

CAREER + Student READINESS Success

Conversations about Transitioning to College: A Resource for Parents and Guardians

Transitioning to college can be exhilarating—and extremely challenging. As students anticipate the friends they’ll make, their new independence, and pursuing their academic interests, parents and guardians can think with them about support from home, developing healthy skills, and how to connect with resources when they face challenges. Use the prompts and questions below to facilitate intentional conversations with your incoming Sewanee student to get them thinking about how they can connect and succeed when they get to campus.

- **Communication while apart.** Talk with your student about how you’ll stay in contact while they are at Sewanee. Set expectations for how often you’ll communicate with them and how you’ll communicate. When will you communicate by phone or video, and when will you text?
- **Prompting independence.** Help your student to think about all the tasks they will need to manage independently, perhaps for the first time: making a schedule for classes and meetings, going to bed and waking up on time, doing their laundry, managing their time throughout the day, attending to their mental health, and maintaining healthy eating and exercise habits. For many students coming from a highly-structured high school environment, the first semester at college can be a dramatic change. Help your student to think through what their strengths and challenges are in relation to time-management and independence.
- **Balancing academic and social life.** Help your student think about what their goals are for college: academic, social, and in terms of career opportunities. Think with them about how they will achieve their goals while balancing new and exciting activities and the sometimes-challenging obstacles. Encourage them to think about what groups and activities they will want to get involved in and how to be brave about trying new things.
- **Talk about facing disappointment.** Help your student think about what they will do when they face disappointment, which will inevitably happen. Whether that disappointment be academic, social, or other, how will they work through those challenges? Ask: What have you done to overcome disappointment in the past? How can you learn from those experiences?
- **Once the semester begins, ask for academic updates.** Students may be used to parents and guardians receiving grades as they did in high school; now, it will be up to students to communicate to you their academic progress. Each year, the Sewanee Registrar’s Office creates an academic calendar that parents and guardians can subscribe to ([instructions can be found here](#)). Use significant dates on the calendar to prompt questions with your student: “I see final grades are available. How do you feel about your grades? Were there classes that surprised you?”
- **Encourage your student to connect to resources.** Our hope is that every Sewanee student knows they have a team of mentors supporting them throughout their time at Sewanee, including academic advisors, career readiness & student success coaches, peer mentors, tutors and other academic supports, athletic coaches, wellness and mental health support, and more. Talk to them about what it will be like to reach out for support—what barriers might they face in doing so? Each incoming Sewanee student has access to meet with a [career readiness & student success coach](#) who will support them throughout their time at Sewanee. They are a great place to start if a student needs support but is not sure how to find it.