

RANDOLPH-MACON WOMAN'S COLLEGE

April 2007

Seasonal 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 spring:

- Some students lose their motivation for the final push
- Spring fever hits and problems arise as students become restless
- Anticipating the end of the year
- Frustration and confusion develop because of class registration
- Papers and exams are piling up
- Summer job panic
- Feeling like they are no longer accountable for their actions – may turn to vandalism
- Sexual assault increases
- Concerns about moving home for the summer

Helping Students Handle the Emotions & Decisions During This Time of Year Senior Send-offs

Senior celebrations and graduation countdowns are beginning to kick into high gear. While many of these involve good, clean, safe fun, others may involve risky drinking behaviors.

Shifting Traditions

This concern has caused one school in New Jersey to put a stop to the tradition of seniors visiting their old freshman residences and partying with alcohol, reported the *Star Ledger*. This year, during the three-night celebration, no alcohol will be allowed in the residence halls.

Misbehavior by seniors in previous years, along with recommendations from a school alcohol summit made last year, led to this decision. Many students and faculty members believe the death of a new student nearly one year ago, found in a residence hall trash chute after a night of drinking and partying, could also have impacted the decision.

Connecting with Your Student

So, talk with your student about the campus celebrations being planned. Even if he isn't a senior, he may be participating with friends who are set to graduate. Some things to help him consider include:

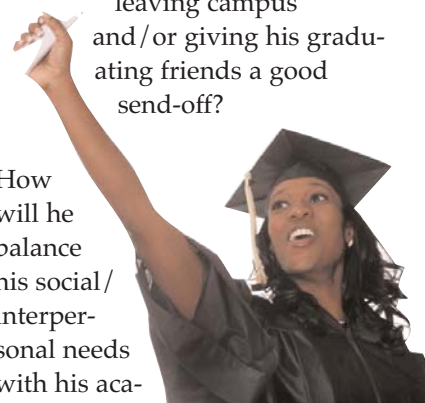
"This is an emotional time for students who are graduating or anticipating the departure of good friends."

- ▲ What does he want this next month or so of school to include?
- ▲ How will he feel good about leaving campus and/or giving his graduating friends a good send-off?

- ▲ How will he balance his social/interpersonal needs with his academic/organizational/job commitments?

- ▲ What will help him really feel like he has closure?
- ▲ If alcohol is in the mix within some celebrations, how is he going to make responsible, healthy decisions for himself?

You can't be there to make decisions for your student. What you can do, though, is to help him consider the bigger picture beyond "graduation parties." Talk with him about intent, his feelings, decision-making and more. This is an emotional time for students who are graduating or anticipating the departure of good friends. Your care and concern can help make it a bit easier—and a good deal safer.



Is your student getting enough shut-eye?

Sleep Issues Among Today's Students

Students often find themselves pushed beyond their limits. Overwhelming amounts of academic, work, personal and co-curricular responsibilities can impact their daily sleep patterns.

Many college students underestimate the need for a good night's sleep. It is very easy to fall into a pattern of poor sleeping habits yet students are often unaware that their sleep deprivation (which is usually self-inflicted) can cause them serious problems. They may be so used to being consistently sleepy that they don't realize their lack of sleep is unhealthy or abnormal.

You can help them become more knowledgeable about the role adequate sleep plays in their college success. The following quiz can help.

True or False:

1. Most young adults require 6-8 hours of sleep per night.
T F

Impact of Sleep Deprivation

According to www.sleep-deprivation.com, 47 million American adults—almost a quarter of the population—do not get enough sleep. Getting enough sleep is important, as being overtired can cause:

- ✓ Moodiness
- ✓ Higher susceptibility to illness
- ✓ Lack of energy
- ✓ Stress
- ✓ Anger
- ✓ Lack of concentration
- ✓ Difficulty retaining new information

Because of these effects, lack of adequate sleep often causes students' grades to drop. Staying up late to study and then getting up early in the morning to do it again are counter-effective strategies that can become a senseless cycle.

2. Getting adequate amounts of sleep helps prepare people for the next day's challenges.
T F

3. Eating chocolate or other sugary foods makes falling asleep more difficult.
T F

4. Taking naps is a good way to offset getting too little sleep at night.
T F

5. Sleeping pills and other sleep aids improve sleep quality.
T F



6. Sleep loss is linked to an increased risk of mental illness (such as depression) and other illnesses (such as colds and flu).
T F

7. Trading sleep time for study time will increase your ability to be successful academically.
T F

For some tips on helping your student get quality sleep, see page three.

Resources: National Sleep Foundation at www.sleepfoundation.org; University of Michigan Health Service at www.uhs.umich.edu/wellness/index.html

Answer Key

1. **False:** Most young adults require 7-9 hours of sleep per night in order to remain healthy.
2. **True:** Sleep is necessary to maintain your circadian rhythms (the light-dependent 24-hour cycle that regulates body and mind), restore your body functions, and strengthen your immune system. All of these things help prepare you for the following day.
3. **True:** Chocolate and other sugary foods do make falling asleep more difficult. If you are hungry close to bedtime, eat a light carbohydrate or dairy snack instead. In small quantities, eating something light can sometimes help you fall asleep. Have you heard the notion that a bottle of milk puts a baby to sleep? The same can work for adults.
4. **False:** Taking a nap is not recommended because it reduces the amount of time a person sleeps at night. If necessary, take your nap early in the day and for no more than 20-30 minutes.
5. **False:** Sleeping pills and other sleep aids actually reduce sleep quality. The U.S. Food & Drug Administration does not regulate products classified as dietary supplements (such as melatonin). Therefore, their strength and quality are not guaranteed.
6. **True:** In college students, depression is two times more common than in the general population, affecting nearly 20% of students. Researchers believe that lack of sleep contributes to this high rate. Additionally, inadequate amounts of sleep cause increased susceptibility to illnesses such as colds and flu.
7. **False:** Many college students make the mistake of staying up late or pulling all-nighters to prepare for an exam or to complete an assignment. In reality, not getting enough sleep makes it more difficult for them to concentrate; process, analyze, and retain information; and manage stress.



Developing a Personal Brand

One of the newest terms used in the job search business is “personal brand.” Employers are looking for high-quality talent who know how to “sell” themselves in a positive and productive manner. Consider discussing this concept with your student.



Creating a Personal Brand

There are many ways for your student to create a personal brand, such as:

- **Know your passion.** What makes you get out of bed every morning? What makes you smile in your school and work environment?
- **Develop your goals and**

dreams. You have to know where you want to go even if you don’t know how you will get there yet. Dream Big!

- **Be honest with yourself.** Assess your strengths and areas for opportunities.
- **Discover what is unique about you.** Determine what you stand for and what makes you different.
- **Be visible.** Go above and beyond simply because you love what you are doing.
- **Attitude is everything...** make sure yours is a positive one.
- **Ask others for feedback.** Ask your peers, mentors, supervisors, family, friends, professors, etc. Get a wide range of feedback

so you know what areas you need to focus on for personal and professional development.

Adapted from a PaperClip Communications article by Brenda Andrews, Disney College & CareerStart Education Programs Manager, Disney University, Disneyland Resort

The Elevator Speech

Encourage your student to create an “elevator speech.” This is a 30-second introduction of who she is, what her interests/goals are, and the desire to make a connection with someone who could assist in her career growth.

An elevator speech can be used if your student is in an elevator with someone who could have an impact on her career; someone she simply wants to introduce herself to, share a few goals with, and ask for 30 minutes of time to discuss her career history and the skills needed to be successful in the desired field.

Stretches to Stay Healthy at the Computer

Since students will be spending *much* time at the computer during the next month or so, finishing projects and papers, encourage them to do some healthy stretching during their breaks.

A few stretches to try include:

- Extend arms and move wrists in a circular motion, clockwise and counterclockwise
- With arm extended and hand palm up, gently use the other hand to stretch fingers of the extended hand toward the floor. Perform on both sides.
- Give yourself a hug reaching hands all the way to the shoulder blades
- Rotate your body all the way to the right, then left
- Stand up and take a walk or march in place
- Be sure to stay hydrated! Muscles need to be hydrated in order to work properly and avoid injury.

Sources: American Occupational Therapy Association at www.aota.org, www.kidsource.com, www.kidshealth.org

Quality Sleep

Experts suggest a few simple tactics to help students increase the quality of their sleep.

- ▲ Get on a regular schedule.
- ▲ Don’t make your bed a key study space.
- ▲ Don’t drink alcohol before bed as it can interrupt a good night’s sleep.
- ▲ Avoid watching the clock.
- ▲ Establish a relaxing routine about a half hour before bed.

- ▲ Consider using “white noise” to help fall asleep (like a fan).
- ▲ Try to make your bed as comfortable as possible.
- ▲ Finish eating about two hours before bed.
- ▲ Avoid exercise right before bed.

For more information on the importance of sleep, see the article on page two.

Sources: The Centers for Disease Control; www.sleepfoundation.org; www.sleep-deprivation.com

Connecting Over the April Calendar

During this next month or two of school, your student may be in a mad dash to finish things up. However, hearing from you via mail, email or phone can help her calm down a bit and put things in perspective. Here are a few April events that you can tap into when connecting with your student:

April is National Kite Month. Send your student a simple plastic kite in a poster tube with the suggestion that he "Go fly a kite!"



April 4, 1926 is the birthday of poet and author **Maya Angelou**. Find a favorite saying or two and email them to your student. We can all use a dose of inspiration now and then.

April 6, 1992 is when **Barney, that big purple dinosaur, debuted**. Hard to believe it's been 15 years. Does your student have any memories of Barney? Share a giggle over the phone.

April 13 is **Friday the 13th** this year. Wish your student good luck by sending a box of Lucky Charms cereal!

April 15-21 is **National Library Week**. Have someone take a photo of you posing with your student's favorite childhood book and then email it to her. Or send her a copy of the actual book that she just couldn't get enough of when she was wee.

April 16-22, 2007 is **Astronomy Week**. Send your student *The Klutz Guide to Backyard Stars* or some sort of star chart. Then, encourage him to get outside and look to the sky, if even for a few minutes, to clear his head. Or he can hold a simple star party on the lawn with some friends.

April 16-22 is **National Wildlife Week**. Send your student a picture of her favorite animal that she can tape to her computer. Or adopt an animal in her name.

April 22 is **Earth Day**. Let your student know about some environmen-

tally conscious practices that your family has started using at home. Send him a canvas or mesh bag to use next time at the grocery store, instead of plastic. Or encourage him to visit www.earthday.net for more tips and ideas.

Putting Summer Plans in Place

As your student determines what the summer will hold, there are some things you can do to help:

- **Ask What She's Interested In.** What does it mean to "have a worthwhile summer" in your student's eyes? Ask her! Seeing what's important to her will help you put her goals first instead of imposing your own.
- **What About Classes?** Is your student planning to take a class or two this summer? Discuss the pros and cons.
- **Direct Him to Career Services.** The good folks in this office can help him look for summer jobs, internships and more. They won't get the job for him—that's up to him! Yet, they'll provide support and resources throughout the process.
- **Put Out Some Feelers.** It's not your job to "fix" the summer plans issue for your student. Yet, if he asks and will be with you for the summer, put out some feelers in town. Let community members know that your talented, hard-working kid will be around and looking for work!
- **Talk Realistically About Money.** It's easy to have grand dreams about the summer yet, it's also important to be realistic about what needs to be done. Have an intentional conversation with your student about money and what needs to happen in order to cover next year's college costs. If she knows that she's responsible for spending money and books and other expenses, that will help her gauge her work schedule over the summer while also seeing if she can fit in the volunteer gig she'd like to try. Providing complete information so she can make adult choices is a great step in fostering self-responsibility.

