

The Campus Link

A newsletter for parents & families

October 2008



Inside this issue:

Depression and College Students 2
Beloit Mindset List for Class of 2012 .. 2
Helping Students Market Their Skills.. 3
Marketing Skills 3
On the Road to a New President 3
Quality Sleep: A Student Necessity 4
Seasonal Student Issues 4

The Study Abroad Possibility

Chances are that your student is hearing chatter about study abroad opportunities. Niagara University recognizes the value of diverse cultural and academic experiences and encourages all students to study abroad for a semester or summer session. This is sometimes a difficult decision for students. Should I go or should I stay? Make sure it's the right decision for your student by having him/her discuss opportunities with an academic adviser. Here are five great reasons for students to study abroad:

5. 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.
4. International experience helps students gain fluency in another language, as they are immersed in the culture. Living abroad can also help them satisfy college language requirements.
3. International experience is an impressive resume note, especially in today's competitive job market and global society.
2. 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 beliefs and values.

1. International experience offers a one-of-a-kind structured opportunity to explore a new country with their peers, while engaging from both an intellectual and a social perspective. Students return changed by the experience and often say it's the best thing they ever did.

For further information about NU's study-abroad programs, visit www.niagara.edu/sap. If your student is interested in studying abroad, he/she should contact Bernadette Brennen, assistant to the academic vice president/study abroad coordinator, 716-286-8360 or bmb@niagara.edu.



Top Study Abroad Destinations

Open Doors 2007, a report on international education published annually by the Institute of International Education, lists the 20 most popular destinations for U.S. students studying abroad as:

United Kingdom	Czech Republic
Italy	Japan
Spain	Greece
France	Argentina
Australia	Austria
Mexico	Chile
China	New Zealand
Germany	South Africa
Costa Rica	Brazil
Ireland	Ecuador

There's a growing interest in nontraditional destinations, plus the number of U.S. students studying abroad has increased by 8.5 percent.

Source: <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/>



October is Depression Education and Awareness Month

Depression and College Students

- Restlessness, irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders and chronic pain

Other Depressive Disorders

Dysthymia is a less severe type of depression. It involves long-term, chronic symptoms that can keep you from feeling good or functioning well. Many with dysthymia experience major depressive episodes at some point.

Bipolar Disorder is also called manic-depressive illness and is less prevalent. It involves cycling mood changes from severe highs (mania) to lows (depression). These mood switches are typically gradual but can occur in a rapid, dramatic manner. Mania may include:

- Abnormal or excessive elation
- Unusual irritability
- Decreased need for sleep
- Grandiose notions
- Increased talking
- Racing thoughts

- Increased sexual desire
- Markedly increased energy
- Poor judgment
- Inappropriate social behavior

Left untreated, mania may worsen to a psychotic state.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is characterized by periods of depression that accompany seasonal changes, usually in late fall and winter, although there is reverse SAD in the summer, too. In addition to symptoms of depression, daytime fatigue, over-sleeping, craving carbs and weight gain can occur. A decrease in light, either indoors or due to overcast days, can worsen symptoms.

There are plenty of professionals on campus available to help your student if he/she needs it. Encourage your student to reach out to a residence life professional, the counseling center staff, or a faculty member he/she trusts if he/she needs assistance. Caring folks are ready with a listening ear.

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health, www.nimh.nih.gov; Healthy Minds, www.healthyminds.org/collegestats.cfm.

Nearly half of all college students report feeling so depressed at some point in time that they have trouble functioning, according to the American Psychiatric Association. That's a whole lot of students. And they estimate that one out of four adults will experience a depressive episode by age 24.

Depression involves the body, mind and thoughts, impacting one's ability to sleep, study, work, eat, and enjoy life. It is more than feeling "down in the dumps" or "blue" for a few days. It's feeling "down" and "low" and "hopeless" for weeks at a time, with the inability to pull oneself together.

Consider talking with your student about the signs and symptoms of depression — and what to do.

Depression

Signs and symptoms include:

- Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" moods
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed, including sex
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Insomnia, early morning awakening or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight loss, or overeating and weight gain
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts

Beloit Mindset List for Class of 2012

Today's traditional-aged new students were born in 1990. And, as they do every year, Beloit College's Ron Nief, director of public affairs, and Tom McBride, a professor of the humanities and English, have created their Mindset List for the Class of 2012. They describe it as "an effort to identify the worldview of 18-year-olds in the fall of 2008." Here is a sampling:

- For these students, Jim Henson (of Muppet fame) has always been dead.
- GPS satellite navigation systems have always been available.
- Coke and Pepsi have always used recycled plastic bottles.

- Electronic filing of tax returns has always been an option.
- College grads have always been able to Teach for America.
- Schools have always been concerned about multiculturalism.
- Students have always been "Rocking the Vote."
- Caller ID has always been available on phones.
- Soft drink refills have always been free.
- There have always been charter schools.

Read the whole fascinating list at www.beloit.edu/mindset/.

Helping Students Market Their Skills

One of the toughest things for students to learn is how to market the skills and experiences they gained through high school and college. As they get ready to apply for jobs and internships, you can help them communicate all that they have to offer in a way that sells their gifts and talents.

Create a Personal Brand

One of the newest terms in the job search business is “personal brand.” Students can easily create their own brand by implementing a few of these tips:

- Know your passion. What makes you get out of bed every morning? What makes you smile?
- Develop your goals and dreams. You have to know where you want to go even if you don't know how you will get there yet.
- Be honest with yourself. Assess your strengths and areas for opportunities.
- Discover what is unique about you. Determine what you stand for and what makes you different.
- Be visible. Go above and beyond simply because you love what you are doing.
- Attitude is everything. Make sure yours is a positive one.
- Ask others for feedback. Ask your peers, mentors, supervisors, family,

friends, professors, etc. Get a wide range of feedback so you know what areas you need to focus on for personal and professional development.

Resume Reminders

Remind students to keep these basics in mind when creating their resume:

- Avoid college slang — don't make potential employers guess what you are talking about.
- You have done a lot in your time at college — but you aren't writing a memoir, you are compiling a resume. Try to limit your resume to one or two pages with the highlights of your experiences.
- Make sure you include any volunteer experiences that provided you with specific marketable skills.
- Ask a mentor, supervisor, or friend to review your resume for clarification, typos, and to ensure you didn't forget to include anything.

Also remind students to check any social networking sites they are involved with. Employers may check sites such as MySpace and Facebook to find out more about candidates. The picture a student paints on her resume could be tarnished if it isn't congruent with what an employer perceives from an online profile.

On the Road to a New President: Want to Find Out More?

Check out these Web sites to learn more about the candidates:

- Declare Yourself at www.declareyourself.com
- John McCain's Web site at www.jobnmccain.com
- Barack Obama's Web site at www.barackobama.com
- Vote Gopher at www.votegopher.com

Make an educated decision with these great resources. Consider talking with your student about the upcoming elections, too.



Marketing Skills

For many employers, a student's GPA or major is not as valuable as the transferable skills they will bring to an organization. Consider how these skills can be marketed on a resume:

- Student experience = Marketable skill
- Conducted presentations and workshops = Oral communication skills
- Created and coordinated programs and events = Event planning
- Managed a budget = Quantitative skills
- Participated in fundraising efforts = Sales experience
- Promoted programs on campus = Marketing and publicity experience
- Worked within a diverse group of people = Teamwork
- Managed peer staff = Supervision
- Completed annual reports = Assessment

You can help your student get into this type of mindset. Whether it's leadership involvement, participation in athletics, or just good quality academic work, there are plenty of skills to be shared!

Quality Sleep: A Student Necessity

Many of us are experiencing a sleep debt. According to the Centers for Disease Control, over one-quarter of the U.S. population report occasionally not getting enough sleep (approximately eight hours per night) while nearly 10 percent experience chronic insomnia. College students are not immune to this — in fact, this population very rarely gets all of the sleep they need.

Being overtired can cause:

- moodiness
- higher susceptibility to illness
- lack of energy
- stress
- anger
- motor vehicle and machinery-related accidents
- lack of concentration
- difficulty retaining new information

Lack of adequate sleep often causes students' grades to drop — sometimes dramatically. Staying up late to study and then getting up early in the morning to do it again are counter-effective strategies. And the practice of sleep-deprived all-nighters? That creates a sleep debt that can be tough to overcome.

Early to Rise CAN Make You Wise!

Morning people are more likely to get good grades than late risers, according to new research presented at the Associated Professional Sleep Societies' annual meeting (June 2008).

Often, students are unaware that their sleep deprivation can cause them serious problems — they may be so used to being consistently sleepy that they don't realize their lack of sleep is unhealthy or abnormal. Or they may just think it's "part of college life" because roommates, residence hall

noise, late-night socializing, and more regularly interrupt their sleep. You can help them see that this doesn't have to be the norm — good, quality sleep can go a long way in making them healthier, happier individuals.

Ways to Get Quality Sleep

The experts suggest a few simple tactics to help students increase the quality of their sleep:

- Get on a schedule. It is helpful to get to bed around the same time each night so your body gets used to a regular sleeping schedule.
- Don't make your bed a key study space. It comes highly recommended that activities like studying, reading, and any other type of work or stress-related activity **NOT** be done while in bed. This presents a problem for students who have only their beds and desk chairs in which to sit and complete their schoolwork. Urge students to utilize common areas (if they are quiet enough) and the library instead.
- Realize that a nightcap won't help the situation. A common misconception among students and non-students alike is that alcohol will help you sleep. Though drinking before bed may help some people fall asleep, it doesn't guarantee a quality night of sleep. Often, it causes the drinker to wake up several times during the night, which can be just as detrimental as only getting a few hours in the first place.
- Avoid watching the clock! Often, keeping an eye on your alarm clock can stress you out and make it even more difficult to fall asleep. Consider turning your clock around after you set your alarm, or putting it in a bedside drawer where you can hear your alarm in the morning but not see the time at night.
- Establish a relaxing routine (taking a shower, listening to music) to do about a half hour before bed.

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 very different from them.
 - Conflicts between friends — both new and old — can occur as students settle into 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" as students begin to feel more comfortable in their surroundings.
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- Consider using "white noise" to help you fall asleep (like a fan).
 - Try to make your bed as comfortable as possible.
 - Finish eating about two hours before going to bed.
 - Avoid exercise right before bed — a workout in the late afternoon is ideal, because it gives your body adequate time to cool down (and a dropping body temperature is what the brain associates with sleep).
- Talk with your student about sleep habits. She/he will likely brush you off and say it's impossible to get sleep in college. But, it isn't. It takes discipline and commitment for quality sleep to become the norm.
- Sources: *The Centers for Disease Control; www.sleepfoundation.org; www.sleepdeprivation.com*