



WESTCHESTER
COUNSELING
CENTER

Administration Center,
Second Floor
(914) 773-3710

Commuter Students

Suggestions for Family Members



Balance and adjustment are two words that come to mind when anticipating your commuter student attending college. How can you best be an ally while continuing to set boundaries that work within your household? Here are some tips for helping your commuter student get the most out of their college experience.

- **Sit down with your student prior to the start of the semester.** Discuss and write down a list of both your concerns and concerns of your student. These might be more logistical in nature, for example, how will you manage finances, meal-time, curfew, car/transportation, or completing chores. Or they may be more emotional and mental, like how your student anticipates spending his/her free time, increased social activities, or creating more distance within your parent-student relationship. Preparing for these changes will help with the adjustment once the semester begins and students begin to feel stressed.
- **Encourage involvement.** Studies show that students feel more committed to college and have a higher success rate when they participate in activities and share experiences with other students. Acknowledge your student's commitment to academics. **Encourage your student to stay on campus between classes** and to attend athletic events, clubs or organizations, concerts, and other student activities.
- **Provide suggestions to improve social connection.** For example, sitting at lunch with new people and striking up a conversation or tagging along with classmates headed for lunch after class. Another great way to connect is to swap numbers with classmates, which can help both socially and academically. Also suggest mentorship—either from a coach, advisor, or professor in order to feel more connected on campus and work on fostering adult relationships outside of their relationships with you.
- **Promote an on-campus job.** If your student currently has a job, or is looking for one, you might encourage them to consider an on-campus job. It will ensure regular engagement with staff and students, involve them in the campus communication loop, and create a natural and safe "home" for them on campus.
- **Don't expect to see a lot of your student.** Chances are that your student has a full plate with classes, work and other involvements. So, if your student doesn't come home for dinner, maybe it's because a classmate invited them to the dining hall that night. You may miss your student, but it's important that they're making these campus connections.



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- **Be alert to stressful times.** Mark them on your calendar. Midterms and exams are particularly difficult times for students. Taking over chores for your student, providing treats, or filling the gas tank of the car are valued gifts during those difficult times.
- **Stay involved.** Get to know Pace University by reading literature or visiting the website. Show support by attending events and activities that are important to them.
- **Consider adapting current household rules.** Consider collaboratively determining new household rules. Adapting rules related to curfew, chores, meals and visitors might afford them more freedom to stay longer on campus to study, catch dinner with a friend or bring a study group home. It will also let your student know that you understand and respect that college is demanding.
- **Provide a quiet, comfortable study space.** College studies require much more time and effort than high school studies ever did. So, your student may be spending several hours of study time for every hour that they are in class—that's what most professors suggest. They'll need time and space to study effectively, without interruptions.
- **Encourage heathy behaviors.** Recommend using the on-campus gym or bringing their own lunch. Commuter students tend to struggle with eating healthy, as they are always on the go. Also understand that sleep habits may change and be prepared for that adjustment.
- **To relate a little better to your commuter student.** Here is a list of common commuter student problems. Adapted from commuterstudentproblems.tumblr.com

#1
Snow.

#2 Professors
who cancel
morning classes
without warning

3 When everyone
posts pictures of their
residence room on
Facebook, and you're
just like "Yeah, well I'm
still sleeping in my
childhood bed."

4 When
resident
students
complain about
early classes.

#5 First class:
8 AM
Second class:
6 PM.

#6 Escaping
from campus
drama only to
return home to
family drama.

7 Backseat
car naps are
a totally
normal thing.

8
Meeting
people.