

The Campus Link

A newsletter for parents & families

September 2006



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An Exciting Year Planned at Niagara

A festive-looking campus greeted Niagara University students as they arrived for the start of the 2006-'07 academic year. Nearly 50 banners proclaimed that this is the 150th anniversary of the university, a milestone that will be celebrated throughout the coming year in a variety of ways.



The celebration couldn't come at a better time. Our enrollment is strong and our residence halls are full. We have new degree programs in nursing, sports management, interdisciplinary studies, and in teaching English to speakers of other languages. Existing programs are expanding, thanks to the Ontario provincial government's consent that has allowed our College of Education to offer a new bachelor's degree program in teacher preparation at sites in the Toronto area.

We're also in the process of developing a new master plan for the campus. In addition to developing a new plan, we'll also be determining what key building and renovation projects will receive priority over the next five years. These are exciting developments that will have a profound impact on the future of the university.

One sign of our promising future continues to take shape daily as construction progresses on our new academic complex. At this time next year, you'll be able to tour the new \$18.65-million complex, which will serve as the new homes of the colleges of Business Administration and Education.

This is, indeed, a special time for the more than 700 students who are a part of our 150th freshman class. On Sept. 27, they will be able to join with the entire university community as we open our sesquicentennial celebration. There will be the opening Mass of the school year that day and a major convocation at which we will honor former presidents of the university. Four of them will be on hand, along with a very special guest, Cardinal Franc Rodé, a Vincentian from Slovenia.

On Nov. 21, we'll celebrate the actual birthday of the university. It was on that date in 1856 that the Seminary of Our Lady of Angels was established in Buffalo. The seminary, which was the predecessor of the university, moved here to Monteaugle Ridge 23 weeks later. Our celebration on Nov. 21 will include a birthday party for the campus community, the opening of an historical retrospective at the Castellani Art Museum on campus, and an international day of alumni prayer. A narrative history of the university's 150 years, written by Dr. John Stranges, a university professor and historian, will also be available.

Throughout the year, there will be a number of other special events, concluding with commencement in May. A lot of material will be available to read and to learn about the rich Catholic and Vincentian heritage of the university. I invite you to join in our celebration, to the extent you are able. As the parents of our students, you are a cherished part of the Niagara community.

Please contact me at jll@niagara.edu with any comments or concerns. You may also follow our anniversary celebration throughout the year by visiting www.niagara.edu/150.



The rhythm of the freshman year. Your student will be acclimating to the ebb and flow of life on campus while your rhythm will change somewhat, too. Authors Karen Levin Coburn and Madge Lawrence Treeger highlight “the rhythm of the freshman year” in their book, “Letting Go: A Parent’s Guide to Understanding the College Years” (2003). Here are some of the key points to be aware of during this first busy month:

- **The first few weeks involve a frenetic academic pace** as classes start, syllabi are interpreted, professors are sized up and schedules are finalized. This may involve “trying on” certain classes, talking things through with upperclassmen and advisers, and finally having to commit to a slate of courses.
- **Extracurricular life also kicks in** during those first few weeks as organizations try to recruit new students, events beckon their participation, and the social scene starts humming in the residence halls and beyond. This can be welcome overstimulation for some students while others get overwhelmed.
- **“Students’ reactions to school tend to be intense during these early weeks,”** say Coburn and Treeger.

What your new student may be experiencing during this first part of the semester

Swaying to the “Rhythm of the Freshman Year at Niagara”

“They either love it or hate it or alternate between the two extremes, sometimes in the same day, sometimes even during the same phone call home.”

- After three or four weeks on campus, **students start settling in**, realizing that this is a new “home” and that they’ve made a long-term commitment.
- Now that reality is settling in after those first exciting weeks, some **students may become homesick**. They’ll reach out to old friends, possibly visiting them, as they wonder if they’ll ever make such good friends on campus. This desire to connect is a grab at continuity during a time of big transitions.
- Sometimes **settling into a day-to-day rhythm** on campus can be comforting to students who were initially overwhelmed and homesick. It’s the start of them finding a place to belong.
- As classes cook along, **some students may become bored** by their classes. Others will have difficulty managing their time since they don’t have the same routine they did

last year. And some will study inefficiently, overwhelmed by what seems an insurmountable amount of work, leaving no time for play.

- Socially, **the honeymoon will soon be over** as roommates have their first squabbles and those “instant friends” from the beginning lose their novelty. First impressions pass and polite tolerance between strangers may give way to disagreements. Students will also start finding their place within the community by choosing groups to spend time with — while still trying to figure out where exactly they fit.

That’s the first half of the semester or so, in a nutshell, according to Coburn and Treeger. As you and your student adjust to the “rhythm of the freshman year,” recognize that not every student goes through every scenario listed above. Keep the lines of communication open and try to listen without being too much of a cheerleader. Students need encouragement, sure, yet they may also just need a listening ear as they learn to figure things out for themselves.

Going Home Too Soon

When your student is sounding homesick and lonely, a natural instinct is to invite them home. Yet, experts say that sticking it out for that first month on campus is key when it comes to students finding their place. It’s important for them to get involved with weekend activities throughout September, whether it’s a hayride program sponsored by their hall council or going to student activities. Involvement and engagement lead to a sense of belonging. Plus, sticking it out means they’ll eat in the dining hall, hang out with other students from class or the residence halls, and tune into the “rhythm” of their new campus life.

Join us for the 51st Annual NU Family Weekend Oct. 20-22 Family Weekend at Niagara University

A campus visit may be right around the corner if you're planning to attend Family Weekend this fall. Yet, it's not just about crab puffs at receptions and shaking hands. This is a real opportunity to connect with your student! Make the most of your family weekend by:

- **Trying New Things.** Participate in any of the following:
 - Casino Night and Prize Auction for chances at great prizes!
 - Brunch with members of Niagara's higher administration.
 - See Niagara Falls and the surrounding sights with a trip on the Niagara Scenic Trolley. This includes the opportunity to purchase special discount tickets for the Maid of the Mist!
 - Our feature event, the "150th Jubilee Dinner" on Saturday night. Great food and live entertainment featuring a family-friendly comedian!
 - The Eucharistic liturgy in our Alumni Hall Chapel.
- **Mingling & Meeting.** Attend brunch, talk with other parents, meet administrators and faculty... These folks are at your disposal during the weekend. Plus, you'll get a better feel for what campus life is about and who is available to your student.
- **Staying on Campus.** It might be tempting to head off campus away from the hub-bub, but participating on campus is how you and your students will likely feel most connected.
- **Ooh-ing and Aah-ing Instead of Huffing and Puffing.** Try to be upbeat and positive throughout the weekend. Comment on how good the dining hall food is instead of making "I can't BELIEVE you have to eat such slop" remarks. Compliment what your student has done to make her room look homey, how pretty the campus grounds look and more. Your student will be seeing campus through your eyes this weekend.
- **Listening to Your Student.** Listen as he tells you about the intramural team he joined or the bio lab he's really enjoying. Listen as she tells you about a group she'd like to join or how much she has connected with her RA. This is your time together to communicate face-to-face. Try to talk less and listen more — you just may pick up on some subtleties that don't come through via IM and phone calls.

Please feel free to call the campus activities office at 716-286-8510 with questions you may have. To download the brochure and registration form, go to: www.niagara.edu/cao. We hope you are able to join us at Family Weekend 2006!

Third annual effort happening this September National Preparedness Month

Being prepared is more than the Boy Scout motto — it's a good idea when it comes to emergencies. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is once again sponsoring National Preparedness Month this September to increase public awareness and to help people be better prepared for a variety of "what if?" scenarios.

Here are a few preparation tips from the National Preparedness Month Coalition that you can share with your student and other family/friends:

- **Get a Kit** — Gather supplies such as water, food, a battery-powered radio, a flashlight and a first aid kit that will allow you to survive for at least three days in an emergency.
- **Make a Plan** — Plan now for what you will do in an emergency. How will you communicate? Will you shelter in or evacuate?
- **Be Informed** — What specific threats could impact your community, from natural disasters to potential terrorist threats? And how should you respond? Learn about the emergency plans already established for your area at www.ready.gov so you have a place to start.
- **Get Involved** — Consider being trained in first aid and emergency response, and getting involved in preparing your community for emergencies. You can learn more through the Citizen Corps at www.citizen corps.gov.

At www.ready.gov, you can find a list of supplies for emergency kits, info and templates to create an emergency plan, and more.

Source: www.ready.gov/america/npml/.

NU Emergency and Disaster Plan

Niagara University is a community involving large numbers of individuals in a complex living and learning environment. We are committed to providing a safe campus environment and providing all necessary support and assistance to students, their families, faculty and staff. However, we realize that an emergency or disaster may occur within the NU community despite our best efforts; and that an effective and timely response is crucial to mitigate the effects of any incident. Information regarding the plan is available at www.niagara.edu/emergencyplan/. We encourage all students to talk with residence life staff and others about what they should do in case of emergency.



Chances are you've seen that commercial where the manly voice comes out of the young college student and the voice rattles on about all they've purchased or all they've done with money they found through using someone else's credit card. This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to identity theft in today's society. Identity thieves can virtually take over their victim's life — renting apartments, leasing cars, racking up bills and forcing their victims into years of trying to rectify their credit.

Identity theft is a growing concern that affects all age groups, all ethnicities and all socioeconomic levels — it does not discriminate. “Personal information is the new currency,” said U.S. Federal Trade Commission chairman Deborah Platt Majoras. “Consumers should protect their personal information as carefully as they protect their cash.”

Minimizing the Risk

As this risk grows, it's important for students — and others — to know how to protect themselves. The FTC has launched a national program to educate people on steps they can take to minimize their risk of becoming an identity theft victim. According to the program, the three keys to minimizing the risk are:

- 1. Deter:** Take steps to reduce your risk of ID theft by safeguarding your information.
- 2. Detect:** Monitor your personal financial accounts and billing statements.
- 3. Defend:** Act quickly when you suspect identity theft.

More specifically, here are some tips to share with your student:

- **Keep your purse/wallet in a safe place.**

Proactive steps for students

Reducing the Risk of Identity Theft

- Carry only the ID, credit and debit cards you need when going out. Don't carry your Social Security card.
- **Treat mail and trash carefully.** Shred sensitive documents, such as charge receipts, insurance forms, bank statements, etc., which you no longer need.
- **Order a free credit report** through www.annualcreditreport.com or 1-877-322-8228.
- **Review financial accounts and billing statements regularly.**
- **Place passwords on your phone, bank and credit card accounts.** But don't use easy-to-access info like your birth date, phone number, your mother's maiden name or a simple series of numbers.
- **Secure personal information,** especially if you share a room or have people going in and out.
- **Don't offer personal info** on the phone, via mail or on the Internet unless you've initiated the contact or know who you're dealing with. It's easy for thieves to pose as a “wolf in sheep's clothing.”
- **Never click on links sent in unsolicited e-mails;** instead, type in a Web address you know. Use firewalls, anti-spyware and anti-virus software to protect your

computer and keep them up-to-date. Visit OnGuardOnline.gov for more information.

- **Put outgoing mail in a post office box or take it to the post office** instead of tossing it in an unsecured mailbox. And remove your incoming mail in a timely manner.
- **Don't give out your Social Security number unless absolutely necessary.** Don't write it on personal checks. And if your school, state or health insurance company uses it as an identifier, ask if you can use another number instead.
- **Be cautious when responding to promotions** as thieves can create phony ones to get your info.
- **When ordering new checks, pick them up from the bank** instead of having them mailed to you.

Identity theft is a very real threat, even within the seemingly “safe” confines of a college or university campus. Help your student become more aware as he takes responsibility for his finances — and his reputation.

Sources: Federal Trade Commission: *Your National Resource About Identity Theft*, www.consumer.gov/idtheft/; “Deter-Detect-Defend: AvoID Theft” brochure, www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/idtheft/idth01.pdf

Suspect That Your Identity Has Been Stolen?

Head to the Federal Trade Commission's identity theft site available at www.consumer.gov/idtheft/ for step-by-step instructions on where to go and what to do. Plus, talk with your campus public safety department. Don't delay! And be alert to signs that require immediate attention:

- Bills that do not arrive as expected
- Unexpected credit cards or account statements
- Denials of credit for no apparent reason
- Calls or letters about purchases you did not make

Source: “Deter-Detect-Defend: AvoID Theft” brochure, www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/idtheft/idth01.pdf.