

The Campus Link

A newsletter for parents & families

August 2007



Inside this issue:

Moving Your Student into the Residence Hall ..... 2

A Cool Move-In Day Idea ..... 2

FERPA Facts ..... 3

Struggles With Self-Esteem ..... 3

Keeping Up the Cash Flow ..... 4

Seasonal Student Issues ..... 4

Commuter Connections ..... 4

Interested Yet Not Intrusive ..... 5

The Pros and Cons of Cars on Campus... 5

Off to a Good Start!

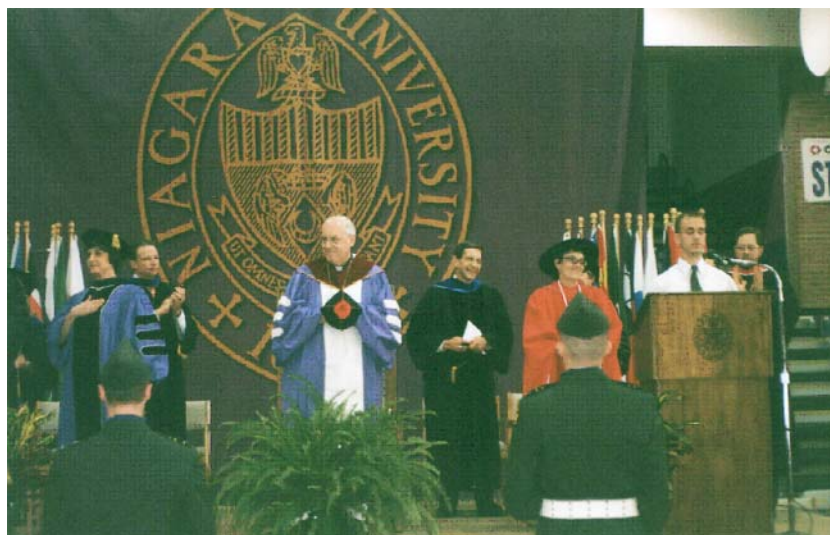
The New Student Convocation is the official welcoming ceremony of new students to the Niagara University community by the president, administration, faculty and staff. It is an opportunity to convey to students the importance of their educational endeavor and the commitment of the university to support them in the achievement of this goal both inside and outside the classroom. In addition to formally introducing the students to their collegiate career, the New Student Convocation gives students a sense of the size, strength and identity of their class. The students also experience Niagara University’s sense of community derived from the values of St. Vincent de Paul. The ceremony is a celebration of university life and the beginning of the New Student Orientation weekend.

All new students are expected to attend the 60-minute convocation, which will take place on Aug. 24. It is an opportunity for students to develop a true connection to the university and to connect with their future graduation class. For parents, it is an opportunity to share in an important transition in the lives of their sons or daughters.

The ceremony itself is designed as a complement to the commencement ceremonies that graduating students experience at the end of their college careers. It includes faculty from each academic department and a procession and recession of the students along with a host of other academic and administrative members.

Highlights of the program include brief remarks by the Rev. Joseph Levesque, C.M., president of Niagara University, and Dr. Bonnie Rose, executive vice president/academic vice president, and the reciting of the “NU Creed” by the president of the Niagara University Student Government Association. The creed was written by a group of Niagara’s student leaders.

**Niagara University New Student Orientation Web Site:**  
[www.niagara.edu/caol/orientation.htm](http://www.niagara.edu/caol/orientation.htm)

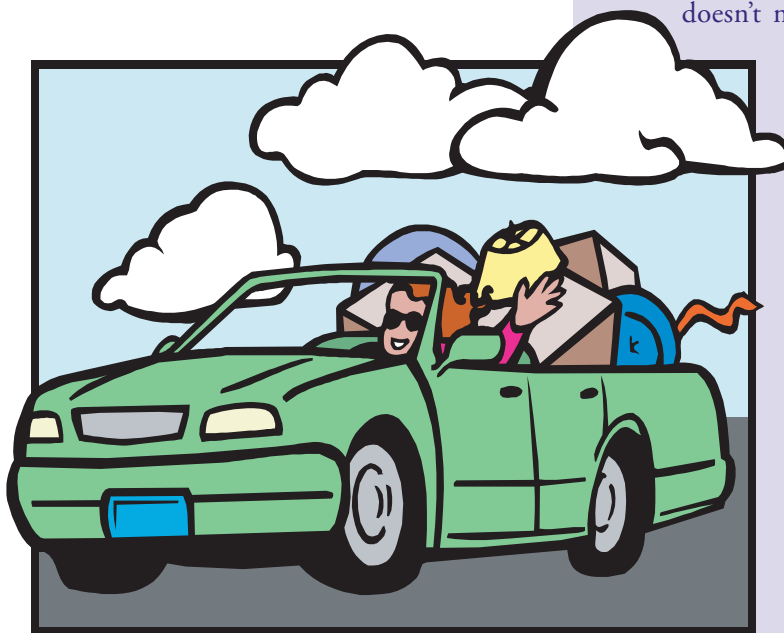


## Making the Big Move

# Tips for Moving Your Student into the Residence Hall

Move in day can be a stressful time for families. The logistics can be difficult to plan out. Add emotions and nerves to the mix and tensions are certain to run high. Here are some tips to make move-in day go as smoothly as possible:

- **Keep in mind the emotions everyone may be feeling.** While they aren't an excuse for rudeness or disrespectful interactions, they can be at the root of a verbal or nonverbal exchange. First-time students are probably feeling excitement, anxiety and even a little bit of fear. Returning students may be feeling a "too cool" attitude or a "let's just get this over with" kind of mentality. Family members may be dealing with a whole host of adjustment issues of their own.
- **Pay attention to the directions you were provided.** Be sure to show up at your assigned time and designated location. Since many students arrive precisely at the opening hour for check-in, you may have a shorter waiting time by arriving later in the time period. Follow all campus directional signs and listen to the staff members on hand. It creates undue stress and confusion when families ignore a well-thought-out process designed to make move-in the smoothest process possible.
- **Give yourself time.** You'll want to have enough time to help your student unpack (see the housing Web site, [www.niagara.edu/housing](http://www.niagara.edu/housing), for tips on what to bring) and arrange a little. Leave the final decorating and organization to your student and her roommate, though. You don't want to be too pushy. Besides, figuring this out from the get-go is part of what college is all about. You may want to take time to get to know your student's roommate and her family too. Planning to grab a bite to eat after both students are settled could serve as a good transition for everyone.
- **Be patient.** Lots of people will be trying to do the same thing all at once. A friendly hello, door held or patient pause will go a long way.
- **Plan for the weather.** Be sure you know what to expect. If it's supposed to be hot, bring lots of water so you stay hydrated. If it's supposed to rain, buy some cheap plastic ponchos, load everything up in plastic garbage bags, and grin and bear it.
- **Prepare for the day.** Students will likely be very excited — at the beginning — but the day will wear on them. You won't want to feel pressured to leave because they are antsy or complaining they are bored. Pack along a surprise activity pack or purchase a disposable camera for them to record the day's events. Don't forget snacks, too.



## A Cool Move-In Day Idea

Put together a surprise gift box for your college student and leave it in the room. Make sure you unpack it and place it somewhere where he/she won't find it until after you leave (under the bed or in a closet is a good bet).

Here are some fun things you could include:

- copy of a favorite childhood story book
- warm throw blanket (if you knit or crochet it, even better!)
- mix CD
- prerecorded video with messages from family and friends
- some fun magazines
- nice lotion or soap
- a drawing from a younger sibling or friend
- candy or another special treat from a hometown shop
- deck of cards
- a book of inspirational quotes
- family pictures
- stuffed animal or cozy pillow
- a blank journal or photo album

What you put in the box really doesn't matter — it's your thought and the surprise that counts! Even the most excited student will feel some pangs of homesickness after you leave. The box will be a welcome reminder that you care and love your student.

## FERPA Facts

What is FERPA anyway? FERPA, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, prevents university faculty and staff from disclosing the content of a student's educational records. There are some notable exceptions to this restriction: for instance, "directory" information can be disclosed, the parents of dependant students (under 24) can access their child's educational records, and students of any age can provide further access by executing a waiver. More information about FERPA is available in the Niagara University catalog, or the NU records office Web page, [www.niagara.edu/records/](http://www.niagara.edu/records/).

So what does this really mean?

Unless it's a health and safety emergency, your student is expected to take responsibility for his/her life. There are many people on campus who will help him/her out, but ultimately college is a time for learning many "life lessons." We expect students to take responsibility for:

- their behavioral choices
- respecting rules and policies
- personal integrity and care
- developing healthy study, eating and sleep habits
- seeking assistance when needed
- being a positive member of the campus community

Help your student out. Instead of jumping in to "fix" things when they happen, talk your student through the process of solving the problem himself/herself. Encourage him/her to use the resources at his/her disposal and seek assistance

## Struggles With Self-Esteem

Many experts suggest that self-esteem, or self-respect, is something that eludes many college students. Does your student believe in himself/herself? For those young people who don't believe in themselves, adjusting to college life can be really difficult. Since each year of college brings with it new challenges and dynamics, self-esteem issues can occur at the start of every academic year.

Some of the signs of a healthy self-esteem include:

- feeling competent in one's ability to cope with life's ever-changing situations.
- setting realistic short-range and long-range goals.
- trusting one's judgment, opinions and ideas in most matters.
- knowing where to get help when the need arises.
- feeling capable of making sound, responsible choices.
- handling change when it occurs.
- being open to both positive and negative feedback.
- being willing to take risks.
- maintaining a positive, energetic and assertive attitude (generally).

Experiencing a dip in self-esteem from time to time is normal. In fact, it's expected. These dips keep us grounded and help us continually evaluate who we are and where we are going in the future. If your student seems unusually anxious or negative during these next couple of months, you can help him/her adjust to the changes in by:

- offering praise, when appropriate. But make sure it's based in reality and not just an attempt to make him/her feel better. He/she will know if you don't really mean it.



- building on pre-existing strengths. Focusing on strengths rather than weaknesses is one sure way to improve your self-esteem. By remembering what he/she is good at, and trying to improve those skills even more, his/her competence — and confidence — will continue to grow.
- helping him/her to avoid making comparisons with others. There is no use in comparing ourselves to others. Encourage your student to focus on his/her efforts and making himself/herself the very best he/she can be.
- encouraging him/her to try new things. You never know when hidden talents will surface and college is just the place to discover them! There is no other time when your student will have such a wide array of opportunities right at his/her fingertips. Suggest he/she check out clubs, organizations and lectures that may be of interest.

## Keeping Up the Cash Flow

College is a great time to start practicing smart money habits. Many college students experience more freedom in college than they've ever had before. Unfortunately, in exercising this freedom, some go a little too far by mismanaging their funds or spending money they don't have.

Talk with your student about money before he/she heads off to school this semester. Here are some questions to get the conversation started:

- How much money are you planning on taking with you from your savings?
- What are you planning on spending your money on throughout the semester?
- Are you expecting to make any money this semester, and if so, approximately how much?
- Have you figured out a budget for yourself?
- What free on-campus opportunities can you take advantage of (i.e. prepaid fees for student activities or recreation facilities, meal plan options, phone service, etc.)?
- Are there ways in which we can help offset costs?

Having this conversation now will help your student begin thinking about the reality of his/her financial situation. Your student might make mistakes! But hopefully, a little bit of foresight and planning will help your student make smart money decisions this year.



## 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 as the school year gets started:

- Getting adjusted to college life for the first time (or once again) — feelings of loneliness and homesickness
- Worries about being able to handle academic pressures and schedule
- Anxiety about perceived restrictions of campus policies
- Roommate adjustments and conflicts
- Money management struggles
- Experimentation with drugs and alcohol
- International students may feel confusion, vulnerability and lack of advocacy
- Lack of social life and lots of questions about how to get involved in new activities

## Commuter Connections

Do you have a commuter student getting ready for the academic year? Commuting to campus brings with it unique challenges. Commuters juggle a great deal, including making a place for themselves academically and socially on campus and handling outside commitments such as family or work.

You can help your commuter student find his/her place this year by:

- **Encouraging him/her to get involved on campus.** Many commuter students just go to class and leave, without checking out campus activities or events. No one says that commuter students can't take advantage of these aspects of the campus community too.
- **Allowing him/her some flexibility with his schedule.** Things may come up. He/she may get invited to go with friends to the campus dining hall or to stay after class with a study group. Try not to worry if you don't see a lot of your student. Making campus connections is important.
- **Considering adapting household rules.** If your student lives at home, consider the possibility of adapting curfew, chore, visitor and meal rules so your student has more freedom.
- **Providing quiet, uninterrupted time for studying.** College is much more demanding than high school. Make sure your student has a comfortable and quiet place to study where he/she won't be interrupted. He/she may need to study a couple of hours a night.

## Interested Yet Not Intrusive

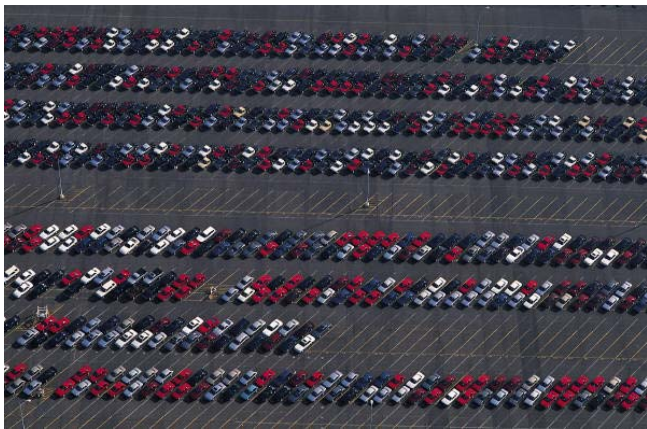
Just because your student is heading off to school, it doesn't mean that he/she no longer needs you. It's important for you to be involved — it's actually quite essential to his/her success!

The key is to be interested, without being too intrusive. You know the drill ... you've been the parent of a teenager for a number of years now!

Here's a quick recap, though, since we all need reminders every now and again:

- Don't make conversations feel like "quizzes."
- Ask your student what he/she is learning in class, instead of always focusing on grades.
- If your student mentions a new person's name, casually ask about that person ("So, Andrew is a friend from ... ?") rather than drilling for details.
- Balance your communication by not always making it about your student — share what's happening in your life, too.
- Don't call or e-mail constantly — there needs to be a healthy distance.
- Ask what your student is getting involved in and what interests his/her so far — share the enthusiasm!

Over the next few weeks, your student may rebuff your efforts to help or even just to talk about school. Don't worry ... it's probably just nerves. You can still be supportive by being ready to listen. Pay attention to cues — and use these openings wisely. Your student is sure to value and appreciate your efforts, even if he/she doesn't demonstrate it right away. Plus, you'll feel more confident as you send your student off to start another chapter in life.



## The Pros and Cons of Cars on Campus

This is a biggie. Having a car on campus is very important to some students. Everyone's family circumstances differ. If you are exploring the possibility of your student having a car on campus, consider the following possible pros and cons:

### Pros

- Increases student's ability to get to an off-campus job or internship.
- Student is able to travel home more frequently and easily.
- Going into town to buy supplies or groceries is less of a hassle.

- Student can get away from campus more easily to study or take a break.
- Opportunities to get involved in the community become more accessible.

### Cons

- The availability of convenience parking.
- Cost of gas remains high, and registration fees can be significant.
- Student may travel home too frequently and lose out on campus experiences.
- Having a car on campus significantly increases the opportunities for students to become distracted from their educational responsibilities.
- Costs associated with car upkeep, including oil changes and maintenance, can eat into student's meager funds.
- College students are considered "higher risk" drivers; therefore, insurance rates may increase and strict regulations may be placed on them as drivers.
- Students who have cars are often pressured by students who don't to drive them places or loan out their car

If the possibility exists for your student to have a car on campus, consider the pros and cons carefully. Many students go through their college years without a car on campus. Not having access to a car can help them learn to problem solve, be creative and explore public transportation in ways they never would have otherwise.