

# The Campus Link

A newsletter for parents & families

February 2007



## Inside this issue:

Where Should I Live Next Year? ..... 2

Beyond the "Freshman 15" ..... 2

Tuition Deduction for Higher Ed Expenses  
Retroactively Extended ..... 3

Financial Aid Renewal Reminder ..... 3

Reminding Students About Elevator Safety .. 4

Celebrating Valentine's Day Creatively .... 4

Seasonal Student Issues ..... 5

## How healthy is your student's dating life?

### Taking a Closer Look at Relationships

You may have heard your student talking about dating. Of course, parents want their child to experience happy, healthy dating experiences with others. While many relationships are positive and special, some, unfortunately, are not.

If you are concerned about the context of your student's relationships, your thoughts may be warranted. Recent statistics have shown that dating violence can take many forms, and that teens are not immune from abuse during casual or serious long-term relationships. While female teenagers report this problem more often, teen males do experience abuse in relationships as well.

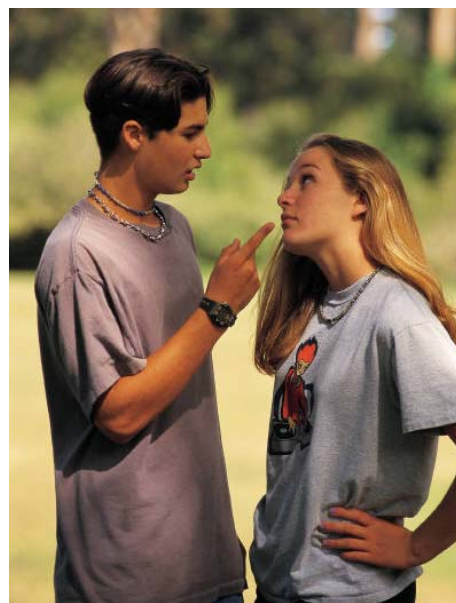
#### Verbal and Emotional Abuse

Sometimes, in their inexperience, young daters find behaviors flattering in their partners, rather than worrying that they could be signs of potential abuse. Not allowing someone to spend time with friends, calling someone constantly to check in, and offering "advice" about hair, makeup or clothes are all behaviors that could be considered "cute," but in reality could mean much more. Verbally and emotionally abusive behaviors have become so commonplace among today's youth dating population that it is difficult to recognize when they have become problematic.

Unfortunately, one of the biggest challenges for today's youth in recognizing dating violence is the confusion between the images of severe battering they see on TV and the actuality of what constitutes abuse. Verbal and emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and physical abuse are all forms of violence.

Some of the most common forms of verbal and emotional abuse are:

- name calling.
- intimidating looks.
- use of cell phones and pagers to maintain constant contact.
- monopolizing someone's time.
- isolation from friends and family.
- making a woman feel insecure.
- saying "I love you" too soon.
- making threats.
- manipulation.
- humiliating someone in public.



Some of the most common forms of sexual abuse are:

- unwanted touching and kissing.
- statutory rape.

## The time for 2007-'08 housing decisions is here!

### “Where Should I Live Next Year?”

It's time for students to determine their housing plans for next year. What on-campus options would they like to pursue? Is off-campus appealing? Help them work through important questions as part of this decision-making process:

- **Who?** Who should I live with? Is it healthy for my current roommate and I to keep rooming together? Do I want to try living with a group? What if I can't find anyone who wants to share a space with me? Will my friends and I remain friends if we live together?
- **Where?** If I live on campus next year, what environment would be best? Should I live in a campus apartment, a house in “the village,” or somewhere else? If I live off campus, should I live with my family? Or should I get a place with some friends? How far away from campus do I want to be? What does that mean transportation-wise? Will I still be able to be involved with activities that are important to me?
- **How?** How will I pay for my housing next year? Do I have enough for the deposit that's required now? Where will I store my belongings during the summer? Do I need to find separate housing for the summer? What will I do about a meal plan? Will I need to get a job?

These questions help students look at the big picture. It's not just about holing up with three of their best buddies in an off-campus apartment or a house on campus. It's about how this decision will impact other areas of their life, from involvement to finances to wellness ... and beyond.



You have probably heard the term “freshman 15” used to describe the amount of weight a first-year student typically gains while away at school. Recent research studies show, however, that first-year students are not gaining as much weight as previously thought.

### “Weight”-y Concerns Beyond the “Freshman 15”

The research shows that the “freshman 15” is more like 5-7 pounds, with an additional gain of 2-3 pounds during the sophomore year. While folks are happy to hear that the idea of the “freshman 15” is a myth, the trend of gradual weight gain could be even more problematic.

Two recent studies measured weight gain among male and female students: the first spanned the freshman year and the second included the sophomore year. In both studies, students were weighed four times during the year — at the beginning of the school year in September, at the end of the first semester in December, after the holiday break in January, and at the end of the year in May. Those who participated in the second study were also weighed at the end of their sophomore year.

The studies included more than 1,250 students. Results indicated that males tended to gain more weight than females,

### It's Your Student's Responsibility

Many on-campus lotteries occur between February and April. Encourage your student to read the materials distributed and ask questions now to learn about this process. They'll feel much more prepared if they do. It's up to your student to follow campus housing procedures in order to secure housing for next year. If he/she doesn't understand the process, there are people who can help such as RAs and residence hall directors. We are always ready to help in the housing office as well. Students can stop by or call us at (716) 286-8100. Students need to be proactive and informed in order to make the housing system work in their favor!

with much of that weight gained during the first semester. For those who participated in the study including the sophomore year, results indicated that males were an average 9.5 pounds heavier and females 9.2 pounds heavier than when they started college.

Researchers continue trying to determine the reasons for this weight gain. Some possible explanations include more drinking, more socializing, eating higher-fat and greater quantities of food in the cafeteria, and less physical activity.

If this trend continues, students will be at risk for developing serious health problems — no matter what the reasons are for the weight gain. You can help offset these concerns by educating your student about how to eat healthfully and take care of his/her body.

Source: “Freshman 15’ Really 5 or 7, but the Gains Don’t Stop” on [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com), Oct. 23, 2006.

## Important 2006 Federal Income Tax Information for Students and Parents

### Tuition Deduction for Higher Education Expenses Retroactively Extended

**Attention Parents:** This information has been sent to Niagara University by the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities and we are pleased to pass it along to you. As stated below, this is not official guidance and has not been reviewed by tax counsel. Please consult a trusted tax adviser for applicability to your particular tax situation.

Late in December, Congress extended legislation that allows for the deduction of higher education expenses in 2006 and 2007. However, by passing the bill so late in the year, there was little time to draft clear instructions for filing taxes for the 2006 tax year. We have outlined the following steps to help you take advantage of this important deduction.

#### Timing is Key

- The IRS will not process returns that claim the tuition deduction until **after Feb. 3, 2007**, so please wait until after that date if you plan on taking the deduction and have not yet filed.
- Paper returns already filed will be held until Feb. 3, and electronic returns filed prior to that date will be rejected and a new return will need to be submitted.
- A detailed description of filing instructions is available on the IRS Web site at [www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=165640,00.html](http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=165640,00.html).

#### Why Bother? What's it Worth to Me?

The tuition deduction is worth up to \$4,000 of college tuition and fees, and can be claimed by single taxpayers

earning \$65,000 or less, or married/joint filers earning \$130,000 or less.

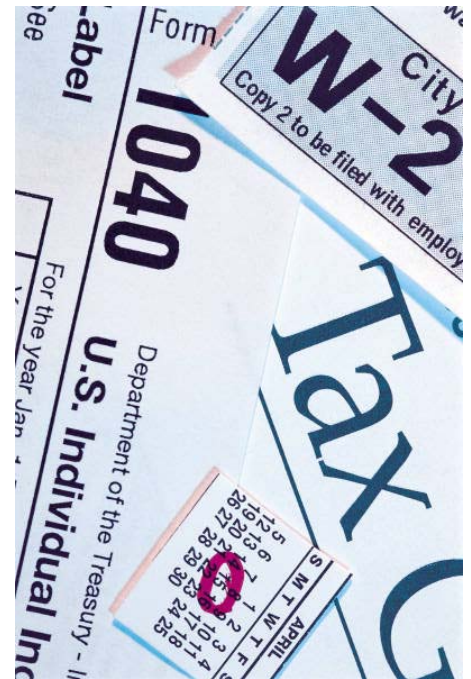
#### Where on the Form 1040 Can I Claim the Deduction?

The tuition deduction must be claimed on line 35 of the 1040, under the category of "domestic production activities." **You must put a "T" for tuition on the entry line.**

**Please note:** Your family may qualify to use either the Hope or the Lifetime Learning tax credits instead. Your tax adviser can tell your family which benefits you most, based upon your income and year in college. Both the Hope and Lifetime Learning tax credits appear on all 2006 tax forms, and were not affected by this late-December deduction change.

Different rules apply if you are claiming multiple deductions on the domestic production activity line. See the IRS Web site for detailed instructions.

**Note that this is not official guidance, and has not been reviewed by tax counsel. Please consult a trusted tax adviser for applicability to your particular tax situation.**



### Attention Parents of Returning Students: Financial Aid Renewal Reminder

The deadlines for reapplying for financial aid for the 2007-'08 academic year are fast approaching. A mailing containing this information was sent home to students in January. If your son or daughter has not yet reapplied for financial aid, please remind them that the renewal FAFSA should be filed by March 15 at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) and signed copies of parents' and students' 2006 federal and New York state tax returns should be mailed to Niagara's financial aid office by April 18. The Niagara University Application for Financial Aid should also be mailed to the financial aid office by April 18. Complete information including the Niagara application and the FAFSA Web site link is available at [www.niagara.edu/financialaid](http://www.niagara.edu/financialaid) or call the financial aid office at (716) 286-8686 if you need paper applications or further assistance.

#### Important Dates:

File FAFSA by **March 15**

Submit signed copies of parents' and students' **tax returns** to NU's financial aid office by **April 18**.

Submit **Niagara University Application for Financial Aid** to NU's financial aid office by **April 18**.

File **tax returns** claiming the tuition deduction **after Feb. 3**.

## Reminding Students About Elevator Safety

Many college and university residence halls are equipped with elevators. These elevators are sometimes misused by students oblivious to the safety concerns surrounding their operation. This past October, a residence hall elevator accident at Ohio State University resulted in the death of an 18-year-old student. This tragic situation occurred when the weight capacity of the elevator was exceeded and the car began to descend unexpectedly, reported Yahoo News (Oct. 24, 2006). The student was pinned while trying to climb out and died at the scene.

This accident serves as a strong reminder about elevator safety. You can utilize the following safety rules, compiled by the University of Arkansas, in conversation with your student:

- Don't overload an elevator. Check the elevator weight posted inside the car and step out if it's packed.
- Don't try to leave a moving elevator. The Ohio State student died when trying to escape.
- Don't try to force elevator doors open. This can cause an elevator to move.
- In an emergency, call for help. Use the emergency phone and then follow emergency personnel's instructions.
- Watch your step getting on and off an elevator. Make sure the car is level with the floor.
- Don't interfere with opening or closing doors. Let doors close.
- In case of fire, do not use an elevator. It could lose power and trap you inside a burning building.
- Never reach your hand out to stop a closing door.

In today's day and age, we can never be too careful. If your student has concerns about a campus elevator, the resident director or public safety can help. Encourage your student to contact these staff members to report mechanical errors or misuse by fellow



students during after-hour time periods.

Source: Mike Stiles, occupational safety coordinator for the University of Arkansas Office of Environmental Health and Safety, as quoted at <http://dailyheadlines.uark.edu/9627.htm>, Nov. 13, 2006.

## Celebrating Valentine's Day Creatively

Who says Valentine's Day is just for those who are dating or married? Valentine's Day is about love! You can show your love for your student this month by ...

- Sending a gift basket with your student's favorite treats from home.
- Making a CD mix with songs your student loves or songs from his/her childhood.
- Calling or writing to share some of your favorite stories from your student's childhood.
- Sending a fun "romantic" movie and some microwave popcorn, a pair of cute heart pajamas or a T-shirt, or cool room decor.
- Putting together a family newsletter dedicated to your student — have siblings and extended family members write "articles," submit fun pictures and more!
- Sending a creative e-card or monkey mail message (visit [www.careerbuilder.com/monk-e-mail](http://www.careerbuilder.com/monk-e-mail) for information on Monk-e-mail) or create and send a multimedia "photo story" using these directions — <http://technology.ninensn.com.au/article.aspx?id=153185>.



Some of the most common forms of physical abuse are:

- hitting, beating and pushing.
- restraining.
- roughhousing/play wrestling.

### What You Can Do

If you are concerned about your student, or your student expresses concern to you about a friend, trust your instincts. You can play a pivotal role in helping your student identify the characteristics of healthy versus unhealthy relationships. This is perhaps the most proactive action you can take.

Since you know your student well, you will be able to sense whether a direct or indirect approach will be best in talking about this tough topic. During your conversation, you might find the following helpful:

- Try to dialogue, rather than interrogate.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Reflect back on what you think you are hearing.
- Listen nonjudgmentally.
- Try to refrain from demonstrating negative body language.
- Offer resources, on campus and beyond, that could be helpful (i.e., residence life, wellness staff, the counseling center, an adviser or coach, campus security, campus ministry/interfaith center staff, hotlines, etc.).

Overall, remember that if your student opens up to you about issues he/she is experiencing or witnessing among peers, it's because your opinion is trusted. If necessary, contact campus security or dean of students to garner support. If, at any time, your student feels unsafe, he/she can always file a report with campus police.

*Resources: "But I Love Him," by Dr. Jill Murray, HarperCollins Publishers, 2000 National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center at [www.safeyouth.org](http://www.safeyouth.org).*



## Seasonal Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here's some things your student may be experiencing:

- Difficulty getting into study mode.
- Things become routine ...school finally becomes home.
- Missing family and friends at home, and friends who did not return to school.
- Not many social activities scheduled.
- Possible roommate changes.
- Renewed interest in classes.
- Resolve to do better academically.
- Cliques become stronger within residence hall communities.
- Cabin fever and burnout.
- Pressures to figure out living plans for next year as the room assignment process draws near.
- Valentine's Day depression if not dating.
- Vocational choice/internship search causes anxiety.
- Spring break planning underway.

### Dating Violence

Dr. Jill Murray, author of "But I Love Him," suggests that these factors contribute to teen dating violence:

- The need for peer approval.
- Gender-role expectations.
- Lack of experience in relationships.
- Little contact with adult resources.
- Less access to societal resources like medical attention and shelters.
- Barriers to gaining legal assistance.
- Substance abuse.

### How frequently does dating violence occur?

According to the Love Is Not Abuse organization, more often than not,

statistics underestimate the reality of the problem. One 2005 national survey found that:

- Nearly one in five teenage girls who have been in a relationship said a boyfriend had threatened violence or self-harm if presented with a break-up.
- Thirteen percent of teenage girls who said they have been in a relationship report being physically hurt or hit.
- More than one in four teenage girls in a relationship report enduring repeated verbal abuse.

*Source: [www.loveisnotabuse.com/statistics\\_abuseandteens.htm](http://www.loveisnotabuse.com/statistics_abuseandteens.htm)*