

Surviving and Thriving: Helping New Students Through the First Year of College Information and Resources for Faculty and Staff

Statement of Purpose

The first year of college can be a difficult transition. Psychosocial development theory suggests that during this time students will experience many of the first stages of learning to manage their emotions, establishing competence, gaining independence, and identity formation. The following brochure has been designed to outline the phases new students may be going through and the various campus services available to help them. In an effort to support the educational mission of the institution, this brochure is provided as a resource when assisting those that seek your counsel. We wish you all the best for a successful school year.

What normal stressors can you expect to see from students in their first year of college?

Because all students are different, it is difficult to predict how each student will respond to the normal transitions of the first year of college. Nevertheless, there are some common issues that impact many first year students.

The following is a guide to some of the adjustment problems you may see in the first year of school. Please keep in mind that this is not designed to be a comprehensive checklist for student behavior. Many students will go through all four years without experiencing any of the issues on the list, whereas some students will experience several of these issues. The list is broken into several categories of concerns: classroom performance, relationships, student differences, and general concerns.

Classroom Performance

It is important for new students to have a balanced view of their academic performance. The following problems may present themselves:

Feelings of inadequacy and inferiority may develop because of the discrepancy between high school status and grades and the initial college performance.

Midterm worries may develop.

Feelings of failure and loss of self-esteem sometimes follow midterm pressures.

Academic pressure sometimes mounts because of procrastination, difficulty of work, and new challenges to capability.

Worry, fear, and guilt may increase as final examinations approach and papers are due.

Optimism can increase since second semester seems like “going downhill.”

Frustration and confusion may develop over decisions about the next year toward the end of spring semester.

Papers and exams begin to pile up due to heavy workload and procrastination.

Relationship Issues

Finding a balance between new friends and old friends and family is not always easy. Students may experience the following range of emotions:

Homesickness is a normal part of leaving home or moving to a new geographical area. Most students will experience this to some degree of another in their first year.

Grief often develops due to the lull of support systems from home and the lack of strong social supports in the new environment.

Depression increases for students who have failed to establish social relationships or achieve social recognition.

Increased pressure on relationships may be experienced because of approaching vacations and extended separation.

Pre-holiday worries may develop, especially for those who have family concerns.

Fear of losing newfound independence and identity may develop around breaks.

Concerns may develop over seeing high school friends again after several months apart.

Depression increases due to anticipation of separation from friends and loved ones at the University.

Social pressures often increase as invitations for participation in trips, banquets, and picnics increase.

Feelings of sadness and concern may increase over leaving friends and moving back with parents.

Student Differences

When confronted with sharing a living space and interacting with a wide variety of classmates, students may encounter the following difficulties:

Value crises may arise as the student is confronted with differences, or conflict, in areas of race, drug use, alcohol, morality, religion, and other social expectations.

Culture shock, confusion, and vulnerability often impact international students.

Sexual conflicts and confusion can result when confronting different relationship standards, sexual values/orientations.

General Concerns

Of course, students may experience concerns unrelated to academics, social relationship, and student differences. Such concerns may include the following:

Feelings of **frustration** may be felt due to real or perceived restrictive policies and regulations of the University.

First-year students may become **disillusioned**, realizing that college life is not as perfect as they had anticipated. Old problems seem to continue and new ones are often added.

Feelings of depression and anxiety can develop due to discouragement over difficulties in adjustment to college life.

Economic anxiety may increase as funds from parents and summer employment begin to run out.

Extracurricular time pressures may increase as parties, concerts, social service projects, and/or religious activities drain energy.

Financial strains may occur due to holiday gifts and travel costs.

Sense of confinement and extreme boredom may develop due to cold weather.

Ambivalence about returning to school after breaks may occur, coupled with post-holiday blues.

Increased use of alcohol and other drugs sometimes occurs. **Anxiety** increases due to the realization that the year is ending and that a deficiency exists in a number of academic areas.

Whom can you call with questions and concerns?

Academic Advising

The office coordinates all academic advising functions, including assigning Academic Advisors, and organizes study skill programs. Students may speak with someone about changing advisors, consult with the Coordinator of Academic Advising about academic problems (including those concerned with a learning disability), and pick up and return information about Off-Campus Programs. **Location and Phone: 105 University Hall, 368-3275**

The Sagan Academic Resource Center

The center provides services to students in three different areas: writing, academic skills, and math. The Writing Center helps students learn effective writing skills and polish up their writing styles. The Quantitative Skill Center helps students who have math questions relating to their science, psychology, mathematics, and economics courses. The Academic Skills Center provides assistance in the areas of time management, study skills, note taking, test preparation, and test performance. **Location and Phone: 324 R.W. Corns Building, 368-3925**

Career Services

Career Services helps build the bridge between education and career by helping students explore their skills, interests, and values and providing techniques that can be used throughout their career development. Services and resources provided include career advising, a career library, mock interviews, graduate school information, a reference service, computerized career help, inviting recruiters to campus, resume referrals, and job postings. **Location and Phone: 324 Hamilton-Williams Campus Center, 368-3152**

Chaplain's Office

Provides pastoral care and counsel for students and directs religions and spiritual life programs on campus. **Location and Phone: 308 Hamilton-Williams Campus Center, 368-3082 or 368-3089**

Counseling Services

Students experiencing problems with stress managements, interpersonal relationships, assertiveness, self-esteem, eating concerns, depression, etc. can turn to Counseling Services for help. Services provided include individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, training for faculty, staff and student groups, referral resources, and outreach programming.

Location and Phone: 324 Hamilton-Williams Campus Center, 368-3145

International Student Services

International Student Services assists international students and American Global Nomads in adjusting to the campus community and in meeting their education and personal goals. The office provides educational and social support, promotes cultural and intellectual exchange between American and international students, and serves as a liaison with other University offices. **Location and Phone: 213 Hamilton-Williams Campus Center, 368-3070**

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center

The objectives of the GLBT Resource Center include facilitating interaction between GLBT groups and other student groups on campus, in the local community, and on a national level, to provide reference materials, sponsor GLBT programming on campus, to meet the need for a GLBT safe zone on campus, and to incorporate GLBT issues into curricular and co-curricular learning. **Location and Phone: 218 Hamilton-Williams Campus Center, 368-3196**

Learning Disability Services

The Learning Disability Services office provides support and accommodations for students with a documented learning disability. **Location and Phone: 105 University Hall, 368-3275**

Minority Student Affairs

Provides specialized support services to assist African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic, and Native American students in their academic, personal, and social adjustment. **Location and Phone: 324 Hamilton-Williams Campus Center, 368-3151**

Public Safety-Campus Security

Public Safety strives to provide a safe environment for the campus community. Officers should be called without hesitation to report suspicious persons and/or circumstances, criminal activity, loss of property, or personal injuries.

Location and Phone: 120 Smith Hall, 368-2222

Student Health Services

At no cost, the Center allows students to see the physicians, nurse practitioner, or nurse. The Center provides the following services: physical examinations, illness/injury care and follow-up, chronic illness care, gynecological exams, STD/HIV testing, and health promotion counseling. Some services, such as prescription medication and lab work

may be assessed a fee. **Location and Phone: Stuyvesant Hall, 368-3160**

Women’s Resource Center

This campus organization provides an array of women-centered programming and information about University and community services available to women. The WRC Lounge provides a meeting place for student groups and houses a library of books, journals, and magazines relevant to women’s issues. **Location and Phone: 324 Hamilton-Williams Campus Center, 368-3189**

Other Campus Resources

<http://orientation.owu.edu/campusContacts.html>

Beloit College Mindset List

Every year Beloit College in Wisconsin compiles a list of facts about the incoming college freshmen class. Many of these tidbits will apply to this year’s freshmen. We hope this will put into perspective where the new students are coming from and help in your interactions with them. Enjoy!

<http://www.beloit.edu/index.php>