

Niagara University

The Campus Link

Niagara's Newsletter for Parents and Friends

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Beginning a New Chapter in the Relationship with Your Student



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The First Year at Niagara University

As the first year of your son or daughter's university experience approaches, it is almost certain that you are experiencing quite the range of emotions. You are likely excited for this change in their life: beginning a new academic career, making educational and career goals and moving toward personal independence. Concurrently, you are likely saddened by the changes that will now be occurring in your life: missing your child's presence at home daily, the change in their schedule, increased demands on them and the change of flow in your household. It is important to acknowledge and accept those changes in order to make your transition to your child entering university more manageable.

Communication:

Keep the lines of communication open. It might be a good idea to set certain times each week that you and your child will call each other. Of course, issues may arise that require more phone contact than initially determined and that is fine! Having those set times when you and your child know that is set aside for family time is both comforting and reassuring. If you are comfortable with email and Facebook, then certainly use them! Those can be great tools to make a quick hello without your student feeling overwhelmed by their schedule, responsibilities and remaining in contact with family



It is important to allow your student to develop as is relevant to them. As we mentioned during CARE, the parental transition from "dictator" to "consultant" is an important one. As a parent of a new university student, try to think of yourself as "letting your student grow" instead of "letting them go." This will ease your transition, as well as the transition of your student.

Spend some time on you:



Try to view this change as an opportunity to do a few (or for the brave – all) of the things you have put off for yourself because of your focus on your child. Finances may be a concern; however, renting a movie, taking a walk in the local park, or strolling through your neighborhood's art museum can go a long way in caring for yourself.

Many times, when a child leaves home, parents forget that they have the time to take care of themselves. This is an excellent opportunity to take for self nurturing or nurturing the relationship you have with your significant other.

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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:

- ◆ Exploration and acknowledgement of personal values
- ◆ Long distance relationship strain
- ◆ Feelings of loneliness and homesickness may increase
- ◆ A desire to feel connected to campus
- ◆ Roommate adjustments
- ◆ Experimentation with alcohol and other drugs
- ◆ Getting acclimated to a new type of academics
- ◆ Figuring out how to get organized and manage time
- ◆ Searching for a sense of belonging



Beginning a New Chapter (Continued from Page 1)

Don't forget to visit:

This counts for parents visiting your student at college, as well as your child visiting home. Family Weekend (October 21-21, 2011) or any day/weekend trip to visit will be welcomed by your student. Plan with them on when the best time to visit will be. Keep in mind; it may be difficult for your student to visit with you the weekend before mid-term evaluations. In addition, arriving a bit early to pick up your student before a break is a great time to visit. It can be a short get-a-way for you, but also provide some extra time with your first year student.

Your student will also be visiting you at home! This is a very exciting time for your child. Talk with your son or daughter about their visits home. Undoubtedly, they will want to visit friends, their former high school and engage in similar social activities in which they engage at college. It will be important for your student to know that spending time with the family is also an important activity and why it is important. Discuss expectations about using the car, being home and meals. Your students habits will likely change and discussing this upfront will diminish the likelihood of engaging in family debates once your student is home.



Resources:

Do not forget that Niagara University is a great resource for you and your student. There are many offices on campus that are happy to help you and

your student in your first year transition experience.

Student Outreach and Support: <http://www.niagara.edu/sos/> (716.286.8303)

Campus Activities: <http://www.niagara.edu/cao/> (716.286.8510)

Campus Ministry: <http://www.niagara.edu/ministry/> (716.286.8400)

Campus Safety: <http://www.niagara.edu/safety/> (716.286.8111)

Counseling Services: <http://www.niagara.edu/counseling/> (716.286-8536)

Kiernan Recreation Center: <http://www.niagara.edu/kiernan-recreation-center/> (716.286.8055)

MISA: <http://www.niagara.edu/misa/> (716.286.8405)

Residence Life: <http://www.niagara.edu/residence-life/> (716.286.8100)

Student Health Services: <http://www.niagara.edu/healthcenter/> (716.286.8390)

Academic Support: <http://www.niagara.edu/oas/> (716.286.8072)

Veterans' Services: <http://www.niagara.edu/veterans> (716.286.8341)

In addition, any office on campus will be willing to provide support to parents and students. If you have a particular concern for your student, contacting any of the above offices regarding your concern can start you on your journey to assist your student in being a successful and productive member of the Niagara University Community!

Offering Advice on Academic Organization

It's important for students to remember that their number one priority is their academic life on campus. As they begin juggling pressures related to roommates, friends, classes, athletic commitments, family and more, a gentle reminder may help keep them on track.

Once students get off track, they quickly find themselves in a place where they can no longer offer attention to anything other than their books. Getting—and keeping—themselves organized from the beginning will help them avoid academic crunches this year. Encourage your student to:

- **Make a Schedule:** It may sound very basic, but completing a schedule grid will help your student map out the weekly events and manage time. Plus, it will keep track academic obligations, while balancing them around other demands. Utilizing NU's Student Planner and Handbook will help to stay organized. Students can also download a weekly schedule planner at <http://www.niagara.edu/assets/Uploads/Weekly-Planner.pdf>
- **Designate a Study Space:** Determining a study space early on will help your student develop positive study habits from the beginning. Encourage your student to select a comfortable space with proper lighting. The space, whether in your student's room or elsewhere, should be a place free from distractions. Creating a "study sack" or something similar, where your



student keeps all of study supplies in one place.

- **Set Boundaries:** From the very beginning of the semester, your student should set boundaries between his/her peers. Maintaining personal space will ensure enough uninterrupted time in the week to accomplish her/his studies.
- **Commuter students** should review the semester activities early on and build their work schedules around classes and activities so they get connected to the campus and other students.

Help your student get—and stay—academically organized with these simple tips.

NU Calendars

Below is a link to Niagara's Fall and Spring calendars

<http://www.niagara.edu/academic-calendars/>

Fostering Self-Responsibility

Going away to college can be a big transition for some students. Here are seven ways you can foster self-responsibility in your student:

1. **Help Your Student Make His/Her Own Decisions.** When you say, “Well, what do you think you should do?” during a phone conversation, you’re offering your support but, instead of jumping in with foolproof advice, you’re helping your student figure out the own answer.
2. **Trust Your Student.** And let her/him know that you do. Your student will feel more confident, supported and able to stand up for what she/he believes as a result.
3. **Communicate without Over Communicating.** Check in with each other a few times each week via email or phone. However, don’t feel like you need to touch base every day—there needs to be some space in between so your student can gain a sense of independence.
4. **Don’t Solve Everything.** The tendency to jump in and “take care of things” is natural. Yet, students need to start learning to do these things for themselves. So, try not to fix things—instead, ask questions like “What steps have you taken so far?” to help your student take the lead and take self-responsibility.
5. **Stay Involved.** Just because your student goes off to college doesn’t mean she/he stops needing your input. Your involvement is essential to success. Be interested, ask questions without prying too much and listen to what she/he has to say.
6. **Let Go a Bit.** You can’t know where your student is every hour of the day—nor should you have to keep track of that. Instead of quizzing ask more general questions like “Have you gone anyplace interesting lately?” or “How have you been spending your free time?” so he/she can share without feeling put on the spot.
7. **Keep your student in the Loop.** Even though your student is building a new life at college, it doesn’t mean she/he should be cut off from what’s happening back home. Share a balance of news to keep the connection strong—and to make sure your student focuses on other people as well.

It’s a time for transition as you and your student determine how to stay connected. Keep the lines of communication open, let mistakes be made and encourage your student to make decisions. It’s all part of the process, especially in this important first month..

Facebook: To Connect or Not to Connect?

Determining whether or not to join Facebook is a tough question for parents. Although more and more adults are using Facebook to stay connected to peers, learn about sales and events happening at favorite shops, and post photos for family and friends, some hesitate for fear of what their children may think. This can be an especially tough struggle for parents of college students.

Do you really want to know how your student is spending the weekend? Or how much time is spent on Facebook, instead of socially with others face-to-face or hitting the books? Here are some pros and cons to consider as you make the decision for yourself:



Pros of Connecting to Your Student on Facebook:

- Facebook offers a quick and easy way to stay connected with your student. You can see pictures of friends, view campus through his/her eyes, and easily communicate back and forth. Plus, you can post pics and news from home for your student to see too.
- You can get a sense of how your student is faring at school. Is he/she meeting and connecting with new people? Is he/she posting information about cool things that have happened or places he/she is planning on going?
- You can relate to your student when she/he talks about friends. You’ll see posts and pics on Facebook that will put a name and a face to the conversation.
- Many students set up their Facebook accounts to receive notifications on their phones or other Mobile Internet Devices. So, if you need to quickly get in touch with your student, posting a message on Facebook offers an additional means of quick communication.
- Your presence on your student’s “friend” list may help keep her/him and peers in check. This can help maintain a good impression on Facebook as she/he gets ready for job searching and more.

Cons of Connecting with Your Student on Facebook:

- Your student might feel like you are curtailing privacy.
- You’ll see what your student and friends are really up to. There’s no escaping photos and comments—you’ll know how weekend time is spent, how much or how little studying is being done, and more than you ever wanted to know about the collegiate experience.
- You might misinterpret something that is posted on Facebook, leading you to worry unnecessarily.
- It takes time to keep up with Facebook. Maintaining a Facebook account is one more thing to add to your already busy schedule.
- Connecting on Facebook could take the place of connecting on the phone. And there’s nothing like hearing your student’s voice and knowing she/he is safe and happy.

Talk with your student about your Facebook connection. See how she/he feels about it. You might be surprised! And if you do connect, be careful about what you post. Just as your student will be staying in check, you should be careful about what you post for all the world to see too. Embarrassing your student certainly won’t help the cause for staying connected.

Help Your Student Steer Clear of Sexting

An increasingly popular form of communication is “sexting,” or sending sexually explicit images and messages to another person. Although many say sexting is done just for fun, it can come with a hefty felony charge, believe it or not. Students have sent inappropriate photos of their peers to others via cell phone or email, causing extensive emotional and psychological damage to those involved. And in some cases, students have actually sent nude photos of themselves to their peers. There have been cases where sexting has resulted in individuals—even teenagers—being charged with possession or distribution of child pornography and being required to register as a sex offender.

You can share the following tips with your student regarding sexting:

- ◆ Remember that there are no guarantees that the text and photos you share will remain private. This can cause you serious problems when trying to apply for jobs, scholarships and more.
- ◆ Keep in mind that nothing sent is truly anonymous. And even if the sender decides to delete a message or post, others may already have passed it on or posted it.
- ◆ Don't take—or send—any pictures of anyone with your phone or webcam without their permission. This is about a person's right to privacy—and you having good manners.
- ◆ Use your common sense. If the information you are about to send was about you, would you want the world to see it or know about it? If not, don't share it!
- ◆ Know that sending nude photos of a minor is illegal. Even teenagers have been charged with producing or distributing child pornography—simply as a result of forwarding these types of photos to friends or classmates. And, keeping them on your phone is a crime too—it's called possession.
- ◆ If you know who sent the photo, let the person know that doing so is against the law. Although confronting the friend might be tough, you'll actually be doing the person a huge favor. Think about what will happen if the police get involved.

Laws about sexting vary from state to state, but it's important to have this conversation with your student regardless. Should your student be concerned about him/herself or others, encourage him/her to talk with a campus professional such as a student affairs staff member, a counselor, a faculty advisor or a member of campus safety.

Sources: www.connectsafely.org; www.netsmartz.org/index.aspx



Students and Sexting

Nearly four out of five college students have received sexually explicit images via text messaging, and more than half have received sexually suggestive messages, according to a recent study of 204 students conducted by University of Rhode Island faculty. Who's sending these messages? Two-thirds of the group surveyed admitted to sending racy emails and texts. Researchers say the results support larger technological trends.

An Apple a Day...



It's National Fruit and Veggies Month! For many students, eating enough fruits and veggies can be the toughest part of maintaining their daily diet. Busy schedules that don't always allow for a visit to the cafeteria, trying to grab items that can be eaten on the go and newfound freedom all play into the mix. Gently remind your student about the importance of consuming enough fruits and veggies. And if she/he is struggling with doing so, offer some tips and suggestions such as these:

- Stick some small plastic bags in your backpack and grab some veggies from the salad bar on your way out of the dining hall. Pay for them and then eat them for a quick snack later or the next day.
- Melt a chocolate bar in the common area microwave and dip some fruit into it for a tasty late-night snack. Or dip some veggies into peanut butter.
- Eat a salad with dinner.
- When you order a sandwich for breakfast or lunch, pick at least two veggies to include on it. Eat them on the side if you don't like them on the actual sandwich.

Fueling up with healthy foods now will help your student in fighting off colds and sickness later on.



ACADEMIC AFFAIRS FAQs

1. When will my son or daughter be assigned an academic adviser? When will they meet?

Your student met initially with an academic adviser at the summer CARE program. This adviser is a fully qualified faculty or staff member who assisted your student with registration for the first semester of classes. This adviser may or may not be your son or daughter's permanent academic adviser. Every student will be assigned a permanent academic adviser by the time the fall semester begins. It is the



students' responsibility to schedule regular meetings with their advisers to discuss their programs of study and degree enhancement opportunities i.e. double majors, minors, internships, study abroad. If their adviser does not appear on their myNU page in the fall, they should contact the department secretary.

2. What is the procedure for dropping or adding a course?

At the beginning of the semester, the university runs a drop/add period. This is a time for students to adjust their schedules. If students meet with their academic advisers and they unlock their record, they can adjust their schedules online until the day before school starts. If students need to change their schedules after registering, they should contact their advisers to discuss changes. Once classes begin, if students wish to change only the time of a course (course section), they can go directly to the records office and process the change. If students are changing courses, they must have a drop/add form signed by their adviser during the established drop/add period. If students drop a class after the established drop/add period, they will receive a "W" on their transcript. Students may withdraw from classes up to the 10th week of the semester. After the 10th week, students must have permission to drop from the instructor and verifications that they are passing at the time of the drop. Nonattendance will result in an F grade. Students within block tuition, who remain full time (a minimum of 12 semester hours), will experience no financial change. Students who drop below full time may experience a change in their scholarships and financial aid and should discuss their situation with a member of the financial aid office. Student-athletes should also check with the athletics office, and ROTC students must check with their commanding officer and Veteran's must check with the Veteran's Coordinator before dropping below 12 hours. International students should check with Records to determine how this would affect their I-20 status.

3. What is a QPA? How is my son's or daughter's QPA calculated?

A QPA is a student's Quality Point Average, a unit of measure that signifies a student's academic standing. To calculate a student's QPA, you must consider each course taken at Niagara University for which the student has received A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D- or F. Convert this letter grade to the corresponding quality points given in the chart on below. For each course, multiply the number of quality points by the number of semester hours assigned to that course. Compute the quality point average by adding these products and dividing by the total number of semester hours for which a student received grades of A+ to F. Courses for which a student received I (Incomplete), W (Withdrawn), N (Audit), S (Satisfactory), U (Unsatisfactory), or R (Retake) are not computed in the QPA.

GRADE QUALITY POINTS

A+ 4.33, A 4.0, A- 3.67, B+ 3.33, B 3.0, B- 2.67, C+ 2.33, C 2.0, C- 1.67, D+ 1.33, D 1.0, D- .67, F 0.0

4. How will my son or daughter's workload be different from what it was in high school? Will my student's academic responsibilities change?

Yes, your son's or daughter's academic workload will be very different in college than it was in high school. Students are required to take more individual responsibility for their academic achievement in college. Faculty members are required to provide a syllabus at the beginning of each semester outlining the students' responsibilities for each class. They may not remind students again of assignments or due dates. Additionally, reading assignments are handled differently in college. Reading assignments are typically more extensive, and some may not be discussed or mentioned again until the material is tested on an exam. Time management and prioritizing tasks also becomes increasingly important in college. Students should expect to learn at a faster pace than in high school. Homework assignments may be less regular than in high school, yet may call for a larger amount of work.

5. What do I do if my son or daughter decides to change his or her major?

Many students begin their college careers with definite goals. However, after looking at the number of disciplines within the university and taking a variety of courses, they may discover a new interest or talent. The process of adding or changing a major should be initiated through a meeting with the student's academic adviser. Some majors allow the flexibility for double majors and/or minors.

Students can change their majors once they have established themselves in college. Nationally, 60 percent - 70 percent of all students do change their major at least once. They are going through a significant transitional period which often sparks new interests and ideas. It is very important for you as a parent to make sure to keep the lines of communication open.

If your student does decide to change a major, discuss the reasons that he/she is making that change. Also, try to understand that your student's strengths, skills and abilities may be better suited to another major. It is important that the students are happy with their choice of major and that the strengths, interests and abilities of each student are in line with the requirements for that major. Students who select majors outside their interests and abilities often experience academic difficulties. For assistance with career decision making or career exploration, refer your son or daughter to the Office of Career Services, <http://www.niagara.edu/career-services> or the Academic Exploration Program, <http://www.niagara.edu/aep-faqs/>.

6. How and when does my son or daughter register for classes?

Initially, students register for classes through the summer CARE program. After the first semester, students will register at times that are set by a rotating alphabetical system by class level. Students should pick up a course schedule at the records office. They are responsible for scheduling a meeting with their academic advisers before their registration period arrives to gain access to Web registration. They enroll for classes by filling out the appropriate registration card, which is approved and signed by their adviser. Then they may register online or report to the record's office to secure their class schedule. Students with outstanding accounts should contact the student accounts office before registering. Before the semester starts, remind your son or daughter to check his/her myNU page for his/her schedule to see if there are any room/day/time changes or course cancellations. They also have the ability to edit their profile and update demographic information, i.e. address changes



7. How many credits should my son or daughter take each semester to graduate on time?

Students must take a minimum of 120 credits or an average of 15 credits per semester in order to graduate in four years. Several programs may have additional requirements (refer to the undergraduate catalog). Students are billed block tuition for 12-18 semester hours. Additional hours are billed as over-load tuition.

8. Will I be contacted if my student gets into academic difficulty? Where can students go for help if they need it?

Contrary to what you may assume, you will not be notified if your student gets into academic difficulty. Confidentiality of students' university records is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a federal regulation enacted in 1974 and amended in 1975. Commonly known as the Buckley Amendment, FERPA provides that parents of dependent children (under age 24), as defined by current IRS guidelines, may see the records, although the other rights provided under FERPA, for instance, the right to contest the content of education records, are limited to the student. Niagara

University also provides for further control of access to student records through an online form, which students are required to fill out on MyNU. In accordance with FERPA, all university correspondence regarding grades, academic honors and/or discipline will be sent DIRECTLY to your son or daughter at the official, permanent mailing address that he/she lists with the university. Additionally, advisers cannot discuss specifics with parents about a student's progress or about any problems that may arise without the student's written consent or the documentation mentioned above. Please keep in mind that, although advisers are not at liberty to divulge confidential information to parents, they are always happy to discuss general university policies. Additional information about FERPA is available on the Web at www.niagara.edu/righttoknow/ferpa.htm.

Deficient midterm grades (C-s, Ds and Fs) are available to students online through their myNU account. Academic deans and advisers have them as well. As part of the educational process, the university expects students to assume responsibility for their own academic progress along with the appropriate communication of that progress with their parents. An open relationship between you and your son or daughter is essential so that he/she will feel free to share both achievements and disappointments with you.

The first six weeks on campus are the most critical time for freshmen. At Niagara, we understand that sometimes students need assistance while they are adjusting to their increased levels of responsibility. To assist students in this manner, the Early Advantage Program (EAP) was developed through the Office of Academic Support. The program is part of an initiative that targets students experiencing academic difficulty. The EAP allows faculty to bring students in difficulty to the attention of staff. As a result of that contact, the student will be asked to attend a one-on-one meeting to discuss his or her progress in the course. The EAP staff will then refer students to services of the Office of Academic Support or make a referral to a more appropriate office.

9. What are the services of the Office of Academic Support?

Among the services of the OAS are:

- ◆ Remedial/developmental course work in reading, writing and math.
- ◆ Free peer tutoring in many introductory courses offered at Niagara: Students who want extra assistance with a course can complete a tutor request form in person at the OAS office in Seton Hall or online at http://apps.niagara.edu/forms/request_tutor.php. All tutors are undergraduate students who have and peer support in the Writing Center to assist students with all aspects of the writing process, from understanding assignment requirements, to planning, organizing and revising a draft for papers for courses across the curriculum.
- ◆ Support for students with documented disabilities who request accommodations in order to access their course content.
- ◆ Monitoring of student progress through the Divisional Support Program (DSP), a
- ◆ program for students who have been enrolled in DSP during the admissions process.

10. What about final exams?

Call your son or daughter and wish them well before exams and be sure they know the scheduled time and location of their exams, since exams are often held in a different location and during a different time than the regularly scheduled class. Exam schedules are available on the Web at <http://www.niagara.edu/exam-schedule/>.

11. What if your son or daughter needs verification of enrollment?

You may need to report student enrollment to your health insurer or employer. Enrollment verification can be done only when school begins. The form should be turned into the records office. It will be processed as soon as classes begin and mailed directly (or faxed if requested) to the organization. If a form has not been provided, the records office has a generic request for verification of enrollment form which can be found at <http://www.niagara.edu/enrollment-verification>. This should be completed by the student, with the full address (or fax number) of the organization making the request. Once again, these will be processed as soon as classes begin.

12. Where can students go when they're confused about policies and procedures or experiencing difficulty resolving an issue?



The Office of Student Outreach and Support is dedicated to assisting students in any challenges they should encounter at Niagara University. We guide students toward solving problems and foster awareness of university services and resources and there's always lifesavers available in the office!

<http://www.niagara.edu/sos/>

