

## Last words of wisdom: Incoming Freshman

As students finalize their packing, bid farewell to high school friends and try to convince mom to stop crying, here are some parting thoughts on a healthy and smooth transition to college:

Vanderbilt's McGuire said, "In high school, there are a lot of extrinsic factors that motivate students — parents making sure you get up in the morning and get to school, teachers that take attendance and stay on you about schoolwork, and even school officials that make sure you are going to classes and getting involved in things outside the classroom. Students are held accountable. In college, many of those extrinsic factors and accountability measures go away. Students have to decide if they are going to get out of bed in the morning and go to class. Many college classes don't require attendance, so students can just skip with no "consequence." Days are less structured, and students have more freedom to decide if they are going to immerse themselves academically, socially, etc. If they haven't found intrinsic motivating factors or have no idea what really motivates them in general, that can be a big struggle for many as they transition to college life."

Mike Geller, New England regional director of admissions for The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. suggested this: "Be mindful and think about what you want to get out of your education. College is not just a stepping-stone to grad school or the workforce, it is a time to really explore what kind of person you want to be in the world."

Scott Chrysler, academic dean and college counselor at Episcopal School of Acadiana in Louisiana warned, "Anything in excess is bad — sleeping, eating, partying, studying, exercising, etc. Learn moderation and balance."

Moira McKinnon, director of college counseling at Berwick Academy in Maine advised: "Be ready to ask for help, from many different sources. Make friends with your resident assistants, your teaching assistants/professors, and the dining hall staff. Do not skip class. Be comfortable with discomfort, and seek out the unknown. Join at least one club or team in the first two weeks to start building a social network and a schedule beyond the academic day. Get a job, on campus if you can: studies show working 10-12 hours a week leads to higher grades, graduating on time, and building a network for your resume. When you are feeling lonely, don't go on social media to connect with all your high school friends; instead, go down the hall and make friends with someone new."

And some final thoughts from current college students:

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"Make decisions intentionally and thoughtfully. I sort of lost my direction during freshman year, and instead of reflecting I just threw myself really hard at anything and everything I could."

"You need about six canisters of Lysol wipes for your dorm room. You will never use the miniature ironing board. Vacuum your rug weekly. Nap often. Be nice to your parents the summer before — they are as anxious as you are but they're also sad."

"Don't rush. Take your time enjoying your first year of college as you make the proper adjustments."

"Keeping an open mind is the biggest thing I've learned. Everyone wants to have a plan that sounds good in their head, but may not be what they wanted to ACTUALLY do. It is kind of a weird concept, but I fell victim to this idea. Focus on simple success freshman year, don't over think it."

"Take care of yourselves mentally, physically, and spiritually. You will get through it all because there are resources to help you. Don't feel like you are alone. Beware of Imposter Syndrome. You are where you are for a reason. Know that who you were in high school is completely different from who you are and will be in college. No number or GPA defines you. Lastly, remember your privilege and know that many people have not had the opportunities that you have had. Learn and work to create an equitable society where everyone has the same chances to succeed as you have had."

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