How Parents Can Support a Student Who Transfers to a New College or Starts in the Spring

Maybe your student decided to take a “gap” semester or maybe they went elsewhere for a semester/term, but it wasn’t a good fit. Whatever the reason, your student will most likely be one of a small group of students starting mid-year at their institution.

For students who took a gap semester, this is their first college move day. Your student will be filled with all of the excitement and nerves of a new student. They may be worrying about scheduling classes, getting along with their roommate, navigating campus, making friends, and working on college-level coursework.

When Students Transfer to a New College

For students who started elsewhere in the fall, they may feel like both a first-year and a transfer student. But most institutions will consider these students to be first-year students (transfer students typically have enough college credits to be juniors). If they had a rough semester at their first institution, they may be worried about repeating those mistakes. They may be hopeful for a fresh start.

They may be grateful to be closer (or farther) away from home. They may be confident in some areas such as living on campus, but worried about other areas. Many will have the same concerns as first-time new students when it comes to navigating a new campus and making friends.

7 Ways to Support Teens Who Transfer

1. Acknowledge your student’s experience. Whether they worked a full-time job or attended classes elsewhere, your student is bringing different experiences to campus than a traditional first-year student. Let them know that you are proud of them for making a decision that worked for them.

2. Encourage your student to reach out to their new roommate in advance of moving in. Whether your student is joining a returning first-year student roommate or
another new student, figuring out who is bringing what to the room can be important. Most importantly, it is also a good opportunity to begin this new relationship.

3. **Encourage your student to participate in welcome activities.** Many campuses host welcome activities during the spring semester/term. These events are great for meeting new friends and learning about ways to get involved on campus. (Hint: These are also great for returning students who may have had a rough start during their first semester and are looking for a new beginning).

4. **Remind your student that not everyone has made their ?forever? friends.** Your student may feel like everyone made their friends at the beginning of the fall semester. But first-semester friends are not always forever friends. In fact, not everyone made friends their first semester. Many students may have had a rough start to college or focused on their academics and are looking forward to a fresh start (see above hint).

5. **Encourage your student to get involved.** Getting involved may look different (involvement fairs are smaller and not all organizations recruit in the spring) but waiting until the fall to get involved may make for a lonely first semester.

6. **Attend orientation and events for new families.** Attending orientation, regardless of when your student begins college, is one of the best ways to show your support of their college journey.

7. **Resist over parenting.** You may worry about your student, we all do, and there are sure to be bumps along the way, but give them space, coach from the sidelines, and then let them navigate this new experience.

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