



Conversations for the Car Ride Home:
A Guide for Families in Communicating
about Life at Loyola



Loyola University Maryland and Families:
Partners in Education

Partners.

As your student prepares for life at Loyola University Maryland, we recognize that this can be an anxious time for both students and families. We invite you to partner with us to work together to keep your student safe, healthy, and successful. As partners in education we encourage you to engage your student in conversations about life at Loyola University Maryland. Some of these conversations with your students may not be easy. This guide provides information, resources, and guidance in beginning and continuing these important conversations with your student.

Where to Begin?

Ask yourself

Before beginning the conversation with your son or daughter, it is important to ask yourself some questions to establish your beliefs, attitudes, and expectations.

- What expectations do you have for your child while they are at college? Some important areas to think about:
- Academic expectations, financial expectations, social expectations (including alcohol and drug use), and expectations of their personal wellness i.e., physical, mental and spiritual.
- When was the last time that you spoke with your student about expectations?
- What sacrifices are being made to send your student to Loyola University Maryland? Does your student know this and what role it plays in your expectations?

To support your student, Loyola University Maryland provides numerous supportive services and resources. Below is a list of some of the resources that students can access for support during their time at Loyola

Campus Ministry: www.loyola.edu/department/campusministry

Counseling Center: www.loyola.edu/counselingcenter

Health Services: www.loyola.edu/department/studenthealth

Recreational Sports: loyola.edu/recsports

Student Engagement: www.loyola.edu/studentengagement

Student Support and Wellness Promotion: www.loyola.edu/department/sswp

The Study: www.loyola.edu/thestudy





Continue the Conversations

The first six weeks of college are a especially difficult for first-year students. During this time and beyond, continue talking with your student, remain supportive, call, and email your student to check in and ask questions. Be sure to continue to give your student positive reinforcement for being the best version of themselves that they can be.

Questions to Ask...

- Which class is your favorite? What is challenging for you?
- What is the social scene like? What do most students do for fun?
- What kinds of activities are available to all students?
- What is life like in the residence halls?
- How are you getting along with your roommate(s)?
- Tell me about the people who live in your room/apartment.
- Who are your friends? Has it been easy to find new friends? Why or why not?



The Conversation

Although some of these conversations may be uncomfortable, they are invaluable. Start the conversations early and have them frequently-before your student leaves for college and throughout the college years. Talk with your student in an honest way, and listen to him or her in a non-judgmental manner. Be clear and explicit in what you expect from them. Your views regarding these topics matter for students and the choices that they make. Identify what behaviors you find acceptable and others that you do not. Make sure that your expectations are reasonable, well thought out, and convey trust and support. When discussing expectations, use concrete and realistic strategies for making healthy decisions. It is important to define together what safe and responsible behaviors look like.



Academic Life

Adjusting to college academics can be quite challenging for first-year students, even if they excelled in high school. Being away from home, having less structured school days, and harder coursework can all be contributing factors. Some of the main areas students struggle with are poor planning and time management (e.g. pulling an all-nighter to study for an exam, starting a paper the same day it is due, etc.), not knowing how to study effectively for exams, not knowing how to write a college-level paper, and struggling with course content.

The best way to reduce academic anxiety and to improve one's grades is to reach out *early* for help. There are a lot of wonderful resources on campus to help students, including faculty, the Study, which serves as a learning center, and the Writing Center. Here are some suggestions, if students are struggling in a course or even if they are doing well, but would like to do better:

- Go to office hours and speak to their professor(s) about the course
- Talk to a Messina faculty member, mentor or Evergreen
- Every first-year student will be enrolled in Messina, so they will be connected to a team of dedicated people able to help students navigate their first year of college. Reaching out to the professor, mentor or Evergreen is a great place to start. These people will help students find the right resources on campus.
- Go to the Study (Jenkins Hall, 3rd floor) for free peer tutoring in academic content
- Students can register right from the website: Loyola.edu/thestudy
- Tutoring in nearly every course offered
- Come to the Study for a study strategies workshop
- The free workshop series covers a variety of topics like exam preparation, learning styles, test taking

• Questions to ask:

- What do you believe in and how does it inform the person you are?
- What does your spirituality look like now and what do you want it to look like in college?
- What do your beliefs say about self, God and others?
- How might college life challenge, support or change your faith tradition, spiritual practice or belief?
- As you learn about the Jesuit Catholic character of Loyola, where do you feel a connection? Where is there disconnect? What do you want to learn more about?
- How will you engage people who might challenge your beliefs?
- How can a community of diverse believers shape your own experience?
- Who can you talk to if you need guidance or a listening ear?



Spirituality

At a Jesuit university, we encourage our students to explore and engage in their faith tradition, spiritual practice or belief. At Loyola, your student will be introduced to various Ignatian concepts such as discernment, reflection, and *Cura Personalis - care for the whole person*. For many, spiritual growth and development is fostered through questions about self, God and others. For each student, this spiritual exploration will look different – it may even be different from your own. We encourage you to create a space for openness and sharing with your student about what they believe, questions they may have, and what their hopes are for engaging their spirituality throughout their college experience.

Conversation Starters and Ideas:

Share about your own beliefs and values. Describe the ways you have changed and grown throughout your experience.

Be honest and transparent about the gifts *and* the challenges of your faith tradition, spiritual practice or belief.

Invite your student to share from their own, unique experience. Storytelling is a sacred practice. It is a wonderful way to dialogue and learn about another person.

Campus Resource:

Campus Ministry honors, celebrates, and welcomes people of all faith traditions, spiritual practices, and beliefs. We are committed to providing supportive guidance, building community, and creating inclusive spaces for meaning making, exploration and spiritual development. Loyola's Catholic, Jesuit identity calls us to nurture respect and solidarity, foster shared and appreciate diverse values, and work together for a more just and humane world. Campus Ministry invites the community not only to coexist, but to pro-exist – to promote one another's being with a message of love – with all members of our human family.

For more information, visit the Campus Ministry website: www.loyola.edu/campusministry

- skills, time management, etc. A complete list and registration information can be found at: Loyola.edu/thestudy
- Work with the time management and organization coach at the Study
- Free of charge
- Students can meet once, weekly or a few times throughout the semester to create a schedule and learn strategies for staying organized and managing their time.
- Go to the Writing Center for help on papers (Maryland Hall 057)
- The WC offers free consultations to all students on any aspect of writing
- Find a quiet place to study
- The University has numerous places to study. The key is finding a place where the student feels comfortable. All the residence halls have study spaces, as do the academic buildings. There is also the library (located close to most first-year housing), and the Study.
- **Questions to begin a dialogue with your student**
- What strategies will you use to stay organized, now that we (parents/guardians) are not here to help you stay on top of things?
- If you don't do too hot on a test, what will you do? Where can you go?
- If your roommates are being loud, where can you study?
- When you have a big research paper to write, where can you go for help?
- If you're feeling generally overwhelmed, who can you talk to?

Alcohol and Drug Use

While your student may have had education regarding alcohol and drug use in school, we encourage you to take time to have a deeper discussion with your student. Taking the time to share your expectations regarding substance use, and listening to what they want their substance use to look like while at college is important in helping them develop and understanding of the role that substance use may or not play in their years at Loyola. Some important areas to address are:

Family beliefs and values

Discuss your personal beliefs about alcohol with your student. Sharing your values around alcohol will create an environment of trust and understanding. If you choose to drink, explain how you drink in moderation. If you choose not to drink, explain why you have made this decision.

Family history

If your family has a history of alcoholism, your student needs to know about the family history. Research shows that children or grandchildren of alcoholics may be up to 6 times more likely to develop an alcohol problem. It is important to communicate with your student about his or her risk factors and explain that some people may be unable to drink alcohol at all without drinking to excess.

While your student is at Loyola we are committed to providing ongoing support and education regarding substance use through our office of Student Support and Wellness Promotion (SSWP). SSWP provides free and confidential individual and group counseling regarding substance related issues, as well as implements campus-wide education and prevention programs. Their office is located in Seton Court 02b, and can be reached by phone at 410-617-2928, Monday-Friday 8:30am-5pm.

For more information visit their website: <http://www.loyola.edu/departments/sswp>

It is important for families to review your student's medical history and consult with on-campus healthcare providers in the case of chronic illness so that care can be transferred to Student Health Services as appropriate. In addition, students should know the names and phone numbers of their private physicians at home.

Students need to carry their insurance card (a copy of the actual insurance card can be put into their phone).

The Student Health is located at 4502A Seton Court.



Physical Health

New students are usually enthralled with the instant freedom they have in college and excited about the new friends they are making.

The vast majority of college students do well academically and stay physically and mentally healthy: however, too many student today stumble into high risk behaviors and situations, unaware of the dangers and consequences.

It's important to have a conversation about behavior and health risks with your student as she or he enters the first year.

Here are some ways to begin the conversation:

“When you get to college you are going to be faced with making decisions every day. Some of the important decisions will be about your health and safety.”

“There will be many people on campus who can help you if you are in trouble. I expect you to use the resources that are available to you.”

“You will be treated as an adult on campus, so it is important for you to understand how to handle illness and difficult situations.”

Questions to ask:

- What are your perceptions of alcohol and drug use at Loyola?
- How will you decide whether or not to drink or use drugs at college?
- How will you decide how much and how often to drink?
- What are some of the risks of excessive substance use?
- What are some ways to avoid these risks?
- What reasons can you give your peers if you don't want to drink/ use drugs?
- How will you handle it if your roommate only wants to drink and party?
- Who can you talk to if you are having difficulty with your own or a friend's substance use?



Campus engagement

Engagement outside the classroom, in meaningful ways has been shown to help students transition to college, have a more satisfying experience, and have a positive impact on academic life. Student involvement is an expectation of students at Loyola. Begin the conversation with your student about what they want to get involved in and how they plan to balance academic and co-curricular expectations.

First-year students often want to wait to engage in co-curricular programming until they feel “adjusted” to campus. However, we encourage students to get active on campus right away, because involvement can play a large part in helping students feel at home in the community and assists in their transition being more seamless.

In order to provide meaningful student experiences, Student Engagement programming contains the primary themes of leadership, discernment, and connection & transition. These themes comprise the core of student learning that occurs through our programming.

Leadership Programming

Leadership is an essential outcome of higher education and it has become a norm to have leadership development programs on college campuses. Currently, Student Engagement offers a variety of short-term and long-term leadership opportunities for undergraduate students and a number of new programs will be created each academic year.

“What happens is everyone is under the impression that at the end of high school, magically college will be different,” says Anne Marie Albano, director of the Columbia University Clinic for Anxiety and Related Disorders in New York. “That once she or he gets away from the same old routine and the same old peers that never connected with him, and the teachers who were mean, it is going to be different. And it isn’t.”

Questions to ask:

- What resources are available at the counseling center on campus?
- How do you know when you are stressed? What are your triggers?
- How will you cope with stressful situations when you are away at school?
- If friends and a family are your support system, how will you stay in touch?
- How will you manage any pre-existing mental health concerns?
- Where will you receive ongoing treatment? How will you manage your medications?

The Counseling Center is here to help. We encourage you to consult with us prior to your arrival on campus to discuss our resources and best ways to support your student as they transition to being a college student. Check out our website for additional information: <http://www.loyola.edu/department/counselingcenter/parents>



Mental Health

Good Mental Health Away From Home Starts Before College

Now is the time for students and families to think about how to handle the stresses of college without the family nearby. Here is a common experience to consider: When Eliza Lanzillo went off to college, she was excited to leave behind her old school, her old routines—and her old mental health challenges. “I thought of it as a clean slate. Nobody knows my history. I could be a new person,” says the now 21-year-old junior at Brown University. Ms. Lanzillo started struggling with the eating concerns and anxiety in high school. She had been doing so well the summer before college that she stopped therapy when she arrived for college in Providence, R.I. But a few months into her first semester, she relapsed.

With high-school seniors deciding where they’ll be attending college in the fall, now is the time for students and their parents to focus on how to maintain good mental health away from home. This is particularly vital for the growing number of students who have already struggled with mental illness in high school. (Source: Andrea Petersen, Wall Street Journal)

A DIFFERENT KIND OF COLLEGE PREP

Students should be able to handle several basic tasks on their own before college. Feeling comfortable with these tasks is particularly important for students with pre-existing mental health issues:

- Making doctor/dentist appointments.
- Getting enough sleep—without parental prodding.
- Making travel reservations and getting to the airport or train station.
- Advocating for themselves with teachers and administrators.
- Managing a budget.
- Managing emotional distress.

Discernment

Discernment is not a specific program area but a tenant that weaves through many of the programs conducted by Student Engagement. At the core of our program delivery is the idea of allowing students time to discern about choices they make, leadership ability, vocation, gift & talents, or their place in the world.

Transition & Connection

Student Engagement develops programming to help students navigate through the various transitions during the college experience. Student Engagement offers opportunities for students to connect with their peers and to gain exposure to many of the resources on campus. The aim of our transitional programming is to assist students in finding their way at Loyola by helping them get involved, understanding the community, and assisting them through the difficult times at college. Particular work is done to help students with the difficult transitions during the first and second year.

Please visit our website <http://www.loyola.edu/studentengagement>

Questions to ask

- What are you excited to get involved in and why?
- Why is getting involved important?
- What was the coolest thing you saw at the fair during orientation?
- What new things do you hope to get involved in at Loyola that you didn’t do in high school?
- How do you plan to balance your academic work and extracurricular activities?
- What are things you can do to manage your time?

Fitness at College

The impacts of physical activity for college students span from improved physical health and stress reduction to increased academic performance, however, many college students do not meet the guidelines for physical activity. The CDC recommends at least 150 minutes/week of cardiovascular physical activity (walking, jogging) AND at least two days a week of strength training. Here are some tips for starting your college experience off on the right foot!

Find the days and times each week you will workout and plug into your calendar.

Use apps like Map my Fitness, Charity Miles, MyFitnessPal, or Lose it!

Compete with friends using a wearable fitness tracker (ie. Fitbit, Jawbone, Garmin).

During the day, walk with a friend instead of using a shuttle. Find great home/room workouts online that you can use as a study break.

Get involved in club sports, group exercise classes, intramural sports, or Outdoor Adventure Experiences.

Take Advantage of Opportunities in Recreational Sports!

Aquatics: The Mangione Aquatic Center houses an eight-lane, 25-yard-long swim course, shallow lane, diving well, sauna and whirlpool.

Club Sports: There are currently 26 club sports teams, with over 550 student club athletes competing regionally and nationally.

Fitness: 6,000 square-foot weight room housing the latest in strength training and cardiovascular conditioning equipment, a three-lane track measuring a tenth of a mile, and a designated core strength/stretching area. Over 35 group exercise classes are offered weekly and personal training sessions, with our team of certified personal trainers, are available for purchase.

Intramural Sports: 12 intramural sports leagues or tournaments are offered annually including basketball, indoor and outdoor soccer, softball, volleyball and dodgeball with about 700 student participants each semester.

Outdoor Adventure Experience: The outdoor trip program offers a variety of outdoor experiences from day trips to extended expeditions. They also facilitate the Outdoor Adventure Pre-Fall Program, taking over 80 first-year students for a week of camping and experiential learning before the Fall Welcome Weekend. All trips are led by the volunteer student trip leaders who receive over 400 hours of training per year. The FAC features an indoor rock climbing wall and outdoor adventure center.

More information available: loyola.edu/recsports

Questions to ask?

- How will you be able to incorporate physical activity into your Loyola schedule?
- What types of activities are you interested in to increase or maintain physical activity levels?
- What does your physical activity involvement currently look like and how do you want that to change when you get to college?
- What impact does participation in physical activity have on your mind and body?
- What challenges will you face to make fitness a part of your week? What do you need to overcome those challenges?

