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:

- Low energy levels and restlessness
- Mid-semester slump and sickness
- Making plans for next year – housing, classes and financial aid
- Hidden conflicts between roommates and friends begin to arise
- Drug and alcohol use may increase
- Mid-term anxiety
- Seniors thinking about graduation
- Excitement or depression about Spring Break plans
- Pledging begins for Greek organizations
- Changing or deciding on a major

### Leadership Possibilities

Students can gain incredible leadership experience by getting involved in all sorts of ways, such as…

- Organizing service projects
- Building sets for a production
- Creating a social media presence for an upcoming event
- Working in the residence halls as a desk staffer
- Serving as membership chair for a student organization
- Ushering at a campus concert
- Writing news reports for the campus radio station
- Contributing ideas as part of a cultural fair planning team
- Keeping stats for rec leagues
- Surveying commuter students to see what services they need
- Working on the campus programming board budget

### Gaining Valuable Skills

Is your student a quieter, do-it-because-it-needs-to-be-done person who doesn’t always seek out the spotlight? That’s wonderful, because our campus needs him and his desire to improve his campus surroundings! In return, he’ll be able to gain leadership expertise in arenas such as…

- Communications skills
- Taking initiative
- Planning events
- Budgeting skills
- Working with others
- Problem solving
- Writing
- Providing customer service
- Assessing student needs
- Better understanding campus diversity
- Getting organized

These skills will benefit your student now, plus they’ll be things she can discuss during job and internship interviews as well, to demonstrate the leadership skills she is gaining. So, encourage your student to seek out those behind-the-scenes needs. Her contributions are welcomed and she’s going to greatly benefit from the experiences.
Helping Students with Hygiene Issues

Hygiene issues can sneak up on students as they get busy, deal with emotional issues or experience health problems. Your student may be concerned about a friend or you may notice some hygiene issues he is experiencing directly.

Whatever the case may be, there is help available here on campus. For instance…

- If you suspect a hygiene issue may be tied to depression or some other mental health concern, the campus counseling center can help. Students who are struggling emotionally often stop handling the “basics” of life well, such as laundry and personal grooming.

- If hygiene becomes an issue among friends or roommates, staff members in residence life and housing are trained to assist in resolving such concerns.

- If there may be an underlying health concern contributing to a hygiene problem, the health center is a good place to talk with someone and get the ball rolling in coming to a resolution.

You can also help by sharing your observations with your student, such as if you notice a smell related to smoking or bad breath that could be addressed through better oral hygiene.

The biggest assist, however, is care in helping your student get beyond anger, embarrassment or humiliation to address a hygiene issue head on. Saying, “I’d just like to help you figure out this issue so you don’t have to be embarrassed and can have a better quality of life” can be a very effective beginning.

A Safe Spring Break

As students prepare to go on service trips or road trips this spring break, you can offer the following reminders to make sure they stay safe:

Keep Your Wits about You. Be smart with your personal safety! Don’t drink or get so intoxicated that you make bad decisions and put yourself in dangerous situations. Keep a clear head in order to keep yourself – and your friends – safe.

Use the Buddy System. Look out for one another and never leave a friend alone. You’ll be safest, particularly in a new place, if you stick together.

Don’t Go Off with People You Don’t Know. It may seem “exciting,” yet trusting people you don’t know can end in tragedy.

Don’t Accept Drinks from Unknown Origins. If you choose to drink, know where your drink is coming from. Don’t accept drinks from strangers, since it can be very easy for them to slip a colorless, odorless liquid “date rape drug” into the mix, with ill intent.

Don’t Do Anything Illegal. The consequences are dire if you get arrested, especially in a foreign country.

Protect Your Property. Carry your wallet close to your body so it’s difficult to pickpocket you. Don’t bring valuables on the trip.

Wear Sunscreen. If you’re doing an outdoor service project or lounging on the beach, sunscreen will prevent the burn that could ruin your break. Plus, it’ll save your skin in the long run.

Protect Your Eyes. Wear sunglasses with proper UV protection and also have a hat. Too much sun can damage eyes.

Being smart is the name of the game in order for your student to enjoy a safe, healthy spring break.

What’s That Smell?

Personal odors can come about due to...

- Not bathing regularly; poor oral hygiene
- Piling up dirty clothes
- Health issues like diabetes, digestive or thyroid disorders
- Smoking
- Medications
- Being overweight
- Incontinence
- Diet
- Cooking with odiferous spices/substances
- Dirty living quarters
- Not washing comforters and sheets
- Having unwashed workout clothes/shoes in small spaces
Financial Aid for Returning Students

Financial aid forms need to be filed each year for federal student aid. Students can renew their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online through www.fafsa.ed.gov.

There are federal and state deadlines for financial aid. By heading to www.fafsa.ed.gov and clicking on “Deadlines,” you can enter your state and school year to gain access to filing dates. And you can learn more about school-specific deadlines by talking with someone in the financial aid office.

Retrieving IRS Data

The IRS Data Retrieval Tool is available for students and parents to access any IRS tax return information needed to complete the FAFSA. It can be transferred directly into your FAFSA. This move is recommended because…

■ It’s the easiest way to provide your tax data.
■ It’s the best way to ensure that your FAFSA has accurate tax information.
■ You won’t need to provide a copy of your or your student’s tax returns to the college/university.

More details about this tool can be found by entering “IRS Data Retrieval Tool” in the search box at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Preferences in Work Situations

As students seek employment and internships, it’s important for them to get in touch with their preferences. For instance, some students are more introverted while others are more extroverted. There is no “ideal” when it comes to this – it’s more about recognizing how those tendencies can work to their benefit in the world of work.

In work situations, the following qualities may apply…

Extraversion

→ Like variety and action
→ Often impatient with long, slow jobs
→ Interested in the activities of their work and in how other people do it
→ Often act quickly, sometimes without thinking
→ Find phone calls a welcome diversion when working on a task
→ Develop ideas by discussion
→ Like having people around

Introversion

→ Like quiet for concentration
→ Tend not to mind working on one project for a long time without interruption
→ Interested in the facts/ideas behind their work
→ Like to think a lot before they act, sometimes without acting
→ Find phone calls intrusive when concentrating on a task
→ Develop ideas by reflection
→ Like working alone

People develop their extroverted and introverted qualities throughout their lives – we’re all works in progress! The key is to know that no one person is only an introvert or an extrovert. Instead, it’s a spectrum to be aware of in work situations – and beyond.

Source: Introduction to Type in Organizations by Sandra Krebs Hirsh and Jean M. Kummerow

While in College

Go to http://studentaid.ed.gov and click “While in College” for information on everything from what to do if your student’s financial situation has changed since entering school to reapplying annually for federal student aid. Details about maintaining eligibility, leaving school early, going through loan counseling and more are also available here.
True Listening

Listening well can make all the difference when you and your student are attempting to communicate. Here are some simple listening tips to keep in mind…

**Give Your Full Attention.** It is easy to have your eyes wander over to another part of the room, or unintentionally listen in on another conversation happening right next to you when you’re supposed to be listening to your student. Do everything you can to keep your eyes and your focus on the person who is speaking to you.

**Stay in the Present.** A common mistake people make when listening is they start to develop their response while the speaker is still finishing his thoughts. You are bound to miss something being said if you are worried about what you are going to say next.

**Limit Advice.** When your student talks with you, he’s not always looking for advice. Sometimes people just need to process through things to figure it out on their own. Be careful not to give advice before you are asked for it.

**Be Patient.** Your student is speaking with you because she has something important to share. Don’t interrupt or respond before she has finished. Interruptions are frustrating and may appear as if you don’t care or aren’t interested.

**Ask Questions.** Confirm what you think you are hearing by asking follow-up questions. Not only is it a good idea to repeat back what you understand your student to be sharing, it also demonstrates how well you are really listening.

**Display Nonverbal Feedback.** Let your student know that you are really listening with a nod of the head, a laugh when appropriate and direct eye contact. If you’re communicating on the phone, a few simple verbal responses – like “Okay…” – can let your student know that you’re hearing her.

Chocolate: The Great Connector!

Chocolate Week is March 19-24, so consider some ways to connect with your student…

- Read the book *Like Water for Chocolate* and compare notes.
- Make chocolate chip pancakes.
- Watch “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” to relive childhood memories.
- Tour a local candy shop.
- Send chocolate bars to share.
- Talk over hot chocolate, either in person or via Skype/FaceTime.

Listening well is an art – and one that is well worth the effort as you continue communicating with your student.

Staying in Tune with Your Student

How do you keep up with your active student as he continues to meet new people, study new topics and gather a variety of new experiences? Here are some key methods…

**Follow-up.** Bring up something your student revealed during your last conversation to check where that relationship/topic/concern is currently at. It’s not about badgering her – it’s about doing a “check in” while also showing her you really were listening.

**Look for Changes.** Has your student’s mood or behavior changed significantly? If so, share your observations and concerns, while also giving him some suggestions about how to address any issues he may be facing, if asked.

**Listen Well.** Tune in, keep your ears open, try not to interrupt and engage in true listening. You’ll learn so much as a result!

**Ask Questions.** Show interest in her activities, friends, classes, work and more. Try to ask open-ended questions that can’t be answered with just a “yes” or “no” in order to gather more information. Genuine interest shows your student that you think her life is well worth investing in.