



Parenting College Students: How Can I Help?

Discussing common concerns early in your student's college career can help your student have more realistic expectations about his/her experience. Students whose reasonable expectations are met tend to stay in college and be more satisfied with their experience in college.

Listening and Discussing Problems

Be empathetic and listen to your student. Sometimes your student will want only to feel as if you understand what her/his concerns are.

Work with your student to assess the problem. Ask questions and help your student define what her/his problem is.

Brainstorm possible solutions and resources. Often first-year student feel they are alone, and that there is nothing that can be done to fix their problems.

Encourage action. Many of students' problems involve other people: professors, roommates, new friends, romantic partners, and others. Talking with someone about a problem is difficult, and it becomes more so the longer a problem is left unresolved. You may role-play conversations with your student to help him/her, but insist that the STUDENT try to resolve issues him/herself. You may suggest your student wait 24 hours before making important decisions. Ask your student what s/he has done to try to rectify the situation. Remind him/her of resources available (see next page).

Weigh possible solutions. Help your student see the positive and negative consequences of their choices and help them to be realistic.

Select a plan. Allow your student to choose a solution that s/he feels is appropriate for the problem.

Continue to be empathetic. Your student will want to share his/her success in resolving the problem or the disappointment that it didn't work out. Success and failure is part of the maturing process, and your student will have more success than disappointment.

Common First-Year Student Concerns

Relationships: Students will have complex feelings about missing life-long friends, family members, romantic partners, and others while feeling excitement about their new relationships. Students are surprised how fast their new friends become so important to them. Solutions: Listen, e-mail, phone, share stories with new and old friends, RA's and campus resources.

Loneliness: It is common for students to feel alone at some point. First-year students at different points believe that their peers are making the transition to college without any problems, and that no one else is having any difficulty. The ironic thing is that one thing they have in common is thinking they are the only one having trouble adjusting. Solutions: Identify a friend to share her/his concerns, talk with your RA, Residence Hall Director, or other campus resources such as counselors, Pathways Peers, Spiritual Director, campus pastors.

Roommate: Living with a roommate in a residence hall with bathrooms shared by many is a new experience for everyone. The majority of roommates live well together, but it is expected that even the best roommates will have a few problems. Solutions: Complete a roommate contract, revisit the roommate contract, go to the RA and RHD.

Decisions: The residence hall policies value students' rights and their responsibility for building a positive community where learning occurs. It is common for students to struggle with their freedom and with the consequences of their choices. Students will make choices about their use of alcohol, drugs, their relationships, and how they choose to use their time. Solutions: Talk with RA's, use campus judicial process and campus resources.

Financial: Students will have to budget their money and their meal plans. Most are not aware of what the cost of daily living is or how to live within a budget. Credit cards are easily available and can lead many students into serious financial trouble. Solutions: Learn about budgets, discuss potential financial problems, discuss expectations about how to handle expenses.

Environment: The College is different than your students' previous environments. Simple things in your student's environment, such as how to use the phones or how and where to park, are new. Students struggle with their sense of competency because they are in a new and challenging environment.

Solutions: Remember past success in solving problems, listen, identify peers in similar situations, talk with upper-class students and campus resources.

Academic: The academic expectations are different than what your student experienced in high school. Students must also learn how to manage their studies with less structure. Students will often experience grades that are lower than what they earned in high school. Solutions: Listen, encourage students to get to know their advisors, talk with professors, attend programs on study skills, visit the Pathways Center, the Writing/Reading/Speaking Lab, attend Supplemental Instruction sessions, identify peers in similar situations, form study groups, talk with upper-class students.

Campus Resources

At Wartburg College, we have many faculty, staff, and students ready and eager to assist your student should the need arise.

Resident Assistant (RA): An undergraduate staff member who lives in the residence hall. The RA's are trained to be aware of common student concerns, solutions, and resources to help students. Ask your student about his/her RA. Is your student participating in activities the RA organizes?

Academic Resource Centers (ARC): Clinton and Centennial Halls have study rooms staffed several evenings a week by upper-class students who completed Pathways Center training. These students can offer assistance on study skills and time management.

Residence Hall Directors (RHD): A full-time professional staff member trained in student development. The RHD's work with the RA's first to resolve students' problems and, in some cases, work directly with the students.

Student Life Office: Located in the Saemann Student Center, this office is home to the Vice President for Student Life/Dean of Students and the Associate Dean of Students/Director of Residential Life.

Counseling Services: An on-campus office staffed with mental health professionals who provide confidential assistance to students free of charge. Counseling Services is located in the Pathways Center.

The Pathways Center: The Pathways Center coordinates academic and support services for students including one-on-one help with study skills and time management, the Writing/Reading/Speaking Lab, academic advising (especially for students exploring major options), Supplemental Instruction (study sessions), Testing Services, Career Services and Vocational Discernment, Mentoring, and the First-Year and Senior-Year Experiences.

Noah Health Clinic: A physician's assistant and registered nurse assist students when they are not feeling well and when they have medical concerns

Information Desk: A resource for campus phone numbers and information.

Diversity Programs: Provides support and programming for American ethnic students and the campus community.

Campus Ministry: Wartburg has an active campus ministry program that includes several faith-based organizations. The campus pastor and director of church relations work to coordinate three weekday chapel services, Sunday worship, and Eucharist services each week.

International Student Programs: Provides services to international students and seeks to promote understanding and global awareness through campus, intercollegiate, and community programs.

Financial Aid: This office provides financial counseling, scholarship listings, and information on available financial assistance programs and on-campus student employment.

Center for Community Engagement: Staff, including the internship coordinator, the community outreach coordinator, and the schools partnership coordinator, help students get engaged in many forms of experiential education, community service, service-learning, and credit and non-credit internships.

For additional resources and details, please refer to the *Student Handbook*.

Informal Resources

Family: You will continue to be a resource for your student. Draw on past successes and allow the room for your relationship to change with your student.

Peers: Old friends and new friends will be addressing similar issues and generating solutions.