

How to Prepare for College

A Guide for College Parents



UniversityParent

Summer Guide

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A Welcome from UniversityParent Founder Sarah Schupp

As the founder and CEO of UniversityParent, I want to introduce you to one of the top parent resources in the country.

With over eight years of consulting experience, UniversityParent has developed parent and family guides at more than 200 universities and colleges nationally providing parents with helpful information about their child's college experience. Student success is shown to improve when parents and families are engaged in their child's college experience.

On top of your student's academic studies, we hope you will encourage your student to become a part of the surrounding community, and that this eBook will be helpful for you as you support and challenge your student throughout their college journey. From all of us at UniversityParent, we wish you all the best as you explore your child's new community.

Sincerely,

Sarah Schupp
Founder & CEO
UniversityParent



Are You Looking to Connect with Other College Parents?

We've recently launched a new Facebook Group for College Parents seeking advice, tips, and parent-to-parent support.

This new group allows you to share your experiences directly with other parents, participate in the dialogue of trending issues, and receive feedback from our staff who will be dropping in from time to time to answer questions and start conversations.

Join now to invite your college parent friends and don't forget to sign up for our eNewsletter!

[Facebook.com/Groups/UniversityParent](https://www.facebook.com/Groups/UniversityParent)





To Be or Not to Be at Orientation?

If you look carefully at your student's orientation registration form, you'll notice a question that asks: Are you registering as a) a student or b) as a family member? You did not read that wrong! Family members are invited and encouraged to attend orientation. There are numerous reasons you should attend, but here are two important ones:

Attending orientation with your student affords you one last chance to bond

- While you won't be together for the entire event, the time you do spend together will afford you the opportunity to learn more about your student's interests, concerns, and hopes as they enter college. Orientation is a time to be there for your student to listen and to help.

The family orientation program offers you the opportunity to ease your mind

- Just as your student will enter college with questions and concerns, so will you. Orientation presents the perfect opportunity for you to ask those questions and get clarity on the issues that concern you the most.
- Many parents can feel like their student is leaving them, but leaving isn't the right word to use. Your student isn't leaving you, they are starting a new stage of their life and you have the opportunity to be there with them when they do.
- While your student meets students, you can meet other parents. You'll have the opportunity to meet other parents in your same situation, whether that is being at orientation the first time or the third time. Sharing stories and making connections with other parents can also help you ease your mind.

Now that you know why going to orientation is a great choice, here is some practical advice to get the most out of the experience:

- Wear comfortable shoes! You will be doing a lot of walking.
- Come prepared to get lots and lots (and I do mean lots) of great information!
- Bring a sweater (for some reason conference rooms are always cold)
- Accept that you will need time to process everything you hear.
- Plan on being tired (but it's that good kind of tired).
- And most importantly, encourage your student and enjoy yourself!



5 Fun Activities to do Before College

It's summer break and you're looking for ways to spend quality time with your student before they leave for college. Your student is no longer a child, yet, not quite old enough to fit in at your book club. To keep your student happy for the summer and to create fantastic memories together, here are five unusual activities you may want to consider.

- 1. Face a Fear Together** - Afraid of heights? Afraid of flying? Face that fear together with your student and go bungee jumping or take a helicopter ride over your favorite locale. Facing a challenge and conquering your fears together is not only exciting and rewarding but will also create a special bond between you and your student. Surely a memory to never be forgotten.
- 2. Learn Something New Together** - Have you been thinking of learning how to golf or maybe paint? Find a common interest and learn how to do it together. Education doesn't have to stop after college. Any time, any age is appropriate for learning something new.
- 3. Take a Hike** - Plan a day to go hiking. Pack a picnic lunch, some hiking equipment and spend the day in a secluded area. This is a great way to catch up on college news, day-to-day life, and a great way to reconnect.
- 4. Volunteer Together** - Giving back to the community can create another life long memory but can also be a way to give back to a community in need. Volunteering together can build life skills and help to connect real world experiences to what your student learned in class.
- 5. Take a Trip Down Memory Lane** - What was your student's favorite thing to do as a child? Was there a favorite place, park, or zoo, perhaps? Take your child for a day or a week down memory lane and do all the things they once enjoyed. Go to the places they loved to spend time at, and recreate a special memory.

Having your student home during summer is exciting. Although they want to spend time with you, they might have other plans too. Spending time with friends or taking a summer job may be on their agenda. When that time comes, be ready but flexible to create new experiences with your college student.



Homesickness: What it is and How to Cope with it

Students across the nation are preparing to start the fall semester at more than 200 colleges and universities that partner with UniversityParent. Move-in day and first-week activities are abuzz with excitement, but as students move in and parents head out, homesickness can take root. The emotions of homesickness usually come in waves, and while the worst cases can have symptoms similar to clinical anxiety or depression, there are several things parents can do to help students when these waves hit.

- **Let them** - Allow your student to struggle through the first few weeks - or months - of college. Students who experience strong homesickness at first are stronger after it passes. Next time those emotions sweep in, students who have already been homesick will know that they can get through it, and the feelings are not so burdensome.
- **Give space** - Instead of being available for your student to call or text at any time, set aside time to contact your student once a week. This will give your student independence and encourage reaching out to friends and peers for support.
- **Talk it out** - When you do talk to your student, ask how he/she is feeling, dealing with the change and adapting to a new lifestyle at college. If he/she shares feelings of homesickness, make sure to emphasize that it's normal and others are experiencing the same. If it sounds like the homesickness is debilitating and affecting your student's ability to eat, sleep, make friends or go to class, encourage a trip to the counseling center on campus.
- **Understand the cause** - Homesickness occurs because everyone needs to belong and be attached to others in a community. When your student joins an entirely new community, it will take time to form relationships and identify his/her role. Homesickness during this time is expected. Parents who remind their students that they're loved, supported and encouraged -even from afar - will build their children's confidence to establish their place at school.

How to Deal with the Empty Nest

Once a college student leaves home, emotions can scatter in all directions. However, there are ways to make the transition process easier. Here are some tips for support.

- **Start a New Chapter** - With additional time to focus on yourself, thinking about your future and a new set of personal goals can be therapeutic. New aims can fill in the time gaps, channeling energy toward positive pursuits. Community classes, lifelong travel plans, and other interests can be explored without holding back.
- **Don't Rush** - There will be grieving and times of reminiscent nostalgia. This is part of the process. Live what you're feeling when you're feeling it. And while you shouldn't dwell on the absence of your college student, don't attempt to fast forward emotional transition.
- **Put Life in Context** - When you begin to miss your college student, focus on the positive, that your son or daughter is growing and developing into a young adult. They're not "gone" they're growing - and it's a great opportunity to get to know your young adult.
- **Avoid Dramatic Decisions** - Give yourself some time to adjust to the changes before making high-impact or long-term decisions. Time will allow for proper decision-making. For example, it wouldn't be bad to set a six month waiting period on large decisions like selling a home, car, or making business decisions.
- **Don't Compensate with Communication** - A temptation for recent empty nesters is to try to fill their parental void with added communication to their student. Communication options are numerous now; however, this will only delay the transition process - which sooner or later will take place anyway. It also could affect your student by preventing her from learning independence or by causing her to resent your communication.
- **Treat Yourself** - Help yourself to a few nice things on a routine basis. Short skirmishes away, a tasty meal, simple entertainments, these activities can put the mind at ease.
- **Think of Others** - Invest it in another direction, volunteer at a homeless shelter, donate time to a service project, think of other family and friends who could use support.

Tips based on advice by Psychotherapist John Tsilimparis and Karen Stabiner, author of "The Empty Nest: 31 Parents Tell the Truth About Relationships, Love, and Freedom After the Kids Fly the Coop".

How can I Help with College Transition?

Parents may assume the answer to a smooth college transition might be to rush in to the rescue; or, taking it from an opposite angle, create a barricade of tough love and a do-it-yourself attitude. A balance between the two is the best way to help them transition and still help them grow.

Be a Parent and let Professors be Professors

- It is important for the growth of your student to learn to handle situations in the classroom on their own.
- Interfering with the relationship between a professor and your student could hurt a relationship that might be able to help your child later in their career.
- Only get involved if the welfare of your child is in jeopardy.

Help Your Student Navigate Challenges and Decision Making

- Teaching how your student how to weigh pros and cons in high school will help the college transition. In college, help them through the process and allow them to make their decisions.
- You student will likely face new situations where they have to make decisions. Preparing them for these situations will help transition into college and get the most out of it.

Teach Time Management

- You can start while they are in high school by giving your student more oversight of both personal and family projects.
- Balancing social and scholastic responsibilities is one of the most important skills that your student can learn and that will be most beneficial after graduation.
- There are many great tools to help your student with time management. From traditional planners to online calendars, work with your student to explore the options that work best for them.

Ask Great Questions

- Instead of telling your student what they should be doing, ask questions that can help them figure out the decision that they want to make.
- Give your student time to think about the situation and come to some of their own conclusions.
- Miles Kington said, “Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit, wisdom is knowing not to put it in your fruit salad.” If you always give your students the answers, sometimes they may not know how to use it.

Encourage Student Involvement

- Students who get involved with campus organizations do better in school and make more connections while in college.
- Familiarize yourself with the student services at your student’s university.





Thank You.

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