Choosing a Major

Many students are currently facing the selection of a major, after taking a variety of courses. This process can be stressful and a bit agonizing for some students, who still don’t feel 100% sure about what they want to do. Your support is a key part of this process.

How to Be Helpful

› Listen!
› Support the exploration of a variety of potential careers.
› Encourage your student to make academics a high priority.
› Encourage her to build skills and strengths out of the classroom that complement her in-class learning.
› Identify talents and abilities you have observed in your student and share them with her.
› Nudge him to visit the career center and his academic advisor, and to talk with on-campus mentors.
› Be careful not to expect your student to follow in your footsteps or take over the family career “legacy.”
› Encourage your student to find his passion and pursue a vocation rather than simply guaranteeing himself a job.
› Promote internships, job shadowing and mentoring as a means to “test” possible majors and career paths.
› Ask intentional questions to help your student filter through what can be an overwhelming decision.

Questions to Ask

› What have some of your favorite classes been? Why?
› How have you performed in these classes? What have you learned?
› What out-of-class experiences have made an impact on you?
› What are your passions? What do you really care about and want to contribute to?
› What majors float to the top?
› How does this major(s) relate to career options of interest?
Deciding Where to Live Next Year

Where will your student call home next year? It’s room selection and apartment-looking season, as students determine whether they will live on- or off-campus in the academic year ahead.

To help with these decisions, here are some important things for your student to consider:

- What is he involved in? Will it still be doable to be that involved if he lives off-campus?
- What about work? If the job is on-campus, will she be able to find parking and get to work on time?
- What about transportation? Will a car be in the equation?
- Who will he live with? What kind of influence will these people be?
- What about eating options? Will she get enough nutrition if she is cooking for herself, without a meal plan?
- What about summer storage? Will that be available?
- When does a lease run? Will he be paying for time that he won’t be living there? If so, how will that be handled?
- If she lives on campus next year, what environment would be best? Should she live in a campus apartment, a suite, a theme house or somewhere else?
- What about transportation? Will a car be in the equation?
- What costs are involved with housing, transportation, food and more? How do these balance out when comparing the realities of on- and off-campus living?

It’s Your Student’s Responsibility

Many on-campus housing lotteries occur right about now. Encourage your student to attend informational meetings and ask questions now to learn about this process. He’ll feel much more prepared if he does. It’s up to your student to follow campus procedures in order to secure housing for next year. If he doesn’t understand the process, there are people who can help within residence life. Students need to be proactive and informed in order to make the housing system work in their favor!

Clique Control

When we’re searching for belonging, it’s easy to get sucked into a clique. Yet, this tunnel vision can make it difficult for us to see other positive people around us. So, here are some things to consider discussing with your student when it comes to clique control...

- What types of limits your student feels others in the clique impose on him (e.g. how to act, who to spend time with, etc.)
- Other places she could seek out positive interactions with peers
- Why this group holds such meaning to him
- If she is afraid to stand up to members of the clique
- What he feels he might be missing because he’s spending so much time with this one group

Students within cliques often don’t see that their behaviors may be exclusionary or that they’re limiting their other options. Gently discuss this with your student to raise his awareness and get cliques under control.
Getting Heart Smart This Valentine’s Day

Sharing a heart-healthy focus with your student

As Valentine’s Day rolls around, it’s easy for students who aren’t in relationships to feel left out. But you can help!

Make this Feb. 14 about focusing on your hearts – those living, pumping mechanisms that keep us going when we treat them right – instead of flowers, chocolates and stuffed animals. You and your student can start a Heart Smart challenge, whether you’re communicating from afar or living in the same household.

Some components of such a challenge could include:

- Both of you going to the doctor to get your heart health checked.
- Becoming aware of your resting heart rate.
- Committing to eating a heart healthy meal at least 5 times per week and then sharing recipes for and photos of those meals with one another.
- Learning something new about cholesterol, nutrition, weight management and more on the American Heart Association site (www.heart.org) once a week that you can share via email or text.
- Sharing a goal that you’ll walk or run a 5K in the late spring or early summer – and then getting into an exercise program that’ll help you prepare! Talk about your fitness goals and accomplishments along the way – it’s more exciting than talking about the weather, right?
- Tracking your heart health through the online Heart360 tool (www.heart360.org).
- Helping each other manage stress more effectively through online encouragement, de-stressing phone calls and taking walks when you’re together.

This is just the tip of the healthy heart iceberg. Yet, if you and your student focus on getting heart healthy together this Valentine’s season, the difference could be dramatic. It’s the ultimate sign of love.

According to the American Heart Association, there are ways to reduce the sugar in your diet, thus treating your heart more kindly.

- Decrease the amount of sugar you add to things you eat or drink.
- Buy sugar-free or low-calorie beverages.
- Buy fresh fruits or fruits canned in water or natural juice, instead of syrup.
- Add fresh or dried fruit to cereal and oatmeal, instead of adding sugar.
- Cut the amount of sugar in baking recipes by one-third to one-half.
- Use extracts like almond, vanilla, orange or lemon instead of adding sugar to recipes.
- Enhance foods with spices like ginger, allspice, cinnamon or nutmeg, instead of sugar.
- Substitute unsweetened applesauce for sugar in recipes (use equal amounts).
- Try non-nutritive sweeteners (determined to be safe by the FDA) such as aspartame, sucralose or saccharin in moderation. They may satisfy your sweet tooth without adding more calories to your diet.

Source: Sugars and Carbohydrates, American Heart Association, www.heart.org, 1/7/14
The “I Don’t Have Money to Go on Spring Break!” Solution

It’s natural to have visions of warm, sunny beaches dancing in our heads as we zip up our parkas and try to keep track of our mittens. Yet, the reality is that many students can’t afford to take a Spring Break trip. That’s why we’ve rounded up some much less expensive options that can still increase your student’s sunny outlook.

Free!
› Get permission to read to an elementary school class and experience the wonder & creativity of wee ones
› Take a nap, whenever you feel like it!
› Sit in a patch of sun or under a sunlamp
› Get an awesome book from the library and lose yourself in it

Under $5
› Rent a Redbox video, pop some popcorn and invite friends over for the latest zombie apocalypse saga
› Go snowshoeing at a local park or golf course and then out for hot chocolate afterwards
› Take an old teacher, friend or family member out for coffee and a chat
› Carry a stack of quarters to an arcade and play Ms. Pac Man with wild abandon
› Buy a few postcards and send out “Wish You Were Here” notes to friends

Under $10
› Hit up a matinee of that movie you’ve been wanting to see
› Go to a local planetarium to learn about the night sky
› Ice skate with friends
› Host a potluck where no one can spend over $10 on their dish to pass
› Meet friends at a restaurant where you all order an appetizer as your meal and share

Inexpensive Spring Break fun is entirely possible! Give your student a nudge so he can enjoy his time without breaking the bank.

Community Contributions

At this point in the year, some students are knee-deep in community involvement, while others are still trying to figure out their place. A key question to ask your student in regards to this is, “What could you contribute to the campus community?”

You can help them assess their contributions with a few other key questions, too…
› What are some things you could teach other people? (From sign language to grammar tricks to the rules of basketball!)
› What about your personality makes you a positive community member?
› What does “community involvement” mean to you?
› What community contributions have you provided thus far?
› How else do you see yourself getting involved in this community?
› What do you hope to show other members of this community?
› What interests/talents/hobbies do you have? How could each be used to contribute to this community? (e.g. You are great at graphic design and could offer to develop a poster series with the leadership office.)

Encourage your student to talk with a trusted advisor, coach, residence hall staffer or supervisor about positive ways to get involved in the campus community. Engaging in the community is a proven way for students to feel more a part of things and to feel like they want to stick around.

Your student can get involved in various ways, such as:
- Attending hall council meetings
- Helping his residence hall staff with a program or bulletin board
- Joining the campus newspaper to do graphic design
- Forming an intramural basketball/volleyball/ping pong team
- Attending a retreat run by campus ministry
- Participating in a service project with some classmates
- Giving campus tours through the admissions office
- Helping to decorate a campus space for Open House
- Singing with the gospel choir or another campus group