

February 2008

Seasonal 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:

- ▲ Difficulty getting into study mode
- ▲ Things become routine...school finally becomes home
- ▲ Missing family and friends at home, and friends who did not return to school
- ▲ Cliques become stronger within residence hall communities, student organizations and in classes
- ▲ Cabin fever and burnout
- ▲ Pressures to figure out living plans for next year as the room assignment process draws near
- ▲ Valentine's Day depression if not dating
- ▲ Vocational choice/ internship search causes anxiety
- ▲ Spring break planning underway

It's NOT a Contest!

Helping Your Busy Student Put Things in Perspective

Many students are guilty of it at one point or another: holding "I had less sleep than you did" or "I'm SO busy!" contests. This tends to be a particular phenomenon among student leaders. They swap tales of all-nighters, crammed schedules and three-page To Do lists, almost as a badge of honor, to prove that they are in demand and working hard. Yet, this approach isn't good for them. After all, it's NOT a contest!

If your student seems caught up in this type of frenzy, there are a few discussion points you can tap into to help him assess what is really going on. For instance:

- What drives him to do all that he is doing? Interest? Fear of life after college? Competition? An inability to say "no"? By getting deep into the "why" behind his actions, you can help him break it down into a healthier approach.
- What does she enjoy about certain involvements? And does the negative-speak you hear about others (i.e. when she complains about the inefficiency of her student government group) indicate that maybe that's not a healthy use of her time and energy?
- How does he feel valued by others, whether it's you, his siblings, his pro-

fessors, his advisors or his fellow students? Is he looking for approval or trying to meet perceived expectations?

- What are her reactions when someone else talks about being so busy? Admiration? Thinking that he is showing off? Empathy? Feeling bad for her and offering to help? Help your student examine WHY she might have those reactions.
- Is he "working smart" to manage time and tasks? Maybe he needs assistance with time management to juggle the many things on his plate.
- Does she feel that anything in her life is suffering due to her hectic schedule? Sleep? Grades? Making friends? Time to exercise? Help her look at her life to see what's good and what might be missing.



By addressing this with your busy student before he crashes and burns out, you can help him determine how he wants to spend his time and the healthiest ways to accomplish that. Involvement and experiencing all that college has to offer is wise; acting like you're in a "busy contest" is not. You can help him see the difference.



February Celebrations to Share

February is full of celebrations that you can share with your student! For instance:

It's Black History Month

So, why not...

- share some trivia questions (see box) to see how much you can educate one another?
- talk about Black leaders, living or deceased, that you admire and why?
- ask her what she is learning about Black History in class or through the multiple Black History Month programs happening on campus?

It's National Hot Breakfast Month

So, why not...

- send your student an envelope filled with instant oatmeal packets?
- make breakfast for her one morning when she's home?
- Give her \$10 so she and a friend can get out into the community and hit a pancake breakfast at the local firehouse or VFW?

It's National Time Management Month

So, why not...

- share a time management tip that is working well for you?
- encourage her to talk with an advisor, residence hall director, coach or other trusted adult if she is struggling with time management?
- get a simple \$5 plastic wall clock, pry off the cover and decorate the face with pictures/stickers/etc. to give your student "the gift of time"?

It's the Chinese New Year!

The Chinese New Year for 2008 begins on Feb. 7. The Chinese calendar is close to 5,000 years old. It is made up of 12-year cycles, with each year named after an animal. People

supposedly possess characteristics of the animal in the year of their birth. So, as the Year of the Rat races in, use the following chart to determine where you and your student fall in the grand scheme of things. You just might learn something about one another!

- ✓ Year of the Tiger—born in 1974
- ✓ Year of the Rabbit—born in 1975
- ✓ Year of the Dragon—born in 1976
- ✓ Year of the Snake—born in 1977
- ✓ Year of the Horse—born in 1978
- ✓ Year of the Sheep—born in 1979
- ✓ Year of the Monkey—born in 1980

- ✓ Year of the Rooster—born in 1981
- ✓ Year of the Dog—born in 1982
- ✓ Year of the Pig—born in 1983
- ✓ Year of the Rat—born in 1984
- ✓ Year of the Ox—born in 1985

(Add or subtract 12 years from any of these dates if you don't see your birth date represented.)

Visit the Chinese Culture Center's page at www.c-c-c.org/chineseculture/zodiac/zodiac.html to learn more about the legend of these 12 animals, the characteristics of each and more.

There is always some way to connect with your student—and February offers options aplenty!

Black History Month Quiz

Questions:

1. Why was February chosen for Black History Month?
2. In what year did Black History Month begin (after being Black History Week)?
3. Which civil rights leader became the first African-American to make a serious bid for the U.S. presidency when he ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1983?
4. Dr. Maulana Karenga, a professor of Black Studies at Cal. State University, created _____ as a way to unite the African-American community after the Watts riots in L.A.
5. Who was known as the "Moses of her people," helping more than 300 slaves escape via the Underground Railroad?
6. Which black track-and-field athlete won four gold medals in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, thus derailing Adolf Hitler's intent to use the Olympic Games as a display of Arian supremacy?
7. Which black broadcaster and author hosts his own daily radio and TV show?

Answers:

1. Because it contained the birthdays of both Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, two men who made a significant impact on black history.
2. In 1976, the celebration was expanded to the entire month of February.
3. The Rev. Jesse Jackson.
4. In 1966, he created the well-known holiday of Kwanzaa, which is celebrated from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1.
5. Harriet Tubman.
6. Jesse Owens.
7. Tavis Smiley.

Spirituality on Campus: The Search for Meaning & Purpose

What are students experiencing spiritually on campus these days? According to a multi-year project by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), today's college students report high levels of spiritual interest and involvement. Over 112,000 U.S. undergraduate students were studied and findings point to many being actively engaged in the search for meaning and purpose. In addition, many are also very involved in religion as students reported a significant commitment to their religious beliefs and practices.

Recent Trends in Students' Experience of Spirituality

In a nutshell, here's what the study found...

Spiritual Search and Religious Engagement

- College students report high levels of spirituality and idealism. They espouse many spiritual and religious values and virtues.

Measuring Spirituality and Religiousness

- Spirituality and religiousness are multi-dimensional, [students] find expression in a variety of beliefs and everyday practices.

Political Orientation and Attitudes

- While there is a political divide on some issues between students at different levels of spirituality and religious engagement, there is also convergence on a number of social concerns and on the ideals, virtues and values that students espouse.

Spirituality, Religiousness and Well-Being

- While spirituality and religiousness generally relate to physical well-being, the relationships with psychological health are nuanced and complex.

Religious Preference

- There is a wealth of diversity in students' religious beliefs and practices.

No matter how your student experiences spirituality, chances are that he is searching for meaning and purpose during his time on campus. You can encourage him to explore various spiritual avenues, whether it's attending interfaith services, checking out various campus speakers, participating in a residence hall program or talking with others on campus. And try to be open about these conversations with your student, too, even if you disagree at times. It's all part of his growth on the path to a more enlightened self-awareness—and life.

Source: From the executive summary of *The Spiritual Life of College Students: A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose*, Higher Education Research Institute, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, University of California at Los Angeles, www.spirituality.ucla.edu (2006).

From an article by Mary Ann Hanicak, Assistant to the Vice President of Student Affairs, John Carroll University (OH)

Alternative Spring Break Possibilities

The picture of a "traditional" Spring Break trip to a sunny destination for a week of debauchery is changing among today's college students. More and more are choosing to participate in alternative break trips to do community service, either in far-off destinations or places right in their backyard. So, as your student looks toward the upcoming Spring Break, consider talking about options that could include:

Cross-Cultural Solutions

www.crossculturalsolutions.org

During Spring Break 2008, students can choose from programs in five countries: Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Peru and Russia—to participate in the Insight Abroad program. They'll work side-by-side with local people to experience another culture during the week that they are there.

VolunteerMatch

www.volunteermatch.org

Students looking for local service projects can tap into this global volunteerism clearinghouse. By plugging in their zip code and interest areas, they'll be presented with a wealth of ways to do good, right in their campus or hometown neighborhood. What an option!

The Campus Community Service Office

Encourage your student to also check with the campus community service office to discuss alternative spring break programs. Some may already be underway but gathering information now is a good way for your student to start planning for next year!

There are plenty of ways for your student to do good during Spring Break. With just a little bit of research, he can find the type of experience that is right for him.



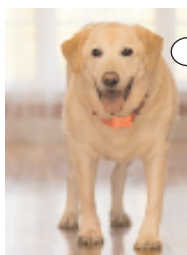
Connecting with Your Student Over Valentine's Day

Love is on many people's minds as Valentine's Day creeps ever closer. Your student may be one of those people, whether he is in a relationship or not.

Uncoupled students can feel crummy while folks in couples can feel pressured. So, to make Valentine's

Day an overall celebration of friend/family/significant other/pet love, here are a few things you can do:

- ▲ **Get Pet Smart.** Send a photo of the family dog, with a bubble coming out of her mouth saying something like, "I fur-get how much I miss you when you're gone!"
- ▲ **Take Care of Your Heart.** Make a pact with your student that you're going to take advantage of the Valentine's Day emphasis on hearts to both take better care of your own hearts, whether through adding 1,000 steps a day, signing up for an aerobic activity or checking out the American Heart Association's National Body Challenge 2008 at www.americanheart.org/.
- ▲ **Converse with Conversation Hearts.** Send a pack of conversation hearts and challenge your student to make up a story using the phrases on them. Could be interesting!
- ▲ **Put Together a Valentine-making Party.** Send a pack of Valentine-making goodies, from stickers to doilies to fun scrapbooking paper (see box for ideas). This will allow your student to hold her very own Valentine-making party with



I ruff you!!
xoxoxo

friends as a way to focus on love beyond just coupledom!

- ▲ **Capture Love Songs.** Next time you're on the phone or Instant Messaging, go back and forth with your student to see how many songs you can come up with that have the word "love" in the title. You'll have a laugh plus you'll each learn more about one another's music this way, too!
- ▲ **Create a "Love Collage."** Cut out magazine pictures or family/friend photos to make a "Love Collage" for your student. This will emphasize the many different types of love that make his world richer! On Valentine's Day, it can be easy to focus on what he doesn't have (a relationship) but you'll be helping him reshift his attitude.

There are all sorts of ways to connect with your college student. Consider a Valentine's Day heart-to-heart today!

Valentine Card-Making Kit

Here are some possible supplies to send along...

- scrapbook paper (the kind that comes in those fat packs at craft stores)
- markers
- magazines and old calendars to cut out photos and quotes
- lacey doilies
- stickers
- sequins
- yarn
- curling ribbon
- construction paper
- crayons
- little kid valentine cards they can adapt
- aluminum foil
- pipe cleaners

And don't feel like everything has to be pink and red! Love comes in all colors.

Super Bowl Sunday!

Even if you and your student are living apart, you can still celebrate together in some creative ways. For instance...

- Touch base during commercials to compare notes
- Send her a Super Bowl Party Pack to prep for the big day (see box for ideas)
- Dress in your team's colors and send each other digital photos—it's the next best thing to being there
- Plan to attend a sporting event together the next time you're in the same town—anticipation can be just as fun!

May the best team win! And soon you can start prepping for college basketball's March Madness!



Super Bowl Party Pack Ideas

- Goldfish crackers
- Fun napkins
- Chocolates shaped like footballs
- A Nerf football
- Balloons
- Goofy hats
- Foam #1 fingers
- A Football for Dummies book

