



Academics: Coaching Your Student to Succeed

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The Parent Program is here for you.

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Parents can play an important role in coaching their student through the rigorous academic aspects of college. The Parent Program recently asked university staff for do's and don'ts when it comes to parents helping students make the most of courses and major areas of study. Here is what we learned.

"The main role of a parent is to encourage students to find what they love to do, discover what they are good at, seek help from campus sources, and continue to work hard," says Wren Singer, director of UW–Madison's Center for the First-Year Experience. Parents should not be involved in course selection, and should not take the time to learn major and degree requirements. To allow students to evolve into independent, responsible adults, Singer urges parents to let students take the lead and make their own decisions about academic matters.

Parents should encourage their student to meet with academic, career, and faculty advisors regularly to ensure proper preparation for major selection, career planning, and graduation. "Students can best prepare for advising appointments by arriving with all necessary documents and a list of questions. This way, your student will get more out of each advising experience," says Steve Schroeder, assistant dean at the Wisconsin School of Business.

Advisors assist students by helping them to consider all possibilities prior to making their own decisions. "Remember, advisors don't tell students what to do; instead, they serve as guides and sounding boards to help students discover things for themselves," says Singer.

Parents should not call advisors in place of their student, Schroeder recommends. Instead, he says, encourage your student to take the initiative to make the appointment. "After the advising appointment, your student can share the key take-aways from the meeting with you. This way you are still in the loop as a coach," says Schroeder.

Along with seeking out advisors, encourage your student to be proactive and establish strong connections with faculty, staff, and administration. These individuals can serve as role models and help guide your student's

development. "Seeking help from multiple sources is important, because no single source knows everything, and some issues are truly a matter of opinion," Singer says. "Students need to learn to seek out multiple viewpoints and integrate them into coherent plans that match what they want for themselves."

To help your student form effective study habits, encourage him or her to try different strategies for studying, including different places, tutors, and study groups. "What worked in high school is not likely to work in college," says Singer.

Parents should be prepared for natural bumps along the academic road and should not panic if something doesn't go well. "Bumps in the road can be valuable learning experiences and are rarely complete life derailments," says Singer.

Rob Sepich, student relations manager at University Health Services, urges parents to encourage their student to break intense study times into small blocks of no more than an hour or two at a time. "This permits more opportunities to recall the material, because we do best with the first and the last things we study during any period," he says.

Along those same lines, Sepich recommends that parents discourage all-nighters. "Using the time to sleep rather than study helps students recall the material far better than cramming," he says.

If your student is trying hard in a course, yet still having academic difficulty, encourage him or her to investigate why. Christopher Lee, assistant dean of the College of Letters & Science, says, "Their usual response is to study more, but I can say with confidence that students who go into a test feeling well-prepared and come out thinking they did well — yet get poor results — are probably not going to fix the problem by studying more. Students should consider whether they are studying the right things, whether the test itself is the problem, or whether anxiety plays a role. They should learn from the test about what went wrong. Professors, teaching assistants, and advisors can help with this."

Finally, encourage your student to take his or her time in college. Schroeder says, "Don't pressure your



Academics (continued)

student to rush through college in three years if it would be inhibiting exploration or growth. Encourage your student to maximize the experience and to take courses that really interest him or her.”

Schroeder also recommends that parents don’t assume that staying in college for more than four years is a red flag to employers. Doing so will allow for more time to participate in internships and leadership activities.

“Remember, once students graduate, what they’ve taken as credits or courses — or earned as grades — won’t matter as much as what they’ve experienced while doing activities, projects, internships, study abroad, research, and service,” says Lee.

Words of Wisdom from Parents

Recently, we asked parents to share some advice with other parents based on their own experiences. Here is a sample of the responses. For a complete list, go to the Parent Program Web site and click on “survey results.”

- **Do** give your student space, but let him or her know that you’re around to talk when he or she needs to.
- **Don’t** solve all of the problems or make all of the decisions for your student.
- **Do** encourage your student to try many different things and get involved. Your student will never again have affordable access to so many opportunities.

- **Don’t** let your own likes or dislikes influence your student’s classes and career choices.
- **Do** tell your student to pursue majors based on what he or she wants to be, rather than what he or she wants to do.
- **Don’t** get upset when your student changes his or her major — and know that it may be changed again.
- **Do** let your student experience college — the good or the bad, it is all a stepping stone in life.
- **Don’t** criticize your student when you don’t approve of some of the things that he or she is trying. Remember that it is all a learning experience.
- **Do** ask about class performance and encourage the use of all resources available to ensure success.
- **Don’t** pick classes for your student.
- **Do** encourage your student to give a roommate a semester to get used to the living situation. Living together takes patience and tolerance.
- **Don’t** make housing decisions before the end of the first semester.
- **Do** text or e-mail your student if that is his or her preferred method of communication.
- **Don’t** call your student too much or on weekend nights if he or she would rather you not do so.

“Encourage students to find what they love to do; discover what they are good at; seek help from campus resources; and continue to work hard.”

Plan Now for Badger Family Spring Visit

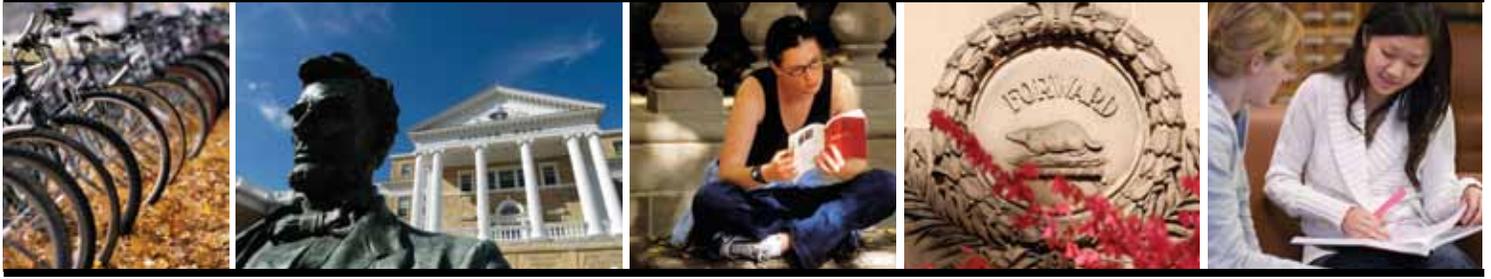
Mark your calendar for the second annual Badger Family Spring Visit. We invite you to visit your student, the campus, and Madison during April 2010. Come experience a variety of free and low-cost family-friendly events, as well as the beauty of springtime in Madison.

A detailed list of weekend events will be posted on the Parent Program Web site by January 1. Simply choose a weekend in April that works for you. Events and attractions will be featured both on campus and in the downtown Madison area.

Participating families will receive a complimentary welcome bag filled with give-away items, and coupons for parking, shopping, and dining at area merchants. Many area hotels will be offering special discounts during your stay.

There is something for everyone at Badger Family Spring Visit. Start making your plans now!





Upcoming Events

Winter Commencement is scheduled for December 20. Ceremonies are at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Speaking at both ceremonies will be UW–Madison alumnus Neil Willenson, founder and CEO of One Heartland (formerly Camp Heartland), a charitable organization that provides free programs and services to children and families affected by HIV/AIDS.

visers to additional College of Letters & Science faculty — to become the first recipients of funding from the innovative program. The initiative is a supplemental tuition charge designed to add need-based financial aid, hire additional faculty to open bottlenecks in high-demand majors, or use technology to enhance learning.

For more details, visit madisoninitiative.wisc.edu/. A second round of funding will be announced in early 2010.

Let's connect!

UW–Madison is using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to interact with students, parents, and alumni. The sites can help you stay on top of news and happenings on campus, learn about important discoveries, ask questions, or contribute your own thoughts. Visit online at:

- Facebook: www.facebook.com/UWMadison
- Twitter: www.twitter.com/UWMadisonNews
- YouTube: www.youtube.com/uwmadison

The Parent Program will soon be on Facebook. Details will be coming early next semester.

Tuition Bills Go Digital

The university's Bursar's Office has gone digital this fall by sending tuition bills via e-mail for students and their parents to pay online.

The new eBilling and ePayment system allows students to authorize parents or other payers to receive tuition statements by e-mail and pay them online using a login ID. Payers can see immediately when their payments have gone through and can view their real-time balances anytime.

Second-semester bills, which will soon be available for viewing, can be paid online with any U.S. checking or savings account. The Bursar's Office does not accept debit or credit cards.

In compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), students have full control over who does or does not receive the tuition bill. When the bill is ready to be viewed and paid, they will receive e-mail notices along with payers students have authorized.

During the fall semester, students received eBills as well as tuition bills in the mail to their specified addresses. As of spring semester, eBilling will be the only billing system. However, payers still have the option of printing the eBills and mailing them in with a check.

For complete details, visit www.bussvc.wisc.edu/bursar/.

Did you know?

We asked parents how the economy has affected their ability to pay for college:

12% said their family will contribute less

15% said family will contribute more

23% percent indicated no change

50% will take out more loans

The Wisconsin Idea

UW Students Win United Nations Award

UW–Madison's chapter of Engineers Without Borders won a prestigious United Nations engineering award for a project that provided a Haitian community with hydroelectric power. The students are working to construct a mini-hydroelectric power generator that will provide three to five kilowatt hours of electricity to a school, library, and church in Bayonnais, Haiti, the poorest country in the western hemisphere. The UW chapter also sponsors projects in Rwanda, Kenya, El Salvador, and Red Cliff, Wisconsin. For more information about the Haiti project, visit www.news.wisc.edu/17390.



Technology Improves Scholarship Process

UW–Madison is using technology to make it much easier for undergraduate students to learn about and apply for scholarships for the 2010-11 academic year.

Each year, the university’s schools and colleges award millions of dollars in undergraduate scholarships. These awards are in addition to standard packages of grants and loans made available to students who have financial need based on the information provided on their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Two important initiatives are making it easier for students and their parents:

- A new Web site, Scholarships@UW–Madison (<http://scholarships.wisc.edu>) offers a central resource where current and prospective students and their parents can explore available scholarships.
- Building on the scholarship site is a second initiative, the Common Scholarship Application. A secure Web interface makes it easy for admitted and currently enrolled undergraduate students to apply for scholarships by completing an online application form.

For more details, visit www.doit.wisc.edu/news/story.asp?filename=1285.

Career Corner

Accepting an Internship or Job Offer

In the current economic climate, any job offer may seem like a great opportunity. But how can your student know if it’s a good match?

Your student’s first consideration should be whether or not the position interests him or her. Many students feel pressured to accept the first job offered. While it may be tougher now than in the past, employment opportunities are still available; a student should not feel like the first offer is the only choice. It helps to ask your student, “Can you picture yourself filling this position and carrying out the daily tasks?” Your student may also want to consider the training and tools that will be made available, and keep in mind the long-term opportunities that accompany the position. Is there room for your student to grow within the organization? And if not, will your student attain marketable skills that will allow him or her to find another job in the future?

Another factor to consider is the work environment. Is your student’s potential supervisor capable of being a mentor and an asset to your student? What is the work environment and what is expected of your student in terms of commitment and duration? Location should also be a topic of

consideration. Many young professionals are asked to move to accommodate their new position. Is your student willing to relocate? If so, would he or she be comfortable in new surroundings?

The primary concern of many students seeking employment is whether or not a position will provide an adequate salary and basic benefits. For many recent college graduates, loans and the cost of living become an immediate reality. Encourage your student to inquire about health care benefits, paid time off, tuition assistance, flex time, and the potential for salary increases over time. The answers to these questions will help your student gauge a job offer’s potential.

Finally, remind your student of the responsibilities and commitment involved in taking a job. Committing to a full-time job will alter your student’s lifestyle and while this is the next step in the process, it is essential that students remain aware of and informed about their decisions. As a parent, continue to be a source of advice and support. No matter how old, your son or daughter will always appreciate your support and interest.

—Thomas Denham,
Career in Transition counselor

The First-Year Experience

First-Ever Live Web Chat

On October 13, the Parent Program, in partnership with University Communications, launched the first-ever live Web chat for first-year parents. Participants were invited to ask questions to members of a panel that included Dean of Students Lori Berquam, Associate Director of Residence Life Cal Bergman, and Nancy Sandhu and Patti Lux Weber of the Parent Program.

The chat focused on students' initial transition to campus and covered topics including relationships with

roommates and friends, homesickness, academics, out-of-class activities, and H1N1 influenza.

Participants sent more than two hundred questions and some four hundred people watched the chat. Given the enthusiastic response, the Parent Program plans to host more chats on a variety of topics in the near future; check the program's Web site for details. Those who were unable to participate in the first Web chat can view the transcript at <http://www.parent.wisc.edu/chat.html>.

They're Coming Home

The adjustment of coming home for winter break from college often comes as a surprise to parents who don't know what to expect. Accustomed to living on their own and following their own schedules, many students struggle with moving back home even just for the break.

First of all, don't be surprised to encounter a student "zombie." Recovering from the physical and mental strains of finals week can be draining and requires an extended period of rest, says Rob Sepich, student relations manager for University Health Services (UHS). For many students, the first priority is getting back on

a healthy schedule. Don't be surprised if your student is primarily concerned with catching up on sleep.

Alternatively, students may have missed their high school friends, and catching up may be at the top of their to-do lists. This, too, is a healthy response and can affirm their ability to maintain long-distance friendships.

Have a conversation with your student regarding expectations for schedules, behavior, and adherence to house rules during his or her stay. Decide if all of the same rules will apply. If you are hoping to spend some quality time with your student, you might want

to consider scheduling a time so it does not get lost in the shuffle. Between catching up on sleep and balancing friends, you might not have as much time with your student as you had hoped. Discuss the schedule of events planned while he or she is home. Talking this over ahead of time will help to avoid frustration stemming from differing expectations.

Lastly, don't be surprised if your son or daughter refers to Madison as "home" or discusses viewpoints or values that may be unfamiliar. This is all part of the maturing process, Sepich says.



300 parents and students joined the Parent Program for a reception during First Year Parents' Weekend 2009.