



Thriving In College

THE PARENT/FAMILY GUIDE

Supporting a Successful Transition to
College Life in the First Year and Beyond

A resource provided by Creighton University Student
Counseling Services

(Adapted from resources provided by JED Campus/USC)

Making the Transition to College Life

Creighton University believes that parents and family members are important partners in the development and well-being of students during their college years.

As your student learns and grows during these years, they will face and overcome challenges as they find their independence in adulthood. Failures and setbacks are inevitable but students can learn from these experiences and become more resilient.

There's more to the college experience than academics alone. In addition to teaching students real-world skills for their future careers, we provide resources to help them succeed mentally, spiritually, physically, and emotionally during their time here.



As some of the people who know your student best, parents and family members are often the first to see the signs of a student struggling or in need of additional support. If you are concerned about your student in any way and unsure of how to help, Creighton's Student Counseling Services can be your first call (402) 280-CALM (2256). This office compassionately addresses student concerns and provides valuable self-care tools.

A Message from Creighton Student Counseling Services



Dr. Jennifer Peter

Senior Director,
Student Counseling Services &
the VIP Center

College is an amazing transformational time in a person's life. As an expert in student well-being, I have learned that college provides a special opportunity for exploration, growth, and development. College is a time for your student to figure out who they are and who they want to be. They engage in examination of their values, their strengths, their life goals, and their emerging identities. Your student builds confidence, resilience, maturity, and knowledge. While this is a very exciting time, it is also very challenging and can come with significant disappointments and frustrations along the way. The ups and downs, success and challenges are all part of the process. The progression of self-awareness, caring and compassionate connections with others, and engagement with our Creighton community and beyond is what makes our students reflect so positively on their experience at Creighton.

As a parent, you play an essential role in helping your student become actively engaged in the development of the person they are meant to be. It may not always be what you expect and may not be linear. Stay involved in their life, listen to what's going well, and help them understand what may be challenging and why. Creighton provides many wonderful resources, so if your student is struggling, encourage them to reach out and ask for help. Our goal is to help them develop into resilient and capable adults. Provide direction and guidance while encouraging them to seek out their own supports. As a parent of a college student myself, I guarantee that there will be bumps in the road, challenges to face, and successes to celebrate. It is essential to embrace how your relationship with your student changes. Your students are inspiring to us in their growth throughout their years at Creighton. Providing them the opportunity to transform and thrive in their lives and their work is the best reward.

A Month-by-Month Guide to the First Year

As first-year students transition to life at Creighton, they will experience many milestones as well as struggles. This calendar guide may help you prepare for common student experiences during the first year, and offer some tips to support your student.

AUGUST

Common experiences and challenges

Excitement, academic or social anxiety, emotions may be erratic

Supporting your student

Help them set realistic expectations and keep open lines of communication

SEPTEMBER

Common experiences and challenges

Sense of freedom, boundary testing, exploration, may procrastinate schoolwork or feel overwhelmed with academic expectations

Supporting your student

Encourage them to get involved with campus groups, and also manage time and take responsibility for their actions

OCTOBER

Common experiences and challenges

Midterm stress, homesickness, roommate challenges, common illnesses, may struggle to balance coursework with campus involvement

Supporting your student

Listen, be supportive, emphasize the importance of their self-care, and encourage them to use campus support resources and services on their own

NOVEMBER

Common experiences and challenges

Very busy with exams, papers and projects, registering for next semester classes, may run out of money and turn to credit cards

Supporting your student

Be supportive and encourage them to use academic support services when needed, encourage financial responsibility and maintaining a budget

DECEMBER

Common experiences and challenges

Sleep deprivation, anxious about returning home over winter break and balancing new independence

Supporting your student

Encourage healthy eating and sleeping habits, communicate home rules, be patient with adjustment and prepare yourself for changes

JANUARY

Common experiences and challenges

Anticipation of new semester, Fraternity/Sorority Life recruitment, applying for study abroad or summer internships

Supporting your student

Encourage them to keep up with schoolwork, seek help if grades are poor, become familiar with resources like the Career Center and Student Employment

FEBRUARY

Common experiences and challenges

Spring Break planning, relationship anxiety over Valentine's Day, rejection from Fraternity/Sorority Life or summer jobs, thinking about housing and roommates for next year

Supporting your student

Provide a listening ear, discuss plans and expectations for Spring Break, encourage them to seek counseling or support when needed

MARCH

Common experiences and challenges

Midterm stress, financial aid paperwork for next year due, may have consequences following Spring Break behavior

Supporting your student

Keep lines of communication open and trust them to make the right decisions, encourage them to seek academic help when needed

APRIL

Common experiences and challenges

Many distractions and activities, high stress with final papers and projects, making plans for summer, and moving out

Supporting your student

Be supportive and encourage self-care, healthy habits and time management, discuss summer plans

MAY

Common experiences and challenges

Anxiety about moving home and leaving new friends and sense of freedom, may begin summer internship or new job

Supporting your student

Discuss responsibilities and expectations at home, be willing to compromise, address any concerns in the first year, communicate with them as an adult and appreciate their growth

Advice for parents of new students



Students come to Creighton with many strengths and talents, and this is the time for us to work together to help them leverage those strengths, define who they are, and cultivate their best selves.

Your student has worked incredibly hard to get to Creighton, and you have worked hard to support them in their journey. There are many resources on campus to help your student thrive ([see the Resources section](#)). The following information can give you a glimpse of what to expect in the coming months, and how you can support your student's development.

WHAT TO EXPECT

College is an exciting time for students, with many opportunities to learn and grow — personally, emotionally, and academically. We want your student to thrive, not just survive during their time at Creighton. To truly “thrive” is to experience meaningful growth in all areas of life and to emerge as not just a smarter, but a better, more compassionate citizen of the world. This means that beyond strengthening their academic intelligence, they cultivate strong relationships, connect with their campus community, and are in tune with their emotions in a healthy way.

As much as success is expected, there will also naturally be times of disappointment, challenge, and difficulties. What matters is how a student anticipates and responds to those times of struggle. Students and families who can anticipate experiencing a range of successes and challenges are better able to remain resilient together.

SUPPORTING YOUR STUDENT

The role of a supportive family is invaluable to a student's ability to thrive. It is important to have conversations with your student about anticipating successes and challenges before they come to campus. Such discussions can focus on how they will adjust to life in college including managing finances, navigating challenges of expectations and pressure, how to make friends, and how they will seek a work-life balance that allows them to achieve their goals while cultivating a strong character. Having these discussions now will help your student be better prepared once they arrive.

Advice on self-care, stress, and wellness

- Encourage your student to work toward a mindset in which persistence, curiosity, self-compassion, and hard work are valued. Help them see that academic success and taking care of themselves go hand in hand; they cannot thrive academically if they are not taking care of their mind, body, and spirit.
- Help your student understand that not everything has to be done “perfectly.” Some things will be important and should be done to the best of their abilities; other things just need to get done.
- Remind them to adopt specific wellness practices, like keeping a healthy sleep schedule, eating a balanced diet, getting enough physical activity, and making time to socialize. Help your student create healthy routines and habits; these all help students feel good, stay healthy, and be their most productive selves.
 - *Group living situations, academic deadlines, electronic devices and alcohol consumption can all contribute to unhealthy sleep patterns. Poor sleep is often a major contributor to stress. Check in with your student about their sleep; encourage them to practice good sleep hygiene and get 6-8 hours nightly.*
 - *Encourage students to be physically active for 30 minutes a day most days of the week. They can break this up into three 10-minute sessions when pressed for time. Healthy movement may include walking, sports, yoga, running, dancing, or other activities they enjoy.*
 - *Eating a well-balanced diet with lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains creates a healthy foundation for the body to function. Discuss the challenges of limiting food calories to make up for alcohol consumption, as well as making healthy choices at the dining halls and other outlets. Our dietitian is available to provide added support.*

- Ask your student what they are doing for fun; “authentic happiness” creates physical and mental resilience.
- Emphasize that stress is a part of life and is motivating; model and reinforce healthy coping strategies like talking to others about one’s problems, understanding the effects of alcohol and drugs, and taking a break to rejuvenate yourself. Encourage students to recognize and manage stress in their lives. Signs of stress include trouble sleeping, frequent headaches and stomach problems; anger issues, and turning to food, drugs, and alcohol to relieve stress.
- Staying in touch with family and friends and getting involved in their community are great ways to increase connection and relieve stress.
- Encourage participation in self-care campus activities like joining up with a mindfulness group, yoga, and other movement classes through Recreation + Wellness. Student Counseling Services also offers stress management and Snacks and Skills workshops. Campus Ministry is a useful resource for connecting students to communities of faith on campus.
- Talk to your student about when and how to reach out for help. Almost all of us feel down or sad at times. Signs of depression include feeling hopeless, worthless, and/or sad, crying more than previously, loss of interest in life, and thoughts of death/suicide. If your student has ongoing symptoms of depression or severe symptoms that interfere with their functioning, suggest calling Student Counseling Services at 402-280-CALM (2256). If a student is threatening to hurt themselves, another person, or cannot engage in life at all, crisis resources are available through Student Counseling Services or call Public Safety at 402-280-2911. We encourage calling Public Safety first in an emergency, then contacting local authorities via 911. Our officers can assist the first responders in locating the emergent situation.

Developing Resiliency

YOUR STUDENT

- Teach your student that “failure” and disappointments are part of life; it is how we self-reflect, learn, regroup and improve that allows us to remain resilient in the face of adversity.
- When faced with adversity, encourage your student to learn from what didn’t go as expected, set a tone of forgiving themselves, and adapt and move forward.
- Emphasize the importance of focusing on one thing at a time. Research suggests that we are much more productive and creative when we don’t multi-task.
- Help them identify their priorities and actively allocate their time to match those priorities. It may be better to do a few things well rather than spread themselves too thin.
- If your student is feeling overwhelmed with all they have to do, suggest learning time management strategies such as weekly schedules and time management logs.
- Celebrate academic and personal achievements. Students thrive when they are recognized for all they do and how they are growing. Point out the small accomplishments they might overlook or ignore.

YOUR STUDENT WITH OTHERS

- Help them see that healthy relationships are those that bring out the best in themselves.
- Let them know that making close friends and developing a sense of belonging takes time. They may forget to see that their high school friendships took years to form.
- Nudge your student to take appropriate social risks like asking a classmate with similar interests to meet up for coffee or joining a student organization.
- Encourage your student to engage in face-to-face conversations on a regular basis.
- Have them identify when relationships and friendships may be more harmful than helpful, and encourage them to find support around managing those relationships.



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

JOINING A DIVERSE COMMUNITY, INCLUSIVE OF ALL VOICES

College is often the first time students will encounter many peers from different backgrounds, from different parts of the country and the world, who may have vastly different experiences, social contexts, religions, sexual orientations, gender identities, political viewpoints, opinions, etc. Meeting and engaging with others who have new perspectives are part of intellectual growth. Integral to the college experience, and students are encouraged to participate in conversation and express themselves.

When engaging with others of differing viewpoints, it is helpful to encourage your student to engage through respectful dialogue. The following advice can help:

- *Listen to understand*
- *Speak from the heart*
- *Suspend judgment*
- *Hold space for differences*
- *Slow down*

COUNSELING SERVICES DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Creighton University’s Student Counseling Services acknowledges the inherent worth and dignity of each person. We strive to affirm the multiple, intersecting identities of each individual and create a welcoming environment. Intersecting identities include but are not limited to racial and ethnic membership, gender, sexual identity, social class, religious affiliation, nationality and/or ability status.

We recognize that not all diversity is universally valued. We acknowledge the effects of stereotypes, prejudice, discrimination, oppression, power and privilege. We understand that some students might be hesitant to come to counseling out of concern of being misunderstood or judged because of their identity or beliefs. To this end, we seek to provide an open and trusting space in which all students feel safe, brave, valued, heard and respected.

Healthy Relationships

College students are often transitioning from the family unit toward independent decision-making. This time between 18 and 25 is often called emerging adulthood and is when young people no longer feel like adolescents, yet do not feel completely sure in their adult identities. Many aspects of their self-perception may be changing during this time as they mature toward individual acceptance of personal responsibility, including responsibility for one's sexual health and relationships.

Look for opportunities to weave topics of sex, gender, dating, and communication into everyday interactions. Open the door for conversations early, often, and casually. Rather than attempt lengthy conversations, ask simple, open-ended questions and listen without judgment. Suspending judgment can help facilitate open communication. Find opportunities to ask them what they think about a TV show, news story, or blog post. Encourage them to explore what they want out of their social life or dating relationships in college.

Help your student understand that healthy relationships come in many forms and all intimate relationships should always be based on love and respect.

People make lots of decisions about their sexuality during college, including whether to abstain from sexual activities or to become, or to continue to be, sexually active. Other sexuality issues that arise include decisions about the gender of partners, the safety measures or contraceptive use, and the intensity of relationships. Let your student know that no one should ever be pressured into having sex — *“It should always be your decision to have sex. This goes for the first time, and every time.”*

Sexual orientation and gender identity

College can be a time when some people explore their sexual orientation. It's also a time when some people decide to “come out.” Creighton has supportive services available for students of all sexual orientations and gender identities. There are also counselors available in Student Counseling Services if students wish to speak with someone confidentially.

About Consent

Consent is explicitly communicated. This means a clear “yes” through words or actions. The absence of “no” does not mean consent has been given. A person who is sleeping, unconscious, impaired due to alcohol or drugs, or under the age of consent **CANNOT** consent to sexual activity.

Consent is an ongoing process, not a one-time question. If someone consents to sexual activity, that person can change their mind and choose to stop at any time, even after sexual activity has started.

Past consent does not mean future consent. Giving consent in the past to sexual activity does not mean past consent applies now or in the future.

Saying “yes” to a sexual activity is not consent for all types of activity. Consent must be **informed** consent, meaning the parties agree to the who (partner), the what (type of activity), when, where, and how. If a person consents to sexual activity, it is only for types of sexual activities that person is comfortable at that time with that partner. For example, giving consent for kissing does not mean consent for other intimate acts. It is the responsibility of the person wishing to engage in sexual activity to be sure consent is present.

If there is no consent, it's against the law.

University Expectation of Students

Any sexual activity which is not in accordance with the Judeo-Christian values of Creighton University and the specific doctrinal teaching of the Roman Catholic Church is prohibited.

We value the dignity of life and the goodness of sexual expression according to the teachings of the Catholic faith. The University must however recognize the privacy of the individual's conscience. We cannot and do not police the domain of private conscience.

Relationship and Sexual Abuse

Intimate partner violence, or domestic violence, can be difficult to see if it starts gradually, if your partner declares love for you, or supports you financially. Intimate partner abuse can include forced sex, physical abuse, and emotional abuse, such as cruel words or threats. It can happen to people of all ages, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and religions. It occurs in couples who live together and apart. **Abuse is never acceptable.**

Abuse in a relationship can be both physical and mental. Remind your student that in a relationship:

- Your partner should never threaten you or hurt you, and should never threaten to harm you or any possessions or people that are important to you.
- You should never feel afraid of your partner or controlled by them.
- Your partner should never make you feel worthless or bad about yourself.

Students who are in an abusive relationship or who have experienced abuse or sexual assault should contact Creighton's Violence Intervention and Prevention Center (VIP) for confidential assistance or the Office of Title IX and Civil Rights Compliance to discuss reporting options. If a student or other member of the campus community is in fear of danger from a partner, immediately contact Public Safety.

Confidential Reporting and Support

Students are encouraged to report misconduct or assault of any kind to the Violence Intervention and Prevention Center (VIP) by calling 402.280.3794 or emailing vipcenter@creighton.edu. This is a free, confidential resource for Creighton students, faculty, and staff, as well as primary and secondary survivors, which includes parents and families.

Alcohol and Other Drugs

Drinking on college campuses is an important concern that needs special attention in the first semester. We take the issue of alcohol use by students seriously, and we want to support you in your role in guiding your student as they become a member of our campus community. As a Creighton parent, you play an important role in influencing your student's choices when it comes to alcohol. In fact, national studies have shown that parents have a key influence on how often their students engage in risky behavior, including alcohol use.

We need you to start talking with your student about alcohol use now and keep the conversation going once they come to campus, especially during their first semester.

Alcohol is the most misused drug in our society, although most people do not even consider alcohol to be a drug. It takes only a single episode of intoxication to experience life changing consequences.

PARENTAL INFLUENCE ON DRINKING DECISIONS

Some parents allow their children to drink a controlled amount on certain occasions, like holidays or family functions. Others believe it is alright for students to drink small amounts of alcohol, as long as they do so in a responsible fashion.

Your own orientation as a parent is a matter of your own values. However, if you are going to permit your child to drink alcohol in certain contexts, then you must be clear about exactly what these contexts are and what constitutes responsible behavior.

It isn't easy or comfortable to engage in a conversation about alcohol, easily the most pervasive drug in our culture, but there are ways to make the conversation more effective when you are able to raise the topic with your student. The following are some tips on approaching the subject.

SOME CONVERSATION STARTERS

Ask direct questions. Many times parents circle around the issue by asking indirect questions like "Did you have too much fun last night?" Ask them point-blank: "Are you drinking at parties? What are you drinking? How much are you using and where are you getting it? Are you smoking pot or trying other things, like Molly or LSD?"

Approach nonjudgmentally — keep your reactions in check. Nothing will shut down a conversation faster than judging or immediately disapproving of their choices. While it's easier said than done, if your student opens up to you, just listen. Don't yell or disapprove, even if you're upset by what they're telling you. Your reaction will set the tone and establish a precedent for any future conversations.

Treat the subject with seriousness. If your student tells you they have a hangover, don't minimize the experience by saying things like, "It won't be your last one, for sure" or telling them they need a better tolerance. This can send the message that you are encouraging and approving of their use. Sometimes this can be a student's way of sending a signal letting parents know that drinking or smoking is getting out of hand.

Put safety measures in place. Let your student know that you are there for support, even from miles away. Do they know the safety resources to get themselves out of a dicey situation? Talk to them about various scenarios and ask how they might handle themselves in the situation. Chances are, they haven't thought it through. Acknowledging the kinds of things that can happen and brainstorming possible responses can help them steer clear of trouble.

Remind them of your standards. Your expectations and standards of behavior and conduct don't end just because your student is out of sight. Substance use and abuse can affect a student's health and academic performance, and have deadly outcomes. Ensure your student that consequences can and will happen if they do not keep their end of the bargain as far as your expectations about alcohol and drug use.

Keep the dialogue open. Let your student know you are a safe place to land. Maybe they need to vent about a roommate's substance use. Or maybe your student did something they are not proud of while under the influence and needs to talk to you about it.

What can you do if, after these discussions, you feel there is a problem? Know your campus resources, listed in this booklet. Additionally, you can request a copy of Talking with College Students About Alcohol, a resource provided by the Omaha College Consortium.

Above all, keep the conversation going. It's too important to ignore.

Source: Lee, J. (2017, October 17). "Have 'The Talk' About Drugs and Alcohol with Your Student." Retrieved from <https://www.collegiateparent.com/starting-college/stu->

UNIVERSITY EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

It is Creighton University's expectation that students will wait until the legal age of 21 before they make decisions about whether or not they choose to drink alcohol or use tobacco products. All tobacco and alcohol products are illegal for people under 21 in Nebraska.

Marijuana and other drugs are illegal in the state of Nebraska.

Reaching Out for Support

Creighton Student Counseling Services (402.280.CALM/2256) offers comprehensive mental health services to Creighton Students. Counselors compassionately address student concerns and provide valuable self-care tools. Typical concerns include self-esteem issues, relationships, stress and anxiety, loneliness, and depression.

The Violence and Intervention Prevention Center
vipcenter@creighton.edu | 402.280.3794

The Office of Title IX and Civil Rights Compliance
titleix@creighton.edu | 402.280.3189

Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct (OCSSC)
communitystandards@creighton.edu | 402.280.2775

The Office of Student Life
studentlife@creighton.edu | 402.280.2775

Student Leadership and Involvement Center (SLIC)
studentleadershipinvolvementcenter@creighton.edu | 402.280.1715

Recreation + Wellness
recwell@creighton.edu | 402.280.2848

Department of Residential Life (DRL) & Housing and Auxiliary Services (HAS)
living@creighton.edu | 402.280.2717

Dining Services
dining@creighton.edu | 402.280.2750

Dietitian Support
DanielleMoran@creighton.edu | 402.280.3862

Creighton Intercultural Center
cicjays@creighton.edu | 402.280.2459

New Student Orientation
newjays@creighton.edu | 402.280.5507

Student Financial Services
finaid@creighton.edu | 402.280.2731 | 800.282.5835

Creighton Student Health Education and Compliance (402.280.2735) provides health education and wellness resources to students, including information on where to go for illnesses, immunizations, and insurance compliance.

Public Safety
publicsafety@creighton.edu
Emergency line: 402.280.2911
Non-emergency line: 402.280.2104

Student Success Center
success@creighton.edu | 402.280.1212

Academic Success Center
academicsuccess@creighton.edu | 402.280.1212

Campus Ministry
campus_ministry@creighton.edu | 402.280.2779

Center for Advising Resources and Support
cars@creighton.edu | 402.280.5566

John P. Fahey Career Center
careercenter@creighton.edu | 402.280.2722

Student Accessibility Services
SAS@creighton.edu | 402.280.2166

Student Employment Office
studentemployment@creighton.edu | 402.280.2408

College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office
ccasdean@creighton.edu | 402.280.3990

College of Nursing Dean's Office
nursing@creighton.edu | 402.280.2703

Heider College of Business Dean's Office
heiderdean@creighton.edu | 402.280.2850

Parking and Transportation
parking@creighton.edu | 402.280.5225