



INTRODUCTION

About This Guide

Congratulations for supporting your student's pursuit of further education! Starting college involves change in their life—change of a significant nature. This guide focuses on the challenges your new college student may experience—some unique to commuters, others common to all students—so that you can better provide support throughout their transition. First-year students whose family members understand transition issues and act to reflect this knowledge begin college with enthusiasm, confidence, and a sense of personal responsibility. Further, those students will be more likely to achieve their goals if family members support them appropriately. Research shows the level a student feels engaged at their institution matters, as it relates to their ability to overcome challenges and stay on track for graduation (Jacoby, 2015).

This guide for families is designed to help you

- support your student during their time at college;
- understand common academic and social transitions commuter students experience in the first college year;
- explore academics, finances, engagement, and well-being related to the college student experience;
- underscore the importance of open and supportive communication;
- identify behaviors and attitudes that enhance student learning;
- learn about common resources available at most institutions; and
- find a common language through a glossary of terms specific to college.

In various sections, such as Academic Expectations and Student Engagement, you will find information to help best support your student as they transition into college. The end of each section includes a “What can you do now?” list. These lists provide specific tasks and action steps to discuss with your student.

The Commuter Student

More than 75% of all students enrolled in colleges and universities commute to campus, and the reasons for this vary. Some students will live at home because of financial obligations or family responsibilities. Others commute because on-campus housing is not available at their institution. Still others may choose to live in a home or apartment near campus as they are looking for more independence. The term *commuter student* is used to identify any college or university student who does not live in institution-owned, on-campus housing. However, some institutions may define commuter students differently; we encourage checking with your student's institution to learn more about their definition.