

Tips for Parents-Starting a New Adventure: Frequently Asked Questions

At Dutchess Community College, we know that sending your student off to college can be both an exciting adventure and a nervous time. To help you through this transition, we've compiled answers to some common concerns and a month-by-month summary of what to expect.

Q: What are the biggest adjustments during the first year?

A: Homesickness and leaving the family behind are challenges during the first year. Students indicate that it helps if family members keep in close contact by phone, email, sending care packages and letters. Other items that make them smile are funds for activities/trips, cookies, cards and things that remind them of home. Another area of adjustment is having a roommate/suitemates and all aspects of sharing the space -- especially if the student is accustomed to having his/her own room. Finally, going home again can be challenging because everyone has changed -- the student, the family, friends, as well as the community.

Q: When is the best time to travel home for the first time?

A: Students recommend that new students wait a couple months before going home for the first time, citing Thanksgiving to be a good goal. Being on campus forces you to connect with your peers.

Q: What do students do when they get sick?

A: Medical services are available at the on-campus Student Health Office Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. A physician is available two days a week and an appointment can be made by calling the Health Office. If the physician writes a prescription, it can be filled at local pharmacies that work with the College and can deliver certain medications. For after-hours medical needs, walk-in immediate care centers and Saint Francis Hospital are in close

Q: What are students allowed to do to the room?

A: The rooms are furnished with a bed, dresser, armoire, desk, chair, and closet. These items must remain in the room. Students are free to personalize and accessorize the rooms any way they want so long as they stay within the guidelines provided in their Housing

Q: Do students need a car?

A: The answer to this question is not easy. Here are common responses from students when it comes up: "It is easier to have a car -- especially if you are used to having one, but there are ways to get rides with other students. If you do not have a car and you want to get off

have to drive with someone else you may or may not know very well.” The local taxi service offers discounted transportation to the train station and mall, and residential students can ride the LOOP Bus for free with a current DCC ID card and sticker that can be obtained at the Office of Safety and Security.

Q: Are there on-campus jobs for students?

A: Students may be able to find off-campus and on-campus employment through the Counseling and Career Office. There are many jobs available throughout the campus. Many students have financial aid packages that require student employment each semester. Whatever the reason, on campus employment is not only a good source of additional income, but also a way to get connected to this community, to meet other students and professional staff members.

Q: Generally, how much money do students need and what do they spend it on?

A: The amount of spending money a student needs varies. There are many things to do on campus or in the Poughkeepsie area that do not cost additional money. The amount is also impacted by the financial responsibilities of the student -- for example, will the student be responsible for paying a monthly phone bill or need cash for gas? After that is determined, other frequent expenses include: recreational activities such as movies, occasional meals out, traveling to work.

Q: What should she/he bring?

A: Students may bring whatever they might need (i.e. iron/ironing board, computer, alarm clock, etc.) Some items that are recommended are a study lamp and a flashlight. Please be sure to review the [What to Bring List](#) and the [Prohibited Item List](#).

Q: What is the mailing address for students?

A: Each student is assigned a campus mail box number and key. In the box students will receive letters and notification slips to pick up a package in the mailroom. The mailing address is: Student Name
53 Pendell Road
Conklin Hall Mail Box # ____
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Students can ship items 30 days before arrival in August. These items can be picked up Monday-Friday at the mailroom located in Hudson Hall during designated hours.

Q: How safe is the campus/Poughkeepsie?

A: We are fortunate to be in a safe community, but it is always important to use good common sense regarding personal and property safety. Our Security Office is available 24 hours per day to patrol and respond to security issues. Students should always lock room doors, carry their key and ID card. It is advisable to close windows when leaving the room. Personal property should not be left unattended and cars should always be locked. When walking at night or traveling in the Poughkeepsie area it is important to either have a companion and/or make sure someone is aware of your plans. Dutchess Community College maintains strict conduct expectations for students and guests that are in place for safety and privacy reasons, they include: designated visitation hours and no alcohol allowed on campus.

Q: Where can students study?

A: Students have several options when it comes to study areas. Francis U. and Mary F. Ritz Library on main campus is open six days a week with varied hours. There are lounges on all floors within Conklin Hall that students are able to use 24 hours a day. The 4th floor also has extended quiet hours that begin earlier in the evening for those studying in the lounge.

Q: Where are students able to use computers and/or check email?

A: There are many areas of campus that are wired for access to the Internet. Each student bedroom is equipped with Wi-Fi access. There are computer labs located throughout the campus, as well as places for students to plug in their own laptop computer. For more information on this subject, please call the Student Help Desk at

Q: What kind of meal plan options can my student have?

A: Dutchess Community College offers three meal plan options: all meal plans are 'declining balance' which means that when a student purchases anything from one of our campus dining facilities the amount is deducted from their starting balance.

Q: Where does my student go to put more money on their meal card?

A: Meal plan request are handled at the DCC Bookstore located in Dutchess Hall. Students also can visit the kiosk located in the lower level of Conklin Hall to add "all campus" funds to

Q: Who should I call on campus if I have an after-hours emergency and I need to reach my child on campus?

A: You may contact Campus Security after-hours, seven days a week at (845) 431-8070 if you have an emergency.

Parenting Your New College Student: What to Expect the First Year

August, After Move-In

What's Happening with Your Student:

- ❖ They are adjusting to a new life, new responsibilities, new relationships, new roommates, and new freedoms. The first six weeks of college are a challenging time for new students who are trying to make these adjustments all at once.
- ❖ They are excited about moving away from home, but may also be homesick.
- ❖ They are enthusiastic about starting college life, but may be insecure about fitting in, being as smart as everyone else, or navigating unfamiliar surroundings.
- ❖ They are separated from friends, loved ones, and familiar surroundings.
- ❖ They're unsure of what to expect academically—the unknown workload and expectations from faculty.
- ❖ They're starting over. They are no longer a big fish in small pond, and no one here knows their former status in high school (this may be a relief for some students; a concern for others).

August Helpful Hints for Parents

Don't forget to take care of yourself! This is a period of adjustment for you, too. Your mixed feelings of joy and sorrow, pride and loss, are normal. There will be a void in the family and some roles may adjust, especially if younger siblings are still at home. It's a good time to refocus on your own hobbies and interests. And remember that your student still needs you and loves you, even if she/he doesn't say it.

September

What's Happening with Your Student:

- ❖ They are enjoying the beautiful weather, the energy of campus in the fall, and the excitement of a new environment.
- ❖ They may be questioning their identity, pushing boundaries, and experimenting with new things. Experimenting may include challenging previous beliefs about religion or politics, experimenting with alcohol/drugs or sexual activity, and challenging social norms.
- ❖ They may have trouble managing time. In September, it's common for students to have a false sense of comfort because papers and projects aren't due until October, and this may lead to procrastination.
- ❖ They're starting to understand that what worked for high school academics won't necessarily work for college, and that a new level of work is expected. This may result in feelings of inadequacy, and they may ask themselves, "Can I really make it here?"
- ❖ Some may be experiencing roommate conflicts.

- ❖ A new trend with college students is an increased dependence on high school friends, which enables them to avoid getting involved with new people and the DCC community. Cell phones, Facebook, and texting make it easier than ever to keep in touch with old friends, and it could result in an increased feeling of “not fitting in” at DCC.

September **Helpful Hints for Parents**

Roommate conflicts do happen, regardless of whether students are complete strangers or have known each other for years. Most students find that talking over the problems with the roommate resolves the conflict. However, sometimes help is needed. It is counterproductive for parents to get involved in roommate disputes. As a parent, the best way for you to help the situation is to refer your student to his or her Resident Assistant (RA), who has been trained to resolve roommate disputes.

October

What’s Happening with Your Student:

- ❖ They might be stressed out about tests and midterms. Some students fall behind in September because they weren’t accustomed to the type of time-management skills required for college.
- ❖ They may receive the first college grades on papers and projects. This helps students to understand what professors expect of them. It also means that students may realize that they are no longer ‘top of the class,’ and some who once got all As now get Bs and Cs. Students may be disappointed or lose self-esteem because they are unaccustomed to receiving poor grades.
- ❖ They’re facing competing social demands. Students who got involved in too many campus organizations may have trouble balancing the demands of the organizations with the demands of coursework.
- ❖ They’ll begin to work on papers and must learn to navigate a college library system. The library system is an important campus resource, but because it is different from libraries that they have used in the past, it may be intimidating.
- ❖ They are learning to manage their own money, and may have trouble sticking to a budget. College presents many pressures to spend money—pizza, movies, clothes, etc.—and they may run out of money sooner than expected.

October **Helpful Hints for Parents**

Have a conversation with your student about the importance of reaching out to campus resources to assist them with their time management and studying skills. DCC’s Counseling and Career Office and Academic Services offer a wide range of workshops to assist students.

November

What's Happening with Your Student:

They may get sick as the change in weather brings on cold and flu season.

- ❖ Stress levels are high as midterms come to an end, and many papers and projects are also due. They also begin to realize that the term is almost over. Procrastinators may panic as they face the consequences of falling behind in coursework. Students may pull "all-nighters" to get work done.
- ❖ Students intending to return for the spring semester begin to register for courses.
- ❖ They may continue to struggle with time management and balancing social activities with academics.
- ❖ Some students may have concerns about going home for Thanksgiving, especially if the student has changed dramatically since the last time they saw their parents.

November **Helpful Hints for Parents**

Care packages are a favorite way to show students how much you love them. Possible contents can include: food (homemade cookies or family specialties are especially nice), money, socks/slippers, pictures from home (don't forget to include the family pet!), newspaper clippings from home, gift certificates for local restaurants or stores, microwave popcorn, candy/chocolate/gum, letters from the family, vitamins, cold/flu medications, winter clothing, and toiletries.

December

What's Happening with Your Student:

- ❖ After Thanksgiving, there is very little time until finals. Term papers and projects are due, and they may be the longest papers or projects that students have ever done.
- ❖ Students will continue to be stressed.
- ❖ Students may get very little sleep, and neglect proper nutrition or exercise.
- ❖ Many students may be concerned about the pressures of upcoming holidays, or returning home to live with the family after a semester of independence.
- ❖ They'll be stressed about finals. For first-year students, this will be their first college finals, and they'll have the added fear of the unknown.
- ❖ Some students will have financial concerns, as the money they budgeted for the semester runs out earlier than planned. They may turn to credit cards to help them in their budget crunch.
- ❖ They'll probably sleep a lot over the winter break, as they try to 'catch up' on four months' worth of lost sleep!

December **Helpful Hints for Parents**

Expect your student to be very stressed in December. While you won't be able to prevent the academic stress, you can reduce the pressure for your student to participate in family obligations or traditions, which put added demands on a student's busy schedule.

January

What's Happening with Your Student:

- ❖ Students return to campus after the Winter Break. Many will feel homesick as they return to campus; others will feel relieved to be back to their independent lifestyle.
- ❖ They will receive their grades from fall term and will either feel disappointed or delighted. Parental reactions to the grades weigh heavily on their minds and influence their stress level as they anticipate a new term. Whether the grades were good or bad, they will have a better understanding of what college work requires.
- ❖ There will be uncertainties in the new semester, as students begin new classes and meet new professors.
- ❖ Some students will make plans for study-abroad programs, summer internships, summer jobs, and transferring to a four year institution.

January **Helpful Hints for Parents**

At DCC, learning takes place outside of the classroom, too. Encourage your student to attend educational and cultural events around campus, including guest lectures, musical and theater performances, museums, poetry slams, etc. Student Activities can help your student explore the variety of events held on campus each semester.

February

What's Happening with Your Student:

- ❖ Students may be depressed as the cold weather and lack of sunshine continue.
- ❖ They'll start taking midterms, and some papers or projects may be due.
- ❖ Many students neglect their health and exercise plans.
- ❖ Students may get 'cabin fever' due to being indoors. This causes some students to be anxious, tense, distracted, or frustrated with people around them—especially roommates.
- ❖ Student organizations demand a lot of time from students. As a result, students who have trouble with their time management skills may feel overcommitted and overwhelmed.
- ❖ Some students have relationship anxiety, especially around Valentine's Day.
- ❖ Students make plans for Spring Break. This may lead to financial concerns for some. Others may be jealous of their friends who are going to places warm and exotic. This may also lead

to disagreements with family over different expectations for how and where this vacation will be spent.

- ❖ Some students may demonstrate irresponsible behavior at parties over Spring Break, and suffer the consequences of that behavior.

February **Helpful Hints for Parents**

Your tradition of taking a family vacation in the spring may change this year. Many students make plans to go on vacation with friends for Spring Break, and do not want to spend their break with the family. Talk to your student early on so that no one is disappointed at the last minute. With open communication, there may be ways to reach compromises. If not, remember that this is another milestone for a young adult, and be supportive of the decision.

March

What's Happening with Your Student:

- ❖ They'll be stressed as they take more midterms and have more papers or projects due.
- ❖ They'll start preparing for the housing selection process if they are planning on returning to student housing for the following year. This includes determining what size suite they want to live with and who they would like their suite mate and roommates to be as well.
- ❖ They'll register for courses for the following Fall Term, and for Spring/Summer Terms if they're staying in Poughkeepsie for the summer.
- ❖ Students will go on spring break; which may mean traveling with friends or returning home to spend time with family.
- ❖ Students feel pressure to declare a major.
- ❖ Students begin to think about summer plans including jobs or internships. Students may also be concerned about how they will fit into the family and the family's expectations if they return home to live with their parents for the entire summer.
- ❖ Financial Aid documents for following year are due.

March **Helpful Hints for Parents**

If you live close enough, March is a good time for a short visit to campus. Be sure to talk to your student ahead of time to make sure it's a good time for her. Students appreciate being taken out to dinner and going shopping when their parents visit!

April

What's Happening with Your Student:

- ❖ Students get spring fever as weather warms up, and they'll find concentrating on academics harder than ever. There are also more distractions on campus, as students go outside to play Frisbee, go bike riding, or enjoy a stroll around campus.
- ❖ Stress levels are high as papers and projects are due, and students take final exams.
- ❖ They must plan for moving out of their current residence hall.

- ❖ The pressure to meet deadlines for transferring to other colleges or scholarships can make for some added stress the student was not expecting.
- ❖ For some, leaving their college friends for the summer will be the biggest concern of all.

April **Helpful Hints for Parents**

Congratulations! You've made it through the first year. You should relax and enjoy this moment. Your student will continue to grow and change over the course of the next few years, and your relationship with your student will also continue to change. However, the first year is a big transition for you both, and you should feel proud if you have both managed to successfully navigate hurdles of the first year.

May

What's Happening with Your Student:

- ❖ Students who lined up summer employment ahead of time will begin their summer jobs. Others will still need to find work.
- ❖ Students who return home may have anxiety about losing their independence, and be concerned about adjusting to life under their parents' roofs again.

May Helpful Hint for Parents

Plan ahead. Be sure to talk to your student about your expectations for saving money over the summer. Address any concerns you had about how money was spent in the first year, so you can avoid continued problems in the sophomore year. Be sure to discuss the use of credit cards as well.