



March 2011

Student Issues

There's a seasonal ebb and flow when it comes to student issues. Here are a few things your student may be experiencing this month:

- ▲ Low energy levels and restlessness
- ▲ Mid-semester slump and sickness
- ▲ Making plans for next year—housing, classes and financial aid
- ▲ Hidden conflicts between roommates and friends begin to arise
- ▲ Drug and alcohol use may increase
- ▲ Mid-term anxiety
- ▲ Seniors thinking about graduation
- ▲ Excitement or depression about Spring Break plans
- ▲ Pledging begins for Greek organizations
- ▲ Changing or deciding on a major

Making the Final Push

Encouraging students through midterms to the finish line

Students are facing midterms and spring break is around the corner. They've almost made it to the halfway point. Whew!

Now comes the trick of pushing themselves forward in order to finish up the year on a high note. There are a few little things you can encourage them to do that can make a **BIG** difference!

Do a Mind Dump. Your student likely has a million things on her mind, like starting that 30-page paper and figuring out what kind of job she can get for the summer. Instead of letting the list make her dizzy, she can help herself by doing a Mind Dump. It involves grabbing a notebook and jotting down everything on her To Do List. It doesn't have to be orderly—she can do that



“Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least.”

~ Johann Von Goethe

later. She just needs to capture what's on her mind in order to clear her head, get organized and move forward with the things she needs to accomplish.

Knock Off a Few Lingerin Tasks. Once a week, encourage your student to pick a task or responsibility that has been lingering too long on his To Do list and get it done! By picking just one of these things per week, it becomes more doable and he'll feel better about not having them hovering over him constantly.

Plan Some Fun. We all need things to look forward to, whether it's a spring break trip or taking a walk with friends after dinner. So, it's a good idea for your student to

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Making the Final Push

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plan some fun stuff that breaks up all the “have tos” and “shoulds” on her list.

Step Away from the Computer. It’s easy, especially during the midterm push, to spend a lot of time in front of the computer. The eyes sting, the back hurts and sitting all the time stinks! That’s why it’s important for students to step away from the computer now and then so it doesn’t feel like it’s running their lives. It’ll be okay if your student doesn’t check his Facebook page today because he’d rather shoot hoops with some friends. He can return emails tomorrow, once he has eaten a good meal. Writing, researching and studying are important, there’s no doubt. Yet, everyone needs to step away from cyberspace now and then to get back into real time.

Stay Connected. Students need to reach out to family and friends regularly in order to feel in touch and in tune. So, encourage your student to take time for campus friends, even if it’s studying together or quickly grabbing coffee to catch up. And she should keep up with her community service efforts, too. It’s important to stay connected to others to increase well-being and to keep on going.

Take Care of Body & Soul. Students need to eat healthy food on a regular basis and get into some solid sleep patterns. Moving their bodies and heading to the health center if they feel a cold coming on is smart, too. A body that is working well supports a healthy heart and mind.

There are a few intense months left this term and your student can really use your encouragement and support to make it to the finish line.

A Safe Spring Break

If your student is traveling somewhere for spring break, you can offer the following reminders to make sure he or she stays safe:

- **Use the buddy system**—In a new place, you’ll stay safest if you stick together.
- **If you choose to drink, know where your drink is coming from and don’t trust strangers**—A colorless, odorless liquid “date rape drug” like GHB or Ketamine can be slipped into the drink with ill intent.
- **Don’t do anything illegal**—The consequences are dire if you get arrested, especially in a foreign country.
- **Protect your eyes and skin**—Wear sunscreen, use sunglasses with proper UV protection and also have a hat.
- **Don’t go off with people you don’t know**—Trusting unknown people can end in tragedy.
- **Keep your wits about you**—Be smart with your personal safety and your property. Carry your wallet close to your body. Don’t get so intoxicated that you make bad decisions and put yourself in dangerous situations. Keep a clear head in order to keep yourself—and your friends—safe.

A safe spring break is very possible, as long as students stay smart!



Why is My Student So Busy?

March can be a busy month when students may not be in touch with you as often as you’re used to. The reasons are numerous:

- ▲ Student organizations they’ve joined are busy planning end-of-the-term activities
- ▲ Midterm exams and papers are fast approaching
- ▲ They’ve made more friends on campus and are spending time with them
- ▲ They are knee-deep in job searching for the summer or after graduation
- ▲ Community service involvements have deepened, as folks learn how reliable and competent they are

Try not to take it personally, as being busy and engaged is what helps many students stay—and succeed—in school. Reach out to let your student know that you’re there and interested in hearing about his busy life. He’ll likely have tales to tell!

Free Career App Available to Help Students

As students job search this spring—for summer gigs or full-time employment—they can use all the help they can get. Luckily, there's an app for that!

The career services office at Texas Christian University added a Career App to iTCU, the university's smartphone app, in the late fall. The resource can be accessed using an iPhone, iPod touch or iPad. It's also available at <https://careers.tcu.edu/resources>.

"I remember sitting in the waiting room and flipping through magazines before a job interview," Susan Nethery, director of student-affairs marketing at Texas Christian University, told *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. "The main idea was, What if you could instead spend that time brushing up on how to answer interview questions, or even look at some questions you may want to ask your potential employer?"

What's Offered

The Career App offers this type of information through six sections:

- **Business Etiquette**—Includes tips on social media, email and small talk
- **Creating Your Personal Pitch**—How to sell yourself, with examples to tap into
- **Dining Etiquette**—What fork to use, ordering tips and more
- **Interview Preparation**—What to wear, what to bring, how to determine your salary range and ways to improve your interview skills
- **Interview Questions**—Review the questions and get suggestions on how to respond, whether you're a current student or experienced alum
- **After the Interview**—What steps to take, like writing thank yous and following up with potential employers

So, interviewees can turn to their iPhone for tips on answering "describe your biggest weakness" as well as help deciphering their business lunch napkin usage.

A few short video tutorials are also available, reports the *Chronicle*, on topics like negotiating salary.

The app is part of an approach to giving students the tools they need to succeed in an iffy job climate. As Nethery told the *Chronicle*, "We're instead going to where the students are and delivering this information to them, because it is crucial to prepare students with the skills they will need to find a job in this economy."

Sources: iTCU from iTunes; *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 12/8/10; <https://careers.tcu.edu/resources/>

How Students are Spending Their Money

The economy may still be in trouble, yet U.S. college students continue to spend money on everyday needs—to the tune of approximately \$60 billion, according to eCampus.com. That's more than any previous year, except for 2007.

Back to School Items

How are they spending this money? Not counting tuition, room, board, fees or textbooks, students spent \$33 billion on back to school items such as:

- ▲ **Electronics and computer-related equipment**—\$12.99 billion
- ▲ **Clothes/accessories**—\$6.63 billion
- ▲ **Residence hall room furnishings** —\$5.31 billion
- ▲ **School supplies**—\$3.45 billion
- ▲ **Shoes**—\$3.41 billion
- ▲ **Collegiate branded gear, like sweat-shirts**—\$1.99 billion

Non-Essential Items

Plus, they spent about \$27 billion on non-essential items throughout the school year, including:

- ▲ **Snacks/drinks**—over \$11 billion
- ▲ **Alcohol**—\$5.5 billion (avg. about \$50 per student/per month)

- ▲ **Clothes/shoes**—\$5 billion
- ▲ **Personal care items**—\$4 billion



Entertainment

And then there's the \$2.4 billion spent on entertainment including:

- ▲ **Movie tickets**—\$658 million
- ▲ **On demand movies**—\$600 million
- ▲ **Music**—\$474 million
- ▲ **Video games**—\$341 million
- ▲ **Renting DVDs**—\$326 million

Better understanding what students are spending their money on can help you discuss finances with your student. These statistics can also help acknowledge the money-spending peer pressure students may face. Going out to eat seems to be a big draw, and students with limited funds may feel left out if they don't go along. Shopping for clothes, shoes and collegiate wear is also a major expenditure—the culture of shopping as recreation can cause some students to overspend when they don't have the funds. Discuss these cautionary tales with your student now, before credit issues become a problem!

Sources: PRWeb, 12/15/10; eCampus.com



Overtired & Overwhelmed

The National Sleep Foundation says that most adults 18 and older need

between seven and nine hours of sleep. Yet, college students don't always make this a priority—and it impacts them. They get overtired, which can lead to stress and a sense of being overwhelmed.



Being overtired can cause:

- Moodiness
- Higher susceptibility to illness
- Lack of energy
- Stress
- Anger
- Motor vehicle and machinery-related accidents
- Lack of concentration
- Difficulty retaining new information

Lack of adequate sleep often causes their grades to drop—sometimes dramatically. And, yes, staying up late to study and then getting up early in the morning to do it again are counter-effective strategies. What about the practice of sleep-deprived all-nighters? That creates a sleep debt that can be tough to overcome.

Getting Quality Sleep

So, the experts suggest a few simple tactics to help increase quality sleep:

- Get to bed around the same time each night so the body gets used to a regular sleeping schedule.
- Don't make the bed a key study space because then it'll be associated with stressful activity.

- Steer clear of alcohol before bed, as it can cause the drinker to wake up several times during the night, which can be just as detrimental as only getting a few hours in the first place.
- Avoid watching the clock.
- Establish a relaxing routine to do about a half hour before bed, like taking a shower, reading or listening to music, plus turn off the TV and computer ahead of time, too.
- Consider using “white noise”—like a fan—to help fall asleep.
- Try to make the bed as comfortable as possible.
- Finish eating about two hours before bed so the body won't be working on digestion.

- Avoid exercise right before bed, since a dropping body temperature is what the brain associates with sleep.

By trying to get her sleeping patterns under control, your student will be doing herself the ultimate favor. Many students are unaware that their sleep deprivation can cause them serious problems—they may be so used to being consistently sleepy that they don't realize their lack of sleep is unhealthy or abnormal. Good, quality sleep can go a long way in making her a sharper, healthier, happier and more in-control individual.

Sources: The Centers for Disease Control, www.cdc.gov; www.sleep-foundation.org; www.sleep-deprivation.com

The Spring Cleaning Season

Yes, it will be spring soon! And that means it's time for spring cleaning. Students can spruce up their spaces with a few easy tips, including:

- Moving furniture to do a thorough sweep and vacuum
- Thinning out their winter clothes as they realize what they haven't been wearing this season, so they can donate those pieces
- Disinfecting items that get a lot of use—and germs—such as phones, doorknobs, handles and more
- Wading through collected papers so they can shred certain items, file others and recycle the rest
- Washing their blankets and comforters
- Scrubbing out their wastebaskets
- Thoroughly cleaning bathrooms (if they have their own)
- Getting reacquainted with the top of their desk!

Spring cleaning gives students an opportunity to start fresh and get to some of those tasks that get lost in the shuffle. Share your own tips as they continue developing cleaning competencies that will last them a lifetime!

Another benefit of spring cleaning now is that students won't have as much heavy-duty cleaning to do at the end of the year when they're trying to juggle final exams and move-out.

