How Parents Can Help Students in Trouble

Parents need to keep perspective and remember that college students are generally resilient and will adjust and bounce back. However, sometimes problems persist. Parents often find it difficult to do nothing when they know that their student may be having difficulty.

If you’ve sensed that your student is struggling with his or her college experience – either academically or otherwise – here are a few suggestions of things you might consider.

• **Wait it out**
  This may be one of the most difficult things that you can do as a parent. You want to jump in and fix things. You want to make your student feel better. You want to feel that you are doing your parental duty and helping your child. But sometimes, you may need to sit back and wait to see what happens. Wait to see if things get better after a while. You certainly want to empathize and support your student, but “wait time” allows the opportunity to find solutions. Wait time allows your student to realize that things may improve with time.

• **Open a discussion with your student**
  Be frank in talking to your student about

Family Weekend 2010

Campus was abuzz with the increased presence of Panther fans during the first weekend of October as more than 1250 Pitt families joined us for Family Weekend 2010. Friday night kicked-off the weekend with our first-ever Family Weekend Student Showcase featuring the talents of eight performing student groups, ranging from a cappella to gospel to dance and instrumentals.

On Saturday morning, families participated in the 2nd Annual Family Match Game, Pitt’s version of the Newlywed Game. The competition was fierce to see which parent/student team knew each other better than the others. Jeffrey Barr and his daughter, Lucy (’14), from Washington, DC, pulled ahead in the final round to win the grand prize of four game tickets and four pregame sideline passes to the Homecoming Game on Saturday, October 30th. Congratulations, Barr Family!

Throughout the weekend, families enjoyed discounted admission to the Carnegie Museums of Art & Natural History, Phipps Conservatory, and our Nationality Rooms in the Cathedral of Learning. Many stopped at the Family Weekend pregame event to get their “blue and gold on” with face paint and sign-making. Of course, no Family Weekend would be complete without a win from our Panther football team who dramatically defeated Florida International University 44-17! Go PITT!

The date for next year’s Family Weekend will be determined only after the football schedule is announced in the spring – stay tuned to [www.familyweekend.pitt.edu](http://www.familyweekend.pitt.edu) for information.

PLEASE TAKE OUR SURVEY

Please take a minute and provide us with some feedback about our parent and family newsletter. By answering a few simple questions online at: [www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BDGNEKPKP4S](http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22BDGNEKPKP4S) you will help us produce newsletters that are informative and beneficial to you. If you have a question for which you would like a response, please send it via parents@pitt.edu.
Dear Reader,

Thank you for the encouraging feedback many of you shared about our first issue of “Panther Connections” through our embedded survey in the last issue. We are very pleased that you found it informative and helpful. That is clearly our goal.

In this issue, we share what is going on in the month ahead as well as provide information on particular topics that many of you have asked us about. The topics include alcohol awareness and prevention techniques you can use with your student, information about the Greek system, and some news from departments regarding services and events.

As always, we welcome ideas for future articles from you; we want to be sure we are giving you information that you want and need. There are many of you out there with questions on a variety of topics, and we would love to hear them and perhaps address some of them in future articles. Please share your ideas and questions with me via e-mail (parents@pitt.edu) with the subject “Article ideas.” I can also be contacted by phone at 412-624-8548.

It was a pleasure meeting many of you during Family Weekend. I look forward to seeing you again very soon. Thank you for reading and as always Hail to Pitt!

Marv Roth, Parent and Family Liaison

Chancellor’s Update

University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Mark A. Nordenberg frequently issues formal “Updates” to the campus community to keep students, faculty, and staff apprised of important developments and information.


The second Update, “Institutional Values in Light of Recent News,” is a candid response to recent events that are quite troubling and can be found at www.chancellor.pitt.edu/news/2010-10-11.html.
A First Year Student Parents’ Heads-Up

Throughout the year, students go through different transitional milestones. At these times, support from family can provide encouragement and reassurance that many of these experiences are normal, and in some cases expected. This is a guide designed to help you understand the types of challenges your student may encounter. Every student is an individual and will react to these challenges in different ways. You want to be attentive to how your students respond to some of their challenges. Your listening ear is a key to knowing when or if they need a little extra support. We will have a brief monthly summary of “typical” challenges.

October - November

First-year students may still be trying to figure out how to keep current with all of their subjects and balance their study time. The challenging aspect for first-year students is that they have not yet had a college-level mid-term exam. Like any first-time experience it is hard to know how to approach it. The best advice is for them to keep up with their course work and regularly review what they have learned.

Students who fall behind typically have a difficult time catching up in time for the exam. Parents who have attended college can probably recall the nervousness that accompanies this time of year. Help your students alleviate stress that might be building around the weight of the exam. They should try to keep a steady and focused, but not stressed, approach to their preparation.

You have probably heard that first semester freshmen often use their high school study strategies as a frame of reference for college. Unfortunately, this is not an effective strategy for college coursework and exams. However, once they have experienced the first series of exams they will be able to better assess their preparation efforts. If they do well, then they are on the right track. If they do not do well, then they should modify their study habits and exam preparation strategies to ensure that they are more effective and subsequently successful.

The Academic Resource Center and other support services (www.parents.pitt.edu/offsa/academic.html) are available to help where needed. Please see the article in this issue by the staff of the Academic Resource Center.

October - November

First-year students may still be trying to figure out how to keep current with all of their subjects and balance their study time. The challenging aspect for first-year students is that they have not yet had a college-level mid-term exam. Like any first-time experience it is hard to know how to approach it. The best advice is for them to keep up with their course work and regularly review what they have learned.

Students who fall behind typically have a difficult time catching up in time for the exam. Parents who have attended college can probably recall the nervousness that accompanies this time of year. Help your students alleviate stress that might be building around the weight of the exam. They should try to keep a steady and focused, but not stressed, approach to their preparation.

You have probably heard that first semester freshmen often use their high school study strategies as a frame of reference for college. Unfortunately, this is not an effective strategy for college coursework and exams. However, once they have experienced the first series of exams they will be able to better assess their preparation efforts. If they do well, then they are on the right track. If they do not do well, then they should modify their study habits and exam preparation strategies to ensure that they are more effective and subsequently successful.

The Academic Resource Center and other support services (www.parents.pitt.edu/offsa/academic.html) are available to help where needed. Please see the article in this issue by the staff of the Academic Resource Center.

Fraternity and Sorority Life 101

By Summer Rothrock, Coordinator of Fraternity and Sorority Life

The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life provides support for 30 social fraternities and sororities which are governed by student-led executive boards – Interfraternity Council, Collegiate Pan-hellenic Association and National Pan-Hellenic Council.

Fraternity and Sorority Life at the University of Pittsburgh enables students to connect to the University and get involved in leadership roles. Each fraternity and sorority experience is unique and can provide members with opportunities to develop lifelong friendship, provide service to the community, have an academic support system and strengthen leadership development skills.

Fraternity and sorority life is a multifaceted experience that begins with the new member education process. New member education serves as an introduction to the history, values, and traditions of the fraternity or sorority through a prescribed chapter educational process. This education helps to bond new members with their organization and connect them to the university.

Students in the fraternity and sorority system coordinate large programs and initiatives for all the chapters. These programs include the Steel City Step Show, Greek Sing, Pitt Dance Marathon, Order of Omega Tutoring program, blood drives, Greek athletics day, and many others. In addition to programming, Fraternity and Sorority Life is currently fundraising for a $500,000 pledge to the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute for lung and thoracic cancer research and awareness.

Fraternity and Sorority Life provides many opportunities and experiences, but one experience that a student should not experience is hazing. Any students who feel they are being hazed should contact the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life or the Office of Student Conduct.

Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life: 412-648-7832

Student Conduct: 412-648-7910
PITT ARTS Connects Students With Culture

By Annabelle Clippinger, Director of PITT ARTS

PITT ARTS has been connecting Pitt students to the vibrant arts and culture scene of Pittsburgh for the past 14 years.

Undergraduate students can enjoy the symphony, opera, ballet, jazz concerts, museum and gallery exhibits, independent films, lectures, plays, spoken word and so much more.

The “Arts Encounters” programs provides students with free tickets, free transportation, a free meal or dessert, and an encounter with stars of the art world, including celebrities like Joshua Bell, Spike Lee, Philip Glass, and Midori. That’s right—the programs are totally FREE!

PITT ARTS offers programs throughout the weekend, and all PITT ARTS offerings are completely alcohol-free. Students can sign up for an arts program with a friend or on their own. Even if they attend individually, they can be sure to meet some other Pitt students who share their appreciation for the arts. Communities are forged and friendships are made on PITT ARTS’ outings.

Each year more than 15,000 Pitt students also enjoy the benefit of attending six of the local museums for free by using their valid Pitt Oakland campus ID, thanks to PITT ARTS. These are the Carnegie Museums of Art and Natural History, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, Andy Warhol Museum, Mattress Factory, Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum, and the Senator John Heinz History Center.

PITT ARTS is a big hit with parents and Pitt families. Every year during Family Weekend, PITT ARTS hosts three “Arts Encounters” programs for undergraduates and their families. Also when you visit your students at Pitt, ask them to pick up some “Cheap Seats” tickets at PITT ARTS so you can attend a Broadway musical touring through Pittsburgh together, or the opera, the symphony, the ballet or a play. There are 11 organizations to choose from with deeply discounted tickets available. Your students can purchase up to four tickets, and their three guests do not have to be Pitt constituents.

PITT ARTS also is an important part of the Outside the Classroom Curriculum (OCC). Students earn OCC credits for the Appreciation for the Arts goal area by attending its programs.

For more information, please visit www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/offsa/TalkToMe.html.

Depression is a very real concern on college campuses across the country, and the University of Pittsburgh has taken proactive measures to help students understand the symptoms of depression and resources available to combat the issue. Pitt has kicked off its annual depression awareness campaign—Give Depression a Voice: Talk About It with a series of events designed to draw attention to the issue.

The campaign is designed to inform students about the symptoms of depression and let them know that help is available if they are struggling. Students and staff will be wearing “Talk About It” t-shirts and wristbands on Mondays to promote awareness of the symptoms of depression. Students should be on the lookout for upcoming events that will be held to spread the word and “Give Depression a Voice.” If your student is dealing with anxiety or depression, please encourage them to visit or call the Counseling Center to speak with someone and “Talk About It.” (412-648-7930)
What you perceive and why you are worried. Be specific in letting him or her know what has caused your concern. Let your student know that you are worried about something that you’ve seen or heard and discuss the situation. Your student may be able to reassure you or explain the behavior that worries you. Just having the discussion may be all that your student needs to let him or her know that someone is noticing and supportive.

• Encourage your student to stay on campus and work through the issue

Of course, this will depend on the severity of your concern, but staying on campus and dealing with issues may be better than coming home and escaping the problems. Encourage your student to make connections at school through utilizing the various services and programs on campus that are designed to assist students. Your student might also benefit from joining groups or participating in student activities. The Student Organization Resource Center Web site http://www.sorc.pitt.edu/organization directory lists all official groups on campus.

• Help your student identify the root of the problem

Sometimes a student is having a difficult time but doesn’t know why. Helping your student to understand and identify the root of the problem is the first step toward making things better. Is your student overwhelmed because he or she needs help with time management? Is their course load too heavy? Are their classes too difficult? Is she or he having difficulty communicating with a roommate? Being able to name the problem will help in identifying a potential solution.

• Help your student create an action plan

Once your student identifies the root of the problem, potential solutions may seem obvious. Does he or she need to visit the tutoring center? Get a dayplanner to write down all assignments and appointments? Consult with the RA to work on roommate issues? Having a one, two, or three step action plan will put your student in control.

• Suggest campus support

Pitt has many forms of support for students. For academic concerns, your student might turn to his or her academic advisor, instructors, Academic Resource Center (see the related article elsewhere in this issue) or writing center, other students in the class or upperclass students. For social issues there are RAs, or the Counseling Center. Help your student think about other people on campus who can provide support.

• Visit your student on campus

While you want to encourage your student to stay on campus rather than come home, both you and your student may feel that you need to touch base with each other in person. You might suggest that you come to campus for a visit rather than have your student come home. This may also help your student to feel pride in Pitt, to introduce you to his or her friends, (to clean his or her room!), and to show you around their new world. You’ll connect with each other, but won’t feel that he or she is running away from problems. You’ll also have the opportunity to see your student in their environment.

If you feel that your student’s problem is serious or more than he or she can handle and you are worried about your student’s health or safety, call the Parent and Family Liaison to discuss appropriate resources for this situation. If you do need to call someone at the University, keep FERPA regulations in mind. The Liaison may not be able to discuss specifics with you, but you can at least alert someone to your concern with your student.

It is difficult for a parent to see a child (of any age) in difficulty, trouble, or pain. Most college students will hit some rough patches at various points during their college career. Most students will weather the difficult times and bounce back. Some students’ difficulties will be more serious and they will need their parents’ help and guidance to get through. As parents, we will need to remember that our student is likely to be stronger, more aware, and more competent at the end of a difficult time.

This article with related links is adapted from a posting from the collegeparentcentral.com website with permission.
Groups Offered by the Counseling Center

**Back on Track:** For students experiencing academic difficulties and those who could also benefit from working on emotional concerns.

**Coping with Family Drama:** A support group for students who wish to work on relationships with their families

**Anxiety Support Group:** Support for students struggling with general anxiety and/or stress.

**Grad Student Support Group:** Weekly support for graduate students in any discipline.

**Sexual Abuse Recovery Group:** A safe place for women who have experienced any type of sexual assault or abuse.

**In the Process:** A support group for students currently in treatment for long-standing mood problems.

**Coping With Grief:** A support group for students who have lost family members or other loved ones.

**Double Trouble:** Exploration in substance abuse, recovery, and self discovery.

**LGBTQ Group:** A safe place for undergrad and grad students to come and talk about being LGBTQ at Pitt.

For more information call the Counseling Center at 412-648-7930 Open to University of Pittsburgh Students only.

---

DIDJA KNOW?

By Anna Vitriol, Health Educator

The first college semester for most students is a time for creating new memories, friendships and experiences. However, for many college students the new semester is also a time for excessive drinking---and its aftermath.

Let's be realistic. Research trends indicate that first-year college students are at a greater risk for alcohol misuse. However, many parents fail to realize how the consequences of excessive drinking can have a significant, destructive, and costly impact on college life.

As the fall semester unfolds, parents need to understand how important it is to talk to their college-age students about the consequences of excessive drinking. The following tips are a helpful way to speak to your students and to ensure they remain safe throughout their college experience.

1. **Set clear expectations concerning your student’s academic work.** Performance rates in college are closely linked to levels of alcohol consumption. The D or F student drinks over twice as much per week compared to the A student. As parents, if you set realistic expectations for your students about their academic work, they are more likely to focus on their studies and spend less time getting in trouble with alcohol.

2. **Avoid reminiscing about your good old college days.**

As entertaining as stories can be about your days living like “Animal House,” you need to be able to draw a fine line between what is normal and abnormal drinking behavior. Stories can appear as if you are giving parental approval to dangerous alcohol behavior.

3. **Stress that underage drinking is against the law.** Parents of college students should express a clear disapproval of underage drinking and alcohol consumption as breaking the law. Moreover, if parents drink themselves, they need to exhibit responsible use of alcohol as a positive influence and role model.

4. **Explain to your student the definition of dangerous drinking.** In college, there are varied degrees of drinking, such as “rapid drinking,” “drinking to intoxication” and “binge drinking.” Parents should stress to their students, that excessive partying can lead to severe intoxication and/or alcohol poisoning which can be extremely dangerous. Discourage students from drinking excessively by avoiding pre-gaming, drinking games or drinking to get drunk.

5. **Tell your student to “Be a Friend, Know the Signs, Call for Help.”**

**Be a Friend**

Parents should ask their students if they have the courage to step in and help someone who is drinking dangerously. Explain to your students how they can help care for a drunken friend.

**Know the Signs**

The fact is college students die every year from alcohol poisoning. The signs of an alcohol emergency are something every college student should recognize and understand. It is important that parents talk to their students about what they should do in such a dangerous situation.

To make sure your students are being safe, discuss with them the signs of an alcohol emergency:

- Heavy vomiting, vomiting while passed out;
- Slow, shallow, or irregular breathing;
- Unresponsive or unable to communicate;
- Violent or threatening;
- Cold, clammy, or blue skin;
- Loss of bodily control;
- Unable to stand or walk.

**Call for Help**

Parents should stress to their students that if they aren't sure what to do, but they think their friend needs help, they should call for help. Alcohol emergencies require immediate medical attention. Have your student input 412-624-2121 in their phone for quick access to help on campus.

If you have additional questions, or would like more tips about how to talk to your student about alcohol, please contact the Office of Health Education and Promotion at 412-383-1830.
Pitt Make a Difference Day

The third annual Pitt Make a Difference Day (PMADD) was held on Saturday, October 16. Nearly 2,700 students participated in a variety of community service projects at 61 sites throughout the Pittsburgh region. The students boarded busses around 9 a.m. at the William Pitt Union and went out into the community for several hours to perform projects such as litter pick-up, landscaping work, and other tasks that benefitted local residents and communities.

PMADD is a student-led event that provides an excellent opportunity for all students to live out the University’s mantra that the “city is our Campus.” Because students enjoy the benefits of living in one of America’s great cities, many embrace the opportunity to give back during this event. Several students take advantage of the opportunity to enhance their roles as campus leaders by coordinating the volunteerism and participation.

Pitt’s Office of Student Volunteer Outreach (www.svo.pitt.edu) coordinates hundreds of opportunities for Pitt students to participate in community service throughout the year through one-day projects or on-going programs. Parents should encourage their students to participate in community service projects and enjoy the benefits of making a difference.

Read an article in the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review about PMADD
www.pittsburghlive.com/x/pittsburghtrib/news/pittsburgh/s_704758.html

BIG EAST VIRTUAL CAREER FAIR

Your student has an opportunity to participate in a first! The Big East Career Consortium is partnering with Unicruit to bring the Big East Virtual Career Fair to students online. They will be able to visit the virtual booths of participating employers, learn about job and internship opportunities, submit resumes, and chat with recruiters in real time. From November 11-19, students will be able to visit employer booths and submit resumes to the employers.

This groundbreaking event will be unlike any career fair or e-fair they have experienced in the past. Forty-plus employers will be “live” at their booths on Wednesday, November 10, from 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Participating employers include: Aon, ADP, First Investors, Geico, Graybar, Hertz, Lockheed Martin, Memorial Sloan Kettering, Peace Corps, Proctor & Gamble, Progressive, U.S. Department of Agricultural, U.S. Rocket and Space, Vanguard, Verizon Wireless, Waste Management, and more.

To attend the event, students must register at www.bigeastcareerfair.com. One lucky registrant will win an Apple iPad in a random drawing.

BROWN BAG-INARS IN THE WORKS

We are preparing to offer a new service in the spring semester: Brown Bag-inars. This will be a 30 minute Webinar held around noon that you can access, while having your lunch at your computer. We will feature University experts on various topics.

Please send your topic ideas to parents@pitt.edu with the subject “Bag-inars”.

7
Academic Resource Center Offers Strategies for Students

Achieving academic success can be made easier when students are aware of the resources that are available to them. Within the School of Arts and Sciences, the Academic Resource Center (ARC) works with students to develop successful academic strategies. Open to all undergraduates at the University of Pittsburgh, the ARC is a student's one-stop-shop for the most comprehensive set of academic services available. The ARC hosts study skills workshops and tutoring in a great environment that includes study space as well as access to the PittNet wireless network.

To help students meet their academic goals, the ARC has some valuable tips that will encourage positive academic results.

1. Always go to class—if a student is not present, then he/she will not receive valuable information. Most important, lack of attendance can affect the overall grade in a course.
2. Study early and often—many students wait until an exam is on the horizon to begin studying. This behavior often leads to cramming which is not a good practice. Reviewing material each day makes it easier to remember and easier to identify. To help students prepare for exams, the ARC has a variety of Wednesday study skills workshops in areas such as test preparation, surviving the sciences, and motivation.
3. Work with the professor—the professor should be the first line of contact when a student needs clarity, or if there are challenges in the course. Students should regularly go to their professor's office hours. Students also should reach out to the teaching assistants (TAs) as another valuable resource.
4. Get help—the ARC offers one-on-one and group tutoring for students who have classes in biology, chemistry, physics, economics, or statistics. The Math Assistance Center (MAC) and the Writing Center also provide additional resources for students. Additionally, study groups can be developed with other students who have mastered the coursework. Success in college can be best achieved through group effort.
5. Manage time effectively—using time wisely is essential to success. Every day, students should have a plan of what they wish to accomplish and should be in the practice of getting the most out of their day so that they are productive. Students also can work with an Academic Retention Specialist at the ARC to develop an individualized academic success plan.
6. Maintain a positive attitude—when students believe that they have the ability to be successful, chances are they will be successful. Going into an exam feeling prepared coupled with a positive attitude can have amazing results.

The Academic Resource Center is available to assists students in achieving academic success. To sign up for one-on-one and group tutoring or the many study skills workshops, students should call 412-648-7920 or visit http://www.as.pitt.edu/undergraduate/offices/arc/index.html.

The University of Pittsburgh is an affirmative action, equal opportunity institution.