Transitioning to College

August is a time of both excitement and uncertainty, as new students begin their first semester of college. The transition to college life requires students to adjust to living in a new place and sharing living space with a roommate, meeting new people and forming new friendships, while meeting new academic expectations. It is quite common for new students to feel overwhelmed when facing so much change, and to have some feelings of doubt or anxiety about their ability to be successful in college. Everyone is feeling this way to some degree, and with time and some experience at FGCU, things will fall into place.

When asked, most new students will say that the best part of being in college is the freedom to manage their own lives and make their own choices and decisions, but with this freedom comes the tremendous responsibility for dealing with the outcomes of those decisions on their own. This can be a difficult emotional adjustment, as students come to understand what it means to be on their own, while coping with the outcomes of decisions that (in hindsight) may not have been the wisest. Once they realize that they have the emotional strength to handle these challenges, however, feelings of doubt are quickly replaced with a newfound sense of pride and maturity!

Homesickness

During the first few months of the semester, you might hear your student say that it has been hard to meet new people and form new friendships and that they miss their friends and family. It is quite common for incoming students to want to spend many of their weekends at home and some individuals find it hard to return to campus afterward. Feelings of homesickness are normal; when faced with so much that is new and different in their lives, new students often miss the familiar pace and rhythm of the life they used to have as they adapt to a whole new set of social, academic and personal expectations. While it is important to allow your student to adjust to college life at her/his own pace, spending too many weekends at home can limit their “bonding time” with their peers on campus, and exacerbate the very problem they are trying to solve.

Encourage your student to stay on campus for several weekends and to take part in campus activities that will help him/her meet new people and feel more at home in the residence hall. It takes time, but most students begin to feel more comfortable as they gain experience with college life!

Time Management & Study Habits

The college classroom is quite different than it was in high school; attendance isn’t always required, class isn’t held every day, and students are exposed to new and different ideas in lectures and discussions that will challenge previously held beliefs. Now that they can decide for themselves if they will attend class and complete assignments (even when they are not due for credit), it’s very easy to decide to skip class or let the reading and homework sit for another day, especially when there are so many other fun things to do on campus! It is important, however, for new students to create a daily routine early in the semester...
that includes attending classes, completing required assignments, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle that includes regular exercise, sleep, and social activities. Excellent time management is the key to success!

As students receive their first grades on assignments and quizzes, they often realize that a change in their study habits is necessary; the study strategies that got them strong grades in high school will not get them the same grades in college. Instructors expect students to take full responsibility for their own learning and their own success, and students cannot be passive and wait for their professor to ask them if they need help after doing poorly on an assignment or exam.

**How Parents & Family Members Can Help:**

- It is important to maintain open lines of communication. Listen, and provide reassurance and support.
- Remind your student that it takes time to adjust...but it will happen!
- Encourage your student to attend campus activities, especially those offered during the first few weeks of classes.
- Students living on campus should get to know their Resident Assistant (RA). This individual can be a great source of information, advice, and support for new students.
- Remind your student that the keys to academic success include regular class attendance, active participation in class discussions, and meetings with instructors during office hours.
- If your student’s birthday will not be celebrated at home, a surprise package and/or phone call are always appreciated!

**Important Dates:**

- Aug 18 - Fall classes begin
- Aug 18 - Late registration begins
- Aug 22 - Deadline for dropping/adding courses (100% refund)
- Aug 22 - Tuition payment due by 5:00pm
- Aug 25 - Cancellation for non-payment begins
- Sep 1 - Labor Day (University closed)
- Sep 12 - Last day to withdraw from ALL CLASSES (25% refund)
- Sep 15 - Remind your students to check their holds on Gulfline

**Important Announcements:**

- **My Student Body** – If your student is a freshman under 21, please remind them to complete the “Essentials Course” of MyStudentBody.com. This is an FGCU freshmen requirement and the course must be passed before they can register for spring semester classes. For more information, please visit [www.fgcu.edu/mystudentbody](http://www.fgcu.edu/mystudentbody).
- **Eagle Family Weekend** – Eagle Family Weekend will take place October 24-26, 2014 and registration is now available!

Visit our website at [http://studentservices.fgcu.edu/NewStudentPrograms/familyweekend.html](http://studentservices.fgcu.edu/NewStudentPrograms/familyweekend.html) to view our tentative schedule and to register for the weekend. Registration is $50 per adult, and $20 per FGCU student and child under 18. Be sure to check the website regularly for updates about the weekend. We hope to see you back in October!
- **First Year Advising** – If your student needs assistance with their course schedule or if they have questions about classes, encourage them to see a First Year Advisor. First Year Advisors will be available for walk-ins during the first week of the fall semester (August 18-22) in our two office locations: 4001 Eagle Hall (M-Th, 8:00 am-7:00 pm; F, 8:00 am-5:00 pm) and 229 McTarnagham Hall (M-F, 8:00 am-5:00 pm).

Helpful Links for Parents and Family Members:

- [Campus Recreation](#)
- [Center for Academic Achievement](#)
- [Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)](#)
- [First Year Advising](#)
- [Office of Student Involvement](#)