



First Year Initiative

# Parent Outlook

Vol. 7, Summer 2008

## A Word of Advice...

*Tips to Help Your Student Succeed*

It is orientation and you've just realized you're really going to send your child off to college. After you finish writing the check and get over the "I'm starting to feel old" thing, take some time to consider the following tips to help you and your student with this challenging transition.

The first six weeks of your son or daughter's life on campus are going to be the most challenging, exciting and difficult times he or she will experience as a college student. If he or she can persist through these critical six weeks, the likelihood of him or her dropping out of college decreases dramatically. In order to become successfully integrated into the college community, a student usually passes through three major stages: separation, transition and incorporation.

Almost every student must begin to separate from their past life as a child, high school student and member of their local community. They will be faced with breaking past habits and disconnecting from their traditional support networks. Further, students must adjust to new living conditions, meet new friends and get to know and understand where they fit into this new community of over 12,000.

The process of integration is often disorienting and disturbing for most students. For some students, the stress of this adjustment period, combined with new academic demands, is so extreme they see no other option but to leave college and remove themselves from the stressful situation. However, there is hope! Read on.

## What's A Parent To Do?

The final stage in the high school to college transition process is incorporation. Here are some suggestions to help you help your new college student through the first six weeks and beyond.

**Make Academics a Priority:** This doesn't mean you should demand your son or daughter get straight A's—it simply means that academics must be a priority. Students who perform well during their first semester feel like they fit in, are more confident about their successful adjustment to college life, and persist at higher rates.

**Encourage Involvement:** Encourage interactions with friends, organizations, college activities, residence hall activities, professors and other university staff. *Students who get involved tend to stay involved and stay in school.* In fact, being involved for 10-20 hours per week actually helps a student manage his or her time.

**Be Supportive and Empathetic:** One of the most common answers students give when questioned why they stayed in school is, "because I felt I could do it." Building self-esteem, supporting independence, allowing your student to resolve conflicts, and learning to "let go" are important steps to help your son or daughter mature and succeed.

**Teach Financial Responsibility:** The efficient money-managing student has a greater chance of attaining a college degree in 4 years. Also, he/she tends to run into less trouble with exorbitant phone bills, over charged credit cards and outstanding bills. (*cont.*)

**Allow for Indecision:** The average college student will change majors anywhere from 3 to 5 times during the course of their college career. This is normal. This is their time to search and experiment. Try not to pressure them into declaring a major too soon. Encourage them to talk with their advisors, the Career Services Office, or people in the field about career options.

## Keep in Touch!

*Show that you still care*

Surprise your son or daughter once in a while with a care package, a card, a letter, or a visit. Consider sending care packages during the first six weeks, midterms, or finals to relieve stress. Over the summer, you may want to discuss how often you and your student will talk on the phone, email one another, etc. Keeping the lines of communication open is the key to being supportive.



## Important Dates for Fall 2008

<b>Classes Begin!</b>	<b>9/2</b>
<b>Last Day to Add Classes</b>	<b>9/8</b>
<b>Last Day to Drop Courses Without a Grade</b>	<b>9/15</b>
<b>Dropped Courses are Graded "W"</b>	<b>9/23-11/21</b>
<b>No Drops Allowed After This Date</b>	<b>11/24</b>
<b>Finals Start</b>	<b>12/15</b>

## The FYI Program:

*A contact for freshmen, parents, and family*

**The First Year Initiative program is the freshmen resource center!**

**FYI services include academic workshops, student referrals, retention advising, our early alert "D/F" list, study breaks, Catapalooza, and helping students successfully transition from high school to college. We coordinate with other campus agencies to refer freshmen to the resources they need, when they need them. Our office is always friendly, accommodating, and useful for parents and students! For more info visit: [www.montana.edu/freshmen](http://www.montana.edu/freshmen)**

## Parent/Family Association

The Parent/Family Association (PFA) was created to provide a way for families to continue their involvement with their student's education and to communicate their thoughts and ideas to the university administration. All families of MSU-Bozeman students are automatically members. Last year the PFA board made updating and organizing a parent website a priority and was proud to partner with FYI to build a great site at: [www.montana.edu/parents](http://www.montana.edu/parents).

The PFA also sponsors the Parent/Family Weekend. This event is held each fall and features information sessions, faculty lectures, sporting events, meals and live entertainment. October 17-19, 2008 is this year's date. For more information on the PFA or our programs call (406) 994-2502 or visit our new and improved website at: [www.montana.edu/pfa](http://www.montana.edu/pfa)

## Questions?

If you have any questions about any item in this newsletter please contact the **First Year Initiative Program** at 994-7359 or email us at [retent@montana.edu](mailto:retent@montana.edu). We would like to extend our warmest wishes to you and your student as you embark upon this tremendous adventure!

