asked to sign his room contract, saying that he agrees with the assessment. Make sure that he pays attention to what it is that he’s signing so there are no surprises over the summer!

Start Packing Ahead of Time. Move-out day is not the time to do all your packing! Get started ahead of time with things you don’t need, figure if you’ll need to ship anything or take it home early, and don’t leave things until the last minute. You’ll want to say your goodbyes on move-out day, not stuff sweaters in crates!
Keeping Stuff Safe

It’s worth reminding your student about some of the best ways to keep his stuff safe…

- Install a safety lock or tracker on your laptop.
- Don’t leave your book bag unattended. Use a locker or carry your bag around with you at all times.
- Always lock up your bike.
- Don’t leave a large amount of cash in your room, even if it’s “hidden” in your sock drawer.
- Keep your blinds pulled at night and when you’re out so potential thieves can’t see what’s “available” to them.
- If there’s a campus engraving program, register your big-ticket items like laptops, TVs, DVRs, bikes and more.
- Lock your room or apartment door when you leave, even if it’s just for a few minutes. Sometimes that’s all it takes.

Making a Medical File: Helping students take responsibility for their health

Students can often get so caught up in their busy lives that they forget to make appointments to visit the dentist, doctor or other medical professionals. Unfortunately, this is a bad practice that can become a bad lifetime habit, as your student fails to put her well being first.

So, consider working with her to create a medical file that contains the following:

- A list of up-to-date vaccinations
- What medications she is on
- Dates of last doctor visits
- Contact info, including websites, addresses and phone numbers, of medical professionals she has an established relationship with
- Health insurance ID numbers
- Any other details that could be helpful to know

Helping her create a file, complete with all the medical details, allows her to take stock of her medical history – and to take responsibility for what she has to do next as she takes these steps into adulthood.

Here’s to your student’s health!

Transitions

The season of transitions is almost upon us, as students prepare to transition into their summers and your family readies to transition into a different pace.

A few things to keep in mind to make these transitions work…

- Communicate
- Don’t assume things
- Think the best of each other
- Be forgiving
- Embrace change as a growth opportunity
- Listen to one another
- Be flexible
- Share laughs
- Love one another