Welcome to Niagara University

The first year in college offers new challenges, experiences and opportunities. As a Niagara freshman, your student joined a community founded in 1856 in the Catholic and Vincentian tradition with a mission to educate and enrich the lives of our students through values-based education. We've developed a first-year program that helps maximize his/her experience and support his/her successful pursuit of a degree.

First-Year Programs
www.niagara.edu/firstyearniagara/First_Year_Programs.htm

- CARE: www.niagara.edu/care/
Niagara University first-year students should register to attend one of the three CARE sessions (Collegiate Advisement Registration Experience) July 14 and 15, July 17 and 18, or July 21 and 22. The CARE program gives students and parents the opportunity to take care of university business while on campus. At least one parent is strongly encouraged to attend. Students will be tested, advised and registered for fall classes, and will experience a variety of social activities in the evening. Last year, 695 parents and 714 students attended the CARE program.

Check-in for CARE is July 14, 17 and 21 (the first day of the CARE session you signed up for) and will be located in the Seton Hall lounge from 7–8 a.m. Student testing starts promptly at 9 a.m. on day one of the CARE session.

Students will be housed on campus and should plan to stay overnight. Even students planning to commute from home are encouraged to stay overnight. Bring a large fan because the residence halls are not air-conditioned.

- New Student Convocation: www.niagara.edu/cao/New%20Student%20Convocation.htm
The convocation is the official welcoming ceremony of new students and parents to the university community. It conveys the importance of the academic endeavor and the commitment of the faculty to the intellectual development of students. During the convocation, students will also experience Niagara University’s strong sense of community derived from a Catholic education and the values of St. Vincent de Paul. The convocation is on Friday, Aug. 22, at 4 p.m. in the Gallagher Center Gymnasium.

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- **New Student Orientation: [www.niagara.edu/cao/orientation.htm](http://www.niagara.edu/cao/orientation.htm)**
  The Niagara University New Student Orientation program supports the first-year experience by aiding new students in their transition to university life on campus. The primary goal for the NSO is to provide various opportunities for new students to learn about college from current student leaders that serve as orientation assistants, Niagara faculty and staff, and the campus community. Students are introduced to the true spirit of Niagara, including that of school spirit and the Vincentian values through community service opportunities. Many of the programs within NSO are designed specifically to help new students connect with each other so they can begin to make friends and be comfortable with their surroundings.

- **Academics**
  - **General Education: [www.niagara.edu/mission/gened.htm](http://www.niagara.edu/mission/gened.htm)**
    Everything in life is interconnected. A liberal arts education prepares students for a cross section of careers and life experiences. Niagara University specifically designed its general education courses to develop critical thinking, information literacy, and communication skills; ability to work effectively with diverse groups; and values and ethical standards. Students will develop these skills and values throughout nine foundation courses, 11 distribution courses, major courses and electives, and extracurricular activities.
  - **Learn and Serve: [www.niagara.edu/learnserve/](http://www.niagara.edu/learnserve/)**
    Learn and Serve Niagara promotes service learning by addressing the needs of the community, while also enhancing our students’ sense of social responsibility through direct service. The goal is to connect the academic content of the university classroom with service to the community, while engaging in thoughtful reflection over the semester. Learn and Serve Niagara places students in local schools and agencies for approximately 15-20 hours each semester. Students will also have the opportunity to earn service hours at one-day events sponsored by the Niagara University Community Action program. These one-day events can include neighborhood clean-ups, working with the developmentally disabled or visiting area nursing homes. Students will likely be placed via the Learn and Serve office at least once during their NU experience, but we hope to see them each and every semester!
  - **Recreation, wellness and club sports: [www.niagara.edu/kiernancenter/](http://www.niagara.edu/kiernancenter/)**
    Niagara’s intramural and recreation program provides opportunities for students to constructively use their leisure time and improve both physically and emotionally. Kiernan Center staff offer approximately 25 intramural, fitness and instructional programs based on student interest.
    The university’s club sports program offers students an alternative to intercollegiate athletics and intramural sports. All clubs are self-administered by elected student officers and are supported by membership dues, fundraising activities, donor contributions, and sponsorships. If the university doesn’t have a club sport of interest, it’s very easy to start one. Students can stop by the Kiernan Recreation Center to get more information on the recreational, wellness and club sport programs available.

The freshman year at Niagara University is a life-altering experience that connects your student to NU and lays the groundwork for his/her success. The total university community uses best practices and works together to welcome, educate and engage students, helping them develop clarity in who they are and what their expectations are, in relation to other students, their family, and to the university and its mission. Now is the time to dream and work to make those dreams a reality.

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**First-Year Niagara is a wonderful program that gives incoming freshmen an opportunity to ask questions concerning any aspect of student life. It allows time for students to become more familiar with the campus and it also attempts to provide insight into what students can come to expect from the academic portion of the college experience and strategies to be successful.”**

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**First-Year Niagara (NUS 102 – Freshman Symposium): [www.niagara.edu/sa/new.htm](http://www.niagara.edu/sa/new.htm)**

First-Year Niagara is a seminar course required of all freshmen that introduces students to the academic culture of Niagara University. Students learn about the university mission, academic honesty, time management, campus resources, and activities. They are introduced to the process of career exploration and self-evaluation. The seminar engages students in activities on campus, including service learning, that encourage them to become committed members of the community. By the end of this course, students develop bonds with other freshmen and become integrated in student life.
What it Means to Be an NU student

A student committee summarized what it means to be an NU student and wrote the NU Student Creed. It is recited at the New Student Convocation each year:

We, new students entering Niagara University as its 149th class, affirm our commitment to excellence in higher education.

We promise to challenge ourselves, both inside and outside the classroom, and to uphold the highest standards of scholarship and integrity.

Before Your Student Heads to College

Chances are that your “To Do” list is feeling large these days, as you and your student prepare for the first day of school. To help you along, here are a few things to take into consideration:

- **Figure Out Insurance.** Will your student’s property be covered by your homeowner’s policy or some other policy if he/she is living on campus? Will renters insurance provide adequate off-campus coverage? And what about health insurance — will your major medical policy provide coverage, no matter where your student is going to school, or is it limited geographically? Is a policy available through the institution? And how will you handle auto insurance if a car is in the picture?

- **Determine Room/House Amenities.** Do campus mattresses require extra-long sheets? What is your student’s roommate bringing? How big is the room? And what is allowed/not allowed?

- **Consider Travel Options.** How will your student get to school — and what about his/her belongings? Will you drive, borrow/rent a vehicle, mail things ahead of time or take some other direction?

- **Get Dates Squared Away Now.** When is move-in day? Family Weekend? Winter break? Thanksgiving break?

- **Think About Technology.** If your student has a cell phone, will the plan/coverage remain the same in a new location? How will you handle computer considerations, especially if you have one family computer that is being shared or none at all? What computer facilities are available on campus? Does the campus bookstore offer deals on laptops?

- **Figure Out Finances.** What kind of bank account will your student use — one from back home or through a bank in the Niagara area? What expectations do both of you have regarding finances? What about ATM availability? Does he/she have a credit or debit card and, if so, how will it be used?

- **Follow Up with Orientation and/or Admissions.** Is there any lingering paperwork from orientation or admissions?

These are just a few important considerations to keep in mind as you help your student prepare for college. Best of luck during this busy, yet exciting time!

New Student Issues

Students preparing to dive into college for the first time may have a lot of things on their minds, such as:

- Sadness about leaving friends and family at home.
- Concern about issues of “belonging” and finding a comfortable place on campus.
- Excitement coupled with anxiety about making a fresh start.
- Worry about academics being “hard” and beyond their abilities.
- Thoughts about what type of first impression they’ll make.
- Concern about roommates and housing (if living on campus).
- Decisions about what to pack and what to leave at home.
- Thoughts about relationships — transitioning into a long-distance relationship or ending a current relationship.
- Worry about finances — wondering if they’ll be able to make enough money during the summer and how much they’ll need to work once school begins.
Stuff Sorting and Preparing to Pack

It’s a good idea to make the acquisition of “college stuff” an ongoing summer project rather than scrambling in August. It’s also smart to consider the realities of space when your student gets to college. Yes, students want all of their familiar, comfortable items around, yet need to pick and choose — or rotate items during trips home — in order to avoid a crowded, cramped room.

For instance, consider furniture. Your student will be provided with the necessities within the residence hall room. To augment this, maybe a large couch isn’t such a good idea! Instead, bring along two large floor pillows (that can be stashed on the bed when not in use), a video game chair that sits on the floor, a beanbag or one of those inflatable chairs. They all provide comfort while not eating up valuable room space.

Also help your student think about the wardrobe. Those bulky sweaters that provide such a reprieve in December will only serve to take up closet and dresser space during the warmer months. So, can he/she pick up winter clothing during a break period instead? Or can it be mailed? Another option is making sure there is space to stash a suitcase full of winter clothes below his/her bed, out of the way until needed.

When it comes to books and papers, help your student remember that he/she will be acquiring a lot of them when purchasing class materials at the campus bookstore. The shelves and files will fill up quickly! It’s okay to bring along some favorite books and papers from home — just not too many. And maybe that huge dictionary isn’t the most practical … it could be time to opt for the medium-size version instead.

An area where many students get hung up is “personal stuff,” from framed photos to graduation gifts to knick-knacks with meaning. There is no way that all of this can fit in one residence hall room, plus, when there’s too much, it can make things seem less special. Encourage your student to pick and choose carefully — and to leave things that are really valuable at home.

The great stuff sort-through is part of the packing process. Encourage your student to start simple, without excessive stuff. Things can always be added later. This way prevents frustration and you won’t be left with a car full of items to truck back home once moving day is over!

Avoid Duplicates

Once your student knows his/her roommate(s), it’s important for them to communicate before they arrive on campus. That way, they can avoid duplicate rugs, TVs, stereos, fridges and more.

Take Stock of Belongings

Before your student heads to college, it’s a good idea to take stock of belongings, says the Missouri Department of Insurance. Estimate and itemize the dollar value of the items your student brings to Niagara University. Then, encourage him/her to update this list annually and keep it in a safe place, such as a safe deposit box or at your house.

Thinking ahead to those “what if” scenarios where students’ belongings can be compromised may not feel great, yet it can help you and your student be proactive while adding to your peace of mind. And that can be priceless!

Source: Missouri Department of Insurance, [http://insurance.mo.gov](http://insurance.mo.gov).

Plan a Send-Off before the Last Minute

Family and friends will likely want to send your student off to college with good wishes. However, the week or two before he/she leaves can be hectic! So, consider planning your send-offs now, before things get crazy, whether it’s a family dinner, a visit to grandparents or a picnic at the local park.

And realize that it’ll be tough to get “quality time” during move-in day because there are so many other competing priorities. Students can feel stressed and stretched during this time — anything you can do to alleviate that will be welcomed!
As your child prepares to leave for college, saying good-bye is difficult for both those leaving and those being left behind, even siblings. Sibling relationships can be enduring, and a sense of loss can be felt when an older sibling heads off to college.

Reconnecting with Children Still at Home

Multiple changes are happening for the college sibling, and similarly, the children left behind are experiencing change in a newly constructed family unit. Consider how you can:

Anticipate the new “family order”
- The middle child or younger child will now take on the role of the oldest in the family.
- Resources such as transportation, bedroom space, computer, etc., may need to be reallocated appropriately among those still at home.
- This is the time to give special attention and support to the child/children still at home.

Staying Connected with the College Sibling

If a sibling is feeling lonely or confused about his/her new perceived role in the family, there are a variety of ways that parents can help those children still at home stay connected with an older sibling at college.

Be careful not to send a “guilt trip”
- It is easy to try to “make” an older sibling spend time with a younger sibling, but allowing the reconnection to happen naturally will lead to a long-term renewed relationship.
- Be careful not to make a returning college student feel guilty for wanting to spend time with friends, bringing new college friends home, or needing alone time, rather than spending time with family or siblings.

Family Transition Tip

Help a sibling prepare a college care package.

Snail mail is always fun to get, so encourage siblings to write each other regularly.

Plan a campus visit
- Family Weekend
- Sibling Weekend
- Homecoming
- Athletic Events

Family Reconfiguration When College Student Arrives Home

A homecoming will require adjustments on everyone’s part.

- Younger siblings experience mixed emotions and may need support from parents if they feel that a returning college student is monopolizing family time and resources.
- Younger siblings may be confused by perceived and real changes in their college sibling. Once able to talk about everything and anything, siblings have led different lives over the past few months and may need to become reacquainted.
- The middle or youngest sibling has become comfortable with his/her role as the “oldest,” and will need to adjust to the adapted family hierarchy once again.

Changing family dynamics are inevitable when a child leaves for college. Consider sibling adjustments, too, as your family gets used to a new way of being.

Family Transition Tip

Once a sibling leaves for college, give siblings still at home a journal where they can write feelings, fears and questions about missing their sibling. Use the journal as an opportunity to discuss this family transition with the sibling left behind.

Plan family gatherings
- Plan a dinner out for just family when the college student comes home to visit.
- Explore a new city by meeting halfway between home and college for a day.
- Have the younger sibling(s) and college sibling(s) collaboratively plan a family weekend getaway.

Virtual connection
- Plan weekly phone calls for younger siblings to talk with their older sibling.
- Provide access to e-mail for siblings back home.

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