Following the Freshman Year

There are certain feelings and emotions that first year freshman students will experience throughout their first year in college. While keeping in mind that every student is different, and will therefore have different thoughts and experiences, here is a basic timeline of what to expect during your first-time student’s freshman year of college.

August

- Encourage your student to go to class regularly, and to stay caught up on homework assignments. Make sure they know how important it is to stay organized and to plan ahead. Also make sure they know how to effectively study for their classes and exams.
- Make sure to keep in touch with your student, through phone calls, e-mail, and sending letters and packages to their Columbia College on-campus mailbox.
- Help your student to adjust to college life. Don’t come right out and ask them if they are homesick, as this will just make it worse. If they show some indication of homesickness, be sure to listen to them, and offer encouragement. Assure them that it is normal to feel overwhelmed at first, and that everything will be alright.
- Encourage your student to give some thought to what they want to major in, or at least what kind of classes they want to take. If they are taking INCC 111 (Introduction to Columbia College) they will be constructing their four-year plan. Even if they are not taking INCC, putting together a four-year plan is an extremely helpful exercise for all new students. Encourage them to visit their academic advisor, and you can even offer to help them if you can. However, if you do help them, be sure not to try to pressure them into or out of any classes; let them make their own final decisions on what courses to take.

September

- Encourage your student to get off campus. There is so much to do in Columbia, and our campus is just a couple blocks away from the downtown district, which offers many shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues. Tell your son or daughter to get some friends together and go to a concert at the Blue Note or a movie at the Ragtag Cinema, or go shopping at one of the many vintage shops and have dinner at one of the great local restaurants just minutes from campus.
- Encourage your student to attend the President’s State of the College Address. This is an excellent way for them to find out what’s new at their school, and what will be happening to the school in the future.
• If your student is having issues in any classes, encourage them to talk to and get to know their instructors. Your student will most likely find that if they take the initiative to talk to their teachers, the teachers will in turn be more likely to help the student succeed in their classes.

• Encourage your student to get involved on campus. Columbia College has over 40 clubs and organizations that your student can join, including student government, special interest clubs, and different academic honor societies. The Student Activities Commission sponsors free events throughout the year; the Community Consultants organize different events at the beginning of the semester, as well as the Fall Formal dance; the Resident Assistants in the residence halls are always holding programs in the halls so residents can get to know each other.

October

• Continue to encourage your students to attend class regularly. It can be easy to sleep in when you live on campus, or to tell yourself that you can get the notes from a friend, but just copying notes isn’t a very effective way to learn. There is no substitute for going to class, and you might as well go, because you’re paying for it!

• Make plans to attend Family Day and Homecoming Weekend. There is a lot going on that weekend, from a 5K run/walk for charity hosted by the Student Government Association, to activities for the entire family, to performances by different groups on campus. Family day is a great time to visit your student, and to get to know the campus, and see their living environment.

• Midterms are held in October, so this will be a stressful time for your student. Offer them support and encouragement when they need it, and be there for them if they need to vent or unwind. You can also brighten their day by sending them a care package to make studying seem a bit easier.

• If your student needs more help studying for midterms (or for classes in general) you can encourage them to visit tutoring services. The Seabrook Writing Center and the Bruce Math Center are located in Missouri Hall, along with tutors for other subjects, such as Spanish and science courses.

November

• With finals approaching, students will most likely become more and more pressured, due to paper deadlines and finals to study for. Remind them to stay organized, keep studying, try to minimize distractions, get a good night’s sleep,
and hang in there. The semester is almost over, and soon enough they will have a break.

- Advising week is held in November, and is the perfect opportunity for students to meet with their academic advisors and come up with a course schedule for the spring semester. Remind your students to come up with a preliminary schedule to take to their meeting with their advisor, which will make the whole process easier. If they put together their four-year plan earlier in the semester, it is a great tool during advising week.
- Students will register for classes the week after advising week, and will need to get financial arrangements for next semester set up.
- This time of year it is common for illnesses to spread through campus. If your student begins to feel sick, tell them to visit Health Services on the second floor of the Student Commons for treatment. There may also be flu shots available.
- Thanksgiving break is this month, so you will have a week to spend with your student. It can be easy to avoid all schoolwork while on break, but if your student still has papers to write and tests to study for, encourage them to work on them over break, because there isn’t much time left before finals when Thanksgiving break ends.

December

- Facing their first round of college final exams, your student will most likely be stressed to the max. Make sure you are there for them, and offer them advice to help them to de-stress, such as getting a good night’s sleep, eating balanced meals, and even getting some exercise at the newly remodeled Southy Fitness Center.
- Another way you can support your student during finals is by sending them a survival kit. You will receive a letter from RHCA (Residence Hall Council Association) with an offer to purchase a finals survival kit full of all sorts of snacks and goodies, which your student can pick up and have while they’re studying for their finals.
- At the beginning of finals week, Campus Life holds a late night breakfast, where everyone from the Campus Life office makes and serves a free breakfast to the students. Encourage your student to go, as it is a great way for students to unwind from their first day of final exams, and best of all, it’s free!
- Residential students have to check out of their residence hall no later than 24 hours after their last final is over, so make sure to communicate with your student in order to get them out of their hall on time and avoid an improper checkout fee. Students do not have to remove all their belongings from their rooms if they are returning next semester, but they do need to take all valuables, as well as fish.
They will receive a checklist of things they need to do and take with them for check out.

- Have a nice relaxing winter break with your student, and be sure to congratulate them on successfully completing their first semester at Columbia College!

**January**

- With classes starting up again, you can encourage your student to look back at last semester, and judge what they need to do differently, or what worked for them last semester. If your student’s grades weren’t what they were hoping for, encourage them to plan out a schedule, and adjust some of their studying and time management methods.
- There are still lots of events happening on campus throughout the year, and it’s never too late to get involved in clubs and organizations. There is bound to be a club related to something your student is interested in, encourage them to get involved.
- With the cold winter weather and the feelings that come with being back at school after a nice long winter break, your student may feel a bit despondent and unmotivated. Remind them to continue to get as much sleep as they can at night, eat healthy, balanced meals, and take advantage of the new equipment in Southy Fitness Center. Activity and healthy habits can help them to get back into the swing of the school year.

**February**

- Now that classes have been back in session for a while, make sure to check in with your student about their classes, if you haven’t already. Find out what they’re learning about, what their favorite class is, and which of their professors they like best, but don’t focus solely on the grades they’re getting in their classes.
- Remind them that they need to go to class every day. Get your money’s worth, and learn something while you’re at it.
- Send your student a valentine in the mail, just to let them know you’re thinking about them.
- Midterms are approaching, so be available to offer your student help and support when they need it. Remind them of the study tools available to them, such as the tutoring services in Missouri Hall and the quiet study space in Ellis Library.

**March**

- Midterms take place early in March, so your student will likely be stressed. Reassure them that the stress will be over soon, and with the semester half over, it’s all downhill from here.
- Encourage your student to begin thinking about next semester: what classes they want to take, which residence hall they want to sign up for, if they want to same roommate or a different one, and other decisions of that nature. Be available to talk and offer advice if they ask for it.

- Spring Break is coming up, communicate with your student to make plans for this time. Remind them that when they get back from break there is not a lot of time left before paper due dates and final exams.

- The priority deadline for students to turn in their FAFSA is also quickly approaching. You need to work with your student to fill out the FAFSA, as it requires information from both of you. The sooner you submit it, the better chance your student has of receiving financial aid, so fill it out as soon as possible!

April

- Remind your student to stay focused. By now they are most likely tired of studying and going to class every day, and they just want to take a break and relax. Urge them to continue to work hard, and soon enough they will have a three month break to unwind from school.

- Now that spring break is over, it will probably hit your student just how little time is left in the semester. Deadlines and tests are coming up quickly, and now is crunch time. Just keep assuring your student that it’s almost over.

- Advising week and registration for fall courses takes place this month. Just like last semester, communicate with your student about class registration, and make any necessary financial arrangements for next semester.

May

- Just like last semester, RHCA will be selling finals survival kits. Be sure to send one to your student!

- Residential students have to check out of their residence halls 24 hours after their last final, and all of their belongings must be out of their rooms. Communicate with your student and make proper arrangements to help them move out, to avoid an improper checkout fee.

- Now that finals are over, you and your student can both relax. Congratulate them on finishing their first year of college!