



Taking Risks: Should You Worry?

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Campus experts advise that some risks can be good — for helping your student to learn, grow, and develop confidence.

By the time your child is ready to enter college, you have already spent a lifetime protecting him or her from risks.

“Watch out for cars!”
“Don’t touch the burner!”
“No running with scissors!”

Now, all of a sudden, your warnings are out of ear-shot while your UW-Madison student faces new kinds of risks at a distance, without you to hold the net.

This can be a nail-biting time for parents, but the good news is that not all of the risks that students encounter are scary ones.

“You might say risk equals anything that moves you beyond your normal routines of thought, of interactions, or of experiences,” says Aaron Brower, the UW’s vice provost for teaching and learning and a social work professor, who focuses on the transition from high school to college. “Once you move beyond that circle of routine, you now are in the risk zone and those risks could be positive or negative.”

Young adults are typically excited, but also apprehensive, about this. “I think there is some anxiousness and nervousness about a new place, a new environment, meeting new peers,” says Gwen McIntosh, a UW Health pediatrician and a professor at the School of Medicine and Public Health who specializes in high-risk adolescent behaviors. “But I think that risk-taking can be positive in the sense that this is a great chance for students to explore a new area, to take a chance and meet a new group of people, or participate in a new activity that in the long run might be very beneficial for them.”

Calculated Risks

How eager teens are to take risks is a function of brain development, says Brad Brown, a UW professor of educational psychology who is an expert on peer groups and parent-adolescent relationships. The impulse to be venturesome develops in early

to mid-adolescence, he says, while the capacity to reason and exercise caution comes into its own later. “By the time young people get to college, that frontal portion of the brain is maturing to the point where typically young people are more thoughtful in the choices and decisions that they make. And therefore, risks are more calculated,” he says.

Yet at the same time, Brown cautions, “They’re still 18, they’re still adolescents, and in many cases, the structure that helps individuals either avoid opportunities for risk or helps them think through the consequences of risk, are suddenly removed. That is, parents aren’t there to watch over them.”

This is not an entirely negative thing, Brower believes. “It’s a different environment and a whole new routine, so students are feeling like almost every moment in those first few weeks of class is filled with novelty and risk, in a sense. [As a student, you are] taking different courses, talking with people you’re not used to talking with, going to different kinds of events that you might not have experienced before, trying new foods that you’re not used to, and thinking for yourself in new ways.”

Thinking Like a Student

If these things don’t strike you as particularly risky, look at them through a teen-ager’s eyes: Will I be rejected by a new friend or a new group? Will I fail at a new activity and embarrass myself? Will I waste the time I could have spent doing something I’d like better?

Sometimes the biggest risk that high-achieving first-year students feel is not the difficulty of any specific activity, but that they’re no longer the proverbial big fish in a small pond, says Eric Knueve, assistant dean and director of the UW’s Center for Leadership & Involvement.

“We get the cream of the crop here — we’re a pretty prestigious university — so the students who come are used to succeeding where they’ve come from, and now they’re put into a pool where everybody’s succeeding. And now there’s going to be a new order that is kind of established, so the fear of



'Where am I going to fit in that order?' probably also is on some students' minds," Kneuve says.

So, what can parents do, from a distance, to cope with the positive-to-negative spectrum of risk?

One way is to begin teaching healthy decision-making processes long before students have arrived on campus. But if you find yourself saying, "I wish I'd known that before," don't sell yourself short; you have likely done more to prepare them than you realize.

"I think the biggest challenge for parents in letting their students go to college is having some faith that the years they've spent raising their children are going to pay off in terms of those children making smart decisions and developing confidence, and having the ability to say no to certain high-risk situations that might end badly, should they pursue them," says McIntosh.

Learning from Mistakes

Communicating clear expectations about avoiding truly dangerous behaviors, such as excessive drinking, is key, says Brower. At the same time, he urges parents to be "unambiguously encouraging" of constructive risks — not inadvertently making fun of a different kind of activity, but asking questions about how it's going and why they like it. And perhaps most important, Brower says, is for students to reflect on the results of the experience, whether good or bad, so they learn something from it.

Letting young adults learn from their mistakes might be agonizing for parents, but it is part of the process of transitioning from the control they have during the high school years. Brown advises parents to "make sure that when their children move to college, they have shifted to more of an advisory role rather than a directory role ... to help young people think through decisions, but not try to make the decisions for them."

He empathizes with parents who are finding it tough to let go. "Don't feel as if there's something wrong with you if you find this to be a hopefully exciting, but also nerve-racking, time in trying to help the kids, not knowing quite what the best thing to do is," he says.

Keep Talking

"I think the best attitude is one of cautious optimism," McIntosh adds, stressing the importance of ongoing dialog. "I think when parents are overly anxious about certain risk behaviors — drinking, drugs, sex, whatever it might be — that can really discourage a child or a young adult from talking to their parents about what they might be worried about or what they actually are seeing when they arrive on campus."

Perhaps a useful lesson from all of this is that, if you want to encourage your students to take more positive risks, revel with them in the ones that pay off.

"My favorite thing about this work is being able to sit with students and hear the excitement they have about something that maybe they've explored for the first time, or something they've always done, but never on this kind of scale," Kneuve says. "That's really fun."

— Bill Graf, University Communications

The Year of the Wisconsin Idea

To celebrate 100 years of upholding the Wisconsin Idea, UW–Madison's long-standing principle that the university should improve people's lives beyond the classroom, an interactive Year of the Wisconsin Idea website has been launched. It features a searchable database of more than 1,000 examples of the Wisconsin Idea in action, a history and timeline of the development of the Wisconsin Idea, a calendar of the year's events, a Twitter feed, and an invitation for UW faculty, staff, students, and the public to upload personal statements about what the Wisconsin Idea means to them. For more information visit wisconsinidea.wisc.edu.





New Tool Highlights Alcohol Safety

As of this fall, students who commit alcohol-related violations of university policy are likely to be required to take a class about alcohol safety as part of the disciplinary process, says Lori Berquam, dean of students. The instruction is called BASICS (Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students).

“By requiring [BASICS] after alcohol-related offenses, we hope to help students avoid academic trouble, legal trouble and health problems — all of which are linked to unsafe consumption,” says Berquam, who serves as co-chair of the Chancellor’s Alcohol Policy Group with Sarah Van Orman, executive director of University Health Services (UHS).

Tom Sieger, director of prevention services and campus health initiatives at UHS, says that BASICS has

been used on other college campuses and found to be “highly effective in helping 18- to 24-year-old students make better alcohol-use decisions.”

Students may be instructed to attend a group experience with eight to 12 other students or one-on-one sessions with a professional substance-abuse counselor. Students must pay \$78 for the group class and \$200 for the one-on-one sessions.

The chancellor’s group has also approved new guidelines that allow students to assist others in an emergency situation, such as calling 911 for a person who may have alcohol poisoning, without fear that they may receive an underage alcohol citation themselves, unless there are mitigating circumstances.

For more information about the new guidelines, visit www.students.wisc.edu/alcoholinfo.

Career Corner: BuckyNet

Finding a job today can be a bit overwhelming for anyone, including college students. Still, despite the current economic circumstances, jobs are available, as long as students are flexible and know how — and where — to look.

Encourage your student to take advantage of resources for finding jobs both on and off campus, and to increase his or her visibility among employers, which will broaden the options when choosing a job or internship.

One of the most valuable on-campus resources is BuckyNet, a recruiting software system shared by the Business Career Center, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Career Services, the School of Human Ecology, the School of Education, the Wisconsin Alumni Association, and the Letters and Science Career Services Office. Using BuckyNet, employers can access a student, regardless of a student’s affiliation with a specific school or college.

BuckyNet allows students to search for jobs and internships specifically related to their degrees,



participate in on-campus interviews, and upload resumes, which in turn allows employers seeking students within a specific school or college to access resumes online.

Students can also check out the calendar on BuckyNet to learn about employer information sessions and upcoming workshops. If your student is interested in going abroad, he or she can also search for international opportunities using Goingglobal.

For more information on BuckyNet, students should contact their affiliated schools or colleges.



Key Dates

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Key Dates

October 29
Madison Freakfest

November 4–6
Parents' Weekend, sponsored by WAA

November 24–27
Thanksgiving recess

December 15
Last class day

December 16
Study day

December 17
Exams begin

December 18
Winter Commencement

December 23
Exams end

January 23
Classes begin

March 31–April 8
Spring recess

Campus Implements New Concealed-Carry Law

As a result of a recent change in Wisconsin law, beginning Nov. 1, officially permitted concealed carry of weapons will be allowed throughout the state, including on campus grounds. The law allows members of the public to carry concealed firearms (with a permit), knives (not switchblades), tasers, and billy clubs, except in areas where expressly prohibited by law.

The law also provides that the university will continue to ban the open carry of firearms and other weapons at all times and in all places on campus. In addition, the law provides the university may continue to ban concealed weapons in its buildings, athletic events, at campus events, and where appropriate signage has been posted.

"It is our goal to implement this law with the least potential disruption to the academic mission of the university," says Susan Riseling, chief of the UW-Madison Police Department. "We reaffirm our existing prohibition that all university buildings remain off limits to guns and other weapons."

If you have questions about implementation of the law on campus, please email uwpolice@mhub.uwgd.edu.

Mobile UW: New and Improved

Mobile UW, the UW's free mobile application for iPhone, iOS, and Android, was upgraded in September. New users can get a free copy, while current users can download a free update from the App Store.

The app provides campus news and events, lectures, Badger scores and schedules, and more. Recent changes include real-time bus information, improved graphics clarity, bug fixes, and app stability improvements.

Mobile UW has more than 20,000 users worldwide, with the majority using the iOS platform. Short demo videos are available for iOS and Android. For more information, visit <http://mobile.wisc.edu/>.

The Class-Registration Process

Your student will soon receive an email message with an assigned registration date and time, based primarily upon class standing and the number of completed credits (including AP credits) on your student's transcript.

Although students aren't required to meet with an advisor before registering for classes, they are encouraged to consult with an advisor when making course decisions. Students are also encouraged to plan ahead, as November is busy for most advisors. You student will find his or her assigned advisor listed at My UW.

Additionally, students can log into My UW and begin creating a "Wish List" of courses for the upcoming semester. Doing this ahead of time allows students to make the registration process more efficient; on the day registration opens, they can log into My UW, find out the availability of the courses they have already pre-selected, and select courses from that list. Keep in mind that the course schedule is a work-in-progress.

Students can continue to monitor course availability and change course selections up until the first drop deadline without a notation on their transcripts.

Did You Know?

What makes The Red Shirt different than any other shirt?

This is no ordinary t-shirt. It's the only one of its kind that continues a long-standing UW-Madison tradition of giving back. In fact, all proceeds go to the UW's Great People Scholarship, supporting students with financial need. **Bring out your Badger. It makes a difference.** uwalumni.com/TheRedShirt.





New: Student Advantage Card

New this fall: The Parent Program has partnered with Student Advantage. The Student Advantage Card gives students access to a host of money-saving deals, including a 20 percent discount on Greyhound tickets, a 40 percent discount for shipping with Greyhound, and a 15 percent discount on Amtrak tickets. If your student is coming home for Thanksgiving, enroll in Student Advantage now to save on the cost of a bus or train ticket.

Student Advantage has savings opportunities on the things your student buys every day. With more than 70 discount partners, savings are available on items from travel to technology to clothes to dorm-room gear. Partners include: Choice Hotels, AMC Theatres, ArmaniExchange.com, Target.com, Lenovo, Orbitz, Sprint, T-Mobile, and more.

Buy a four-year savings card for \$45, or purchase one-, two-, or three-year cards for \$20, \$30, or \$40.

Visit studentadvantage.com/uwm to enroll. Contact the Parent Program if you have questions about this new program.

Madison B-cycle: A New Option for Students

Madison B-cycle is a new urban bike-sharing program that offers a fun, convenient, environmentally friendly, and affordable way to get around Madison. Members have access to 350 bikes at 35 B-stations, and the freedom to pick up a red bike at any B-station and drop it off at any other B-station. Students are eligible for a discounted annual membership of \$45. The program is supported by Trek Bicycles.

For more information, visit www.MadisonBcycle.com.

Free Flu Shots for Students

Throughout October, UW students have been receiving their flu shots. This year's vaccine protects against three strains of influenza, including H1N1 and the two others considered most likely to circulate this year. Starting in November, UHS will continue to provide

free flu shots, but students must make an appointment. For more information, visit www.uhs.wisc.edu/services/medical/allergy-immunization/flu-shots.shtml.

Wisconsin Involvement Network

The Wisconsin Involvement Network (WIN), a new campuswide software program, allows students to identify, organize, and coordinate their out-of-class involvement experiences. Students can create a profile, search for student organizations, learn about campus events, find opportunities that match their interests, and much more. Encourage your student to check it out by visiting win.wisc.edu.

Badger Weekend: Explore Campus and Madison

This year, if you're in town for a Badger game day, you're sure to get an experience that is much more than just football. Campus and community partners have come together to create a tool for families and visitors to learn more about Madison while they are in town for football games. An interactive website offers visitors options of free or low-cost venues and activities to check out while they are in town. For more information, visit gameday.wisc.edu.

Send-Off Celebrations

Parent Program staff joined the Alumni Association this summer as they traveled to Minneapolis and Chicago for student send-off celebrations. The events offered the chance to meet families from these areas, answer last-minute questions, and remind them about Parent Program services that are available throughout a student's time at UW-Madison.



The First-Year Experience

Making a Second-Year Housing Decision

As early as October, some campus-area property owners will begin advertising housing vacancies for fall 2012, and students may begin to feel pressure from friends about where to live next fall. Students mistakenly think that if they do not make a decision during these early months, housing will not be available. Living options and different types of living arrangements are vast and plentiful.

A construction boom in recent years has resulted in more housing spaces than there are students to fill them. With the addition of hundreds of new rentals nearby, as well as a recent on-campus housing expansion, the long-standing trend of signing a lease in November no longer applies.

Students are best served by being patient and not rushing into making hasty housing decisions. Doing so could lead to legal obligations to live with people they have not had the chance to get to know, result in paying premium prices for a rental, or potentially lock them out of other opportunities, including studying abroad for a semester.

Encourage your student to consider staying on campus. There are many benefits to living in the University Residence Halls, including the chance to choose a hall, floor, and room. In fall 2012, students will enjoy two new facilities: a residence hall is opening along the shores of Lake Mendota, and a new Gordon Dining and Event Center will be replacing Gordon Commons. At sign-up time, students can also arrange to live close to their friends. In addition to academic initiatives, University Residence Halls offer dining facilities featuring fresh, nutritious meals as well as resume-boosting employment opportunities. Electricity, heat, cable television, and Internet access are all included.

Information about selecting rooms for 2012–13 will be available in late fall 2011, along with open houses that offer students a chance to visit other buildings, learn about different residence hall communities, explore single-room options, and meet the staff. Even though the process kicks off before winter break, University Housing contracts are not due until the spring semester, giving your student plenty of time to make a decision.

Other students may find that sharing an apartment or house with several friends, or renting a room in the home of a local family, could be a

Student Housing Fair **Thursday, November 17** **Varsity Hall** **Union South 3–6:30 p.m.**

This housing fair will feature “Renting 101” information sessions, Student Tenant Resources, rental options, and more.

better match. Many campus-area options are available, including apartments, houses, and rooms in privately owned residence halls, co-ops, and private homes. UW–Madison’s online Campus Area Housing Listing Service (www.campusareahousing.wisc.edu) offers a consolidated and searchable list of campus-area rentals, along with other important housing-related information.

For some students, living in an environment that provides some element of support or programming may be the best fit. In that case, learning about properties that participate in UW–Madison’s Private Housing Connections (PHC) Program would be a good next step. The program links property owners and their staff to the campus so they may better connect their student tenants to campus resources. For more information, visit www.campusareahousing.wisc.edu/phc.asp.

Discussing housing options will help your student make an informed decision about factors including rent prices, lease terms, location, utilities, furnishings, pets, parking, and meal plans.

Also consider discussing with your student whether you would co-sign for an off-campus lease. Students may not realize that many rental owners require a co-signature. And keep in mind that once a lease is signed, it is a legal and binding contract.

For more information about housing options, visit the Parent Program website and select “Housing.”

