



a newsletter for parents & families

October 2014

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 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
- Anticipating midterms and questioning their abilities
- People start to show their “true selves” – masks start to come off as students begin to feel more comfortable in their surroundings

The Midterm Mindset

Your daughter is likely gearing up to demonstrate her knowledge – or lack thereof – on her first set of midterms. (Oct. 2-8 at CSM) You can be more helpful in this process than you think!

Be Supportive. When talking with your student over the next few weeks, recognize that she may be stressed up to her eyeballs. Reassure her that you just want her to do the best she can, while also reminding her to use campus resources. If she is struggling, she shouldn't hesitate to contact her professors or get some extra tutoring in the Achievement Center.

Send Some Encouragement. Now's a great time to put a little something in the

Don't Take Things Personally

If your student seems unaware of things happening within your family or is cutting conversations short, it's likely because she's overwhelmed. Some 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 demonstrate everything they've learned all term. A few classes only offer two opportunities for assessment – midterms and finals. So, you can imagine the pressure she might be feeling to do well!



mail to let your student know you're thinking about her. A bit of home baking, her favorite snacks, or a humorous card will do the trick!

Don't Add Undue Burdens. Now is probably not the time to tell your daughter that she needs to get a job over winter break to help with finances. Consider waiting until midterms are over to let her know about these types of things.

Encourage Healthy Eating and Sleeping Habits. Gently remind your daughter 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!

Most importantly, just be ready. Ready to support, ready to talk or ready to back off just a little to offer your daughter space to do as well as she can. Once midterms are over, everyone can take a deep breath and get back on track. Your support will mean a great deal during this hectic time.

Residence Life Updates

Residence Life at College of Saint Mary has been busy since you dropped your daughter off on campus in August! Below are some updates from us.

This year, most of the water fountains in Lozier got a ‘facelift’ and had water bottle filling stations installed. Residence Life is excited to provide this accommodation for your daughter! These water bottle filling stations came at the perfect time, as this year CSM has re-committed to encouraging sustainable efforts across campus. As a water bottle is filled up, the station indicates how many plastic water bottles have been saved. How many plastic water bottles do you think our residential community will be able to save this year? It’s the small changes in our daily habits that have the greatest impact on our world. Each time your daughter refills her water bottle at these stations, she is showing her commitment to CSM’s sustainable efforts!

It feels as though the school year just started; however, Fall Break is almost upon us, which means the semester is almost half done! Fall Break is Thursday, October 9th – Sunday, October 12th (no classes are scheduled that Thursday and Friday) and the residence halls remain open.

As you may be aware, the Resident Assistants (RAs) on each floor complete various programs that mix education with fun! If your daughter is staying over Fall Break, she can look forward to a program during that time. Another program that students enjoy each year is *Halloween in the Halls*. This is a safe trick-or-treating event, where children associated with CSM or from the community go through the residence halls and trick-or-treat. This event will be taking place on Thursday, October 30th from 7-9 pm. Be sure to encourage your daughter to participate in this fun annual event!



Kate Branstetter and Ellen Engh
Residence Life Professional Staff

The Study Abroad Possibility

Chances are that your daughter is hearing chatter about study abroad opportunities. This is a difficult decision for students. Should I go or should I stay? Whatever you and your student decide, make sure it’s the right decision for her. Here are five great reasons for students to study abroad:

1. International experience can help students gain self-confidence, self-reliance and independence. Living abroad requires the development of certain life skills students can’t nurture without this unique opportunity.
2. International experience often helps students gain fluency in another language, as they are immersed in the culture.
3. International experience is an impressive resume note, especially in today’s competitive job market and global society.
4. International experience helps students truly understand what it means to be a citizen of their own country, while gaining new world perspectives and exploring different belief and value systems.

5. International experience offers a one-of-a-kind structured opportunity for students to explore a new country with their peers, while engaging from both an intellectual and a social perspective.

Despite these advantages, studying abroad may not be the best option for everyone. Encourage your daughter to speak with Dr. Pam Humphrey, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs / Study Abroad Coordinator at College of Saint Mary. She can be reached at phumphrey@csm.edu or 402-399-2696.



Navigating Conflict Between Friends

"I don't know what happened! Last week we were good friends and this week she's barely speaking to me."

Navigating college friendships takes patience, forgiveness, understanding and clear communication. Conflict can rear its head if friends don't put their best efforts into these relationships. It can be even more stressful if the friend is your roommate!

Here are some tips that might help your daughter along the way...

Go to the Source. It's so easy, especially when living communally and/or being part of a campus community, to talk about friend conflicts with everyone *but* that friend! Going to the source is key if your student really wants to work things out.

Don't Believe Rumors. Part of being in the midst of this type of community is that rumors fly faster than light. Encourage your student to shake off a rumor and go directly to the source to better understand what the true issue is.

Turn Down the Drama. There are so many real-life issues to contend with that fabricated drama doesn't deserve the time and attention it sometimes demands. Suggest that your student not get caught up in unnecessary drama.

Look for True Souls. If someone acts friendly because you have a car, it's pretty easy to tell what her intentions might be. But if someone shares interests and likes your student for who she is, that's a true friendship worth pursuing.

Give the Benefit of the Doubt. When in conflict with friends, sometimes



giving them the benefit of the doubt can diffuse the initial tension so students can get to the heart of the issue. Encourage your student to be the bigger person.

Keep Voices & Emotions Calm. Getting all riled up is one sure way to make a situation worse, rather than better. Suggest a cool-headed approach where students use "I" statements to express their concerns and a genuine interest in resolving the conflict.

Helping Students Set Realistic Goals

Fall and football are now upon us! What does that have to do with student success? In football, there's a goal post. And in the collegiate world, you need to post some goals.

To help your daughter keep on track, you can share these five elements of a successful goal:

1. **Achievable.** Set goals that are realistic within the context of your life. Too often the reason any of us fail is that we set unachievable goals.
2. **Measurable.** Use quantifiable words in your goal lingo rather than fluffing them up with airy concepts. For instance, saying, "I'll spend two extra hours per week on writing assignments" is easier to measure than "I'll put more effort into my writing assignments."
3. **Short.** Keep your goals to short sentences or paragraphs. That way, they're easier to commit to memory and always keep in mind.
4. **Positive.** State your goals in a positive manner that makes them appealing. It's a good way to motivate yourself mentally.



5. **Begin/End.** Determine when you will start working on each goal and when it should be achieved. This will help you focus... and succeed!

Possible Sources of Friendship Conflict

- Someone not pulling their weight with a group project for class
- Misunderstandings enhanced by rumors
- Thinking the other person is upset when it really has nothing to do with you
- Someone borrowing something and not returning it
- Looking for reasons that someone might not like you
- Sharing confidential information with others, even when asked not to
- Being a "taker" instead of viewing friendship as a two-way street
- Talking behind someone's back
- Publicly humiliating someone with words and/or actions.

When Homesickness Strikes

Your family is going through a transition these days, as you get used to your student being in college and she gets used to being there. A natural part of this transition for some students is going through a bout of homesickness. Once the initial excitement of the new academic year wears off, it's pretty common for students to start missing home and the familiarity of their old routine. They may miss friends, family and their "old life," especially once classes start getting harder and they have to work on social connections.

You can help your daughter cope with these feelings of homesickness by offering her the following suggestions:

Acknowledge Your Feelings and Worries. Once you've identified that what you're experiencing is homesickness, it can be much easier to address it. Otherwise, you may be wondering what's happening to you.

Take Advantage of Campus Resources. Residence life staff, campus ministry, faculty members and other staff members are prepared to help students who are homesick or lonely. Don't be afraid to tap into them as a resource – that's why they are here!

Get Involved. If you sit and think about what you're missing at home, you are also missing what you could be doing on campus. This is a lose-lose proposition! Trying new things and meeting new people is one of the best ways to combat loneliness.

Stay Connected to Friends and Family. Although it's important to develop some independence, staying connected is a great way to feel supported as you grow during your collegiate journey. We all need old friends – and the promise of new ones, too.

Play to Your Strengths. Find something on campus that allows you to experience your established strengths, like applying for Leadership Launch, getting creative with a residence hall council activity or singing in the campus choir. Your confidence level – as well as your comfort level – will increase as a result.

CSM Dates to Remember:

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| * Wednesday, October 1 Great Conversations Author on Campus—Ana Castillo | * Monday, October 20 President Live: Q & A with students and President Stevens |
| * Thursday, October 2 through Wednesday, October 8 Mid-Term Week | * Wednesday, October 22 —Reducing Test Anxiety Workshop |
| * Friday, October 3 Leadership Launch Applications Due for first and second year students | * Wednesday, October 22 —Campus Health Fair |
| * Monday, October 6 What is your Learning Style Workshop | * Friday, October 24 —CAB's Haunted Houses Trip |
| * Thursday, October 9 and Friday, October 10 —Fall Break/No Classes | * Thursday, October 30 —Halloween in the Halls |
| * Saturday, October 18 —Leadership Summit for CSM and area collegiate women | |



Greetings from the Vice President for Student Development!

Dear Parents and Families,

As a parent, you play a very important and critical role in helping your daughter handle issues she faces by providing suggestions and offering guidance. Our newsletter, sent each month, will offer resources for you to use during these important conversations, as well as current information about campus events and deadlines. Have a great month!

Sincerely,
Tara Knudson Carl, Ph.D.

