Penn Parents Council Top Ten List: What we wish we knew before becoming Penn parents!

1. **EXPECTATIONS:** College is a time of transition for your student and your family. Talk openly about what it means for your child to be away at school: How many times a week do you want to talk on the phone? Will you set a budget for spending money? What are the expectations, on both sides?

2. **GRADES:** Your A+ student will probably get lower grades in a few courses, and that is normal! Penn students are the best of the best in high school, but they might have academic challenges in college. Remind your student that no one is perfect all the time, and sometimes the greatest learning experiences start with a challenge. We also encourage you to familiarize yourself with academic resources at Penn.

3. **MAJORS:** Students change majors. Your child probably has some idea of what she wants to study, but that can change. Listen carefully to your student when she talks about coursework: what elicits the most excitement or passion? Is there a professor that serves as a mentor? Are they gravitating towards a certain academic discipline?

4. **TRANSITION:** Your student might feel homesick or lonely. Freshman year is a brand new experience that can seem overwhelming. Let your student know that you are always available to listen. It is easy for us as parents to suggest “join a new club” or “get to know the people on your hall,” but sometimes your child really needs you to listen and hear their concerns.

5. **MEALS:** Students can switch meal plans in the first few weeks of freshman year. Is your student quickly using up Dining Dollars? Or eating every meal at Hill House using meal swipes? If the suggested meal plan isn’t fitting your student’s needs, contact Penn Dining to make a switch.

6. **DON’T DO EVERYTHING:** Resist the urge to fix everything for your child. College is the time for our children to learn how to advocate for themselves and navigate life as an adult. Encourage them to ask for help proactively, from professors, classmates, and upperclassmen.
NEED HELP? However, you know your student best. If you are seriously concerned, call Penn. We suggest programming two numbers into your phone: the Penn Parents office at 215-746-4646 and Public Safety at 215-573-3333. These offices can help you get connected to important and relevant resources on campus.

SLEEP & EXERCISE: Sleep and wellness are key to a healthy, happy student. Ask if your student slept well, or if they are getting enough exercise. One family instituted a “walk and talk” date weekly. The student would walk around campus and the parents walked around their neighborhood while talking on the phone. They talked about what they saw—it was a great way to encourage exercise and served as a stress-buster.

TIME MANAGEMENT: Learning how to manage time is key during freshman year. For the first time, your student is solely responsible for his or her schedule. Managing time is a learned skill and takes practice. Weingarten Learning Resources Center has excellent time management suggestions for students. The Penn Tutoring Center can also help!

ENCOURAGEMENT: Your child will experience highs and lows at Penn. Celebrate their successes, but more importantly, let them know they have your support during times of struggle. Make sure they know that you are proud of them. Four years at Penn go by quickly—enjoy this exciting time together. Welcome to the Penn family!

Feeling supported and informed is at the top of every Penn parent’s list. Stay connected to one of the strongest links to your student’s success:

www.pennparents.upenn.edu