Starting Right at TU

Helping parents prepare for the transition to university life.

June 2017
Congratulations to your student for being selected as a member of the University of Tulsa Class of 2021! Your student and your family have worked very hard to earn a place at a major university as they write the next chapter in their story.

Inside this digital publication you’ll find articles and information to empower you to help your student start off on the right foot TU this August. From our move-in day on Sunday, August 13th to their first day in classes on Monday, August 21st to the day they walk across the stage in their cap and gown, TU is committed to helping students succeed.

Your student will have an opportunity to participate in our New Student Orientation this fall from August 13th – 18th. This week long experience fosters mentoring relationships with veteran, proven student leaders as well with faculty members. Further, the orientation program boosts student confidence and introduces new students to key offices, programs, and campus initiatives who will help them get the most out of their time here at TU. If your student hasn’t yet signed up for this incredible experience, they can do so (at no additional cost) at http://canelink.utulsa.edu.

Thank you for confidence in our faculty, staff, and campus leaders here at the University of Tulsa. We are excited to welcome you in person this August, and are committed to engaging and empowering your student as they start writing this next chapter in their story.

Sincerely,

Earl Johnson,
Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Services
Preparing for the Transition to College Life

College has been part of the plan all along. What was that dream in the distance is now just a few weeks away. The transition from high school to college has already started. What does it look like to help your student now? Here are a few suggestions that have been handed down by student-transition experts and veteran parents.

Prepare them, and yourself for the emotional roller coaster that college can be

- **Recognize this is a time of emotional ups and downs for all parents.** The excitement and joy about the opportunities ahead of your student are mixed with waves of nostalgia and sometimes a sense of loss. Find people who you can just talk to as you ride this roller coaster – a close friend or maybe other parents who are going through the same thing.

- **Realize your student is riding a roller coaster of their own.** They’re going to have moments of demanding autonomy “I’m 18, I can handle this myself” followed by surges of missing home or needing to know that family members still care and miss them.

- **Resist the impulse to glorify the college experience.** No one is happy, excited and tranquil all the time between 18 and 22. And when students are overwhelmed with the workload, confused about a problem, or just plain worn out, “These are the best years of your life” is far less helpful and comforting than it sounds.

As the Summer Marches On

- **Be prepared to see less of your student.** As their departure gets closer, students may spend less time at home. They may pack in as much time with friends as possible.

- **Talk about finances.** Helping your student have clear information and expectations about money they’ll have to work with on a monthly basis, plan out their spending, and know how or when they can reach out for help can go a long way to alleviate tension later.

- **Talk about academics.** College life is a whirlwind. Even though TU draws very academic-minded students, it’s still useful to have a conversation before arriving about their academic goals and realistic expectations. And once they’re on campus, get into the practice of asking about courses and professors, rather than asking about grades. This may help your student start seeing their coursework in a more collegiate lens, and help boost their confidence for building relationships with faculty.

- **See yourself as a coach and an anchor.** More than ever your student needs to hear and know that you are in their corner. This relationship will help them stay grounded, and can fuel some courage for the challenges ahead. Instead of going into problem-solving mode when you get that beleaguered phone call, ask questions; then you and coach your student on seeking out campus resources, or seeing their situation in a new way.

Adapted from parent contributions, and from [Letting Go: A Parents’ Guide to Understanding the College Years, by Coburn and Treeger](#).
Attending Class Regularly
College students spend notably less hours in class each week than they did in high school. Sometimes, students might interpret this to mean class attendance is less important. But nothing could be further from the truth. As tempting as it may be to skip class on a cold, rainy Oklahoma morning, nothing replaces being physically (and mentally) present in the classroom every time that class meets. All kinds of important information and material is presented only in classroom lectures, discussion and projects and no one else's notes are the same thing as being there yourself.

Build Relationships With Professors
Again, college is not like high school. Professors want to get to know students. One of the noteworthy reasons members of the TU Faculty enjoy teaching here is because of the way the University maintains manageable class sizes, and creates systems that give professors enough room in their schedules to build relationships with students. Faculty members maintain regular office hours, look for ways to engage students beyond the classroom and may have programs and research that students can join if they express interest. It is much easier for a student to ask for help with a homework assignment or a paper if they already know and have talked with a professor.

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Get Involved
Years of research continue to demonstrate a positive correlation between academic success and student engagement in campus organizations and activities. That may sound a little counterintuitive to us as parents (“If they’re busy they can’t study as much”). However, the out-of-class learning and networking students do in these co-curricular and extra-curricular environments provides powerful motivation, deeper engagement and intrinsic rewards for their continued and future success in the classroom.

Manage Time Well
Learning to plan and manage time effectively is a key skill for college life. There are 168 hours in each week and students will only spend, on average, 15 of those in class. If they can teach themselves to put in a 40-hour workweek on their studies, they will have higher chances of academic success. Helping students see their college experience as a “full-time job” may sometimes be a useful lens for them: show up to work on time, every time; get to know the boss; build relationships and network around the office; put in the required hours.

Seek Help Early
After midterms there will be plenty of students standing in line at the Center for Student Academic Support (CSAS) to sign up for a tutor. Those midterm grades are an eye-opener for lots of people. But, if your student is already aware that they are struggling with the homework or not always understanding the assignment, their chances for academic success increase significantly the sooner they reach out for help. There are tutors, notes, teaching assistants, study skill workshops and group study sessions that can help early. The sooner a student talks to a professor, visits CSAS or reaches out for help, the better.

The Center for Student Academic Support (CSAS) helps students succeed in coursework at TU. CSAS professionals deploy a network of tutors, offers academic counseling, can help with academic accommodations, and provides frequent workshops on topics aimed at increasing the academic success of our students. Encourage your student to visit their new facilities on the ground floor of Zink Hall, or contact them at 918.631.2315 or CSAS@utulsa.edu.
You may be on the other side of town or the other side of the country. But that doesn’t mean you can’t have a conversation with your student about big events happening on the TU campus. Asking questions, starting a conversation, can be a great way to help your student think about their engagement on campus. Here’s a list of five things you can ask your student about during their first semester:

1. **The Activity Fair** – Each year on the first Thursday of the fall semester SA (Student Association – TU’s student-run government) hosts a campus-wide extravaganza where almost every student organization shows up to invite new students to learn more about what they do and to join in. Students will discover everything from volunteer groups, honor societies, academic clubs, to faith-based organizations. Many of the presenters are giving away free materials and goodies. It’s a great way for new students to see just how much is going on campus and to start looking for ways to customize their educational experience.

2. **ImpactTU** – From the same people who put together the week-long Orientation experience, this 6-week lunch-time seminar helps new students successfully transition into the campus community and prepare for leadership. Free lunches, engaging presenters, discussions led by Orientation Leaders, and more make this a great opportunity for first-year students to bolster their confidence, identify early leadership opportunities, and start working on key skills and competencies they’ll need on campus and beyond.

3. **Residence Life Events** – Students who live on campus have a core team of student and professional leaders who are committed to their success. Between these staff members and hall governments there is continual programming aimed at empowering student learning, building community, helping students learn about support services, and providing fun, meaningful experiences. Ask your student what events are going in their residence hall or about the Hurricane Thursday events they’ve been to recently.

4. **Homecoming** – Each fall the Student Association (SA) puts on a series of campus-wide events to involve students in the Homecoming celebration. There are events, programs and contests throughout the week that almost always include giveaways, free food and lots of fun. Simultaneously, our TU Parent and Family Organization also hosts our Parent & Family Day in conjunction with homecoming. This creates a space for you and your family to come to campus, reconnect with your student, see the campus, and to share this experience together.. To learn more about Parent and Family weekend, call Diane at 918.631.2707.

5. **Favorite Professor** – Asking your student which of their professors is their favorite can be an easy conversation starter, and might very well help your student share a bit about their academic experience so far. And you, being the attentive, experienced parent know that by listening to what they say, and what they don’t say, may give you a little insight into any encouragement they need or issues they might want help with in the future.
Preparing for the move to campus

Once your student is accepted and enrolled at the University of Tulsa, they’ll have access to the New Student Portal (portal.utulsa.edu). On that site will be helpful information, including a **New Student Checklist**, filled with reminders and deadlines leading up to New Student Orientation and the start of the fall semester.

In mid-July the Office of Housing will send out final housing assignments along with links for your student to use to select their move-in appointment, and to upload information and materials for their parking permit, student ID and more.

Want to see more? One of our students made a fun video about her experiences at move-in day last year. It’s worth a look: [https://vimeo.com/180839186](https://vimeo.com/180839186)
New Student Orientation is a week-long experience loaded with great fun, helpful information, amazing memories, and more new friends than your student would ever expect. All along the way students are being empowered to succeed quickly at TU.

In Orientation, every student is placed in a small group and paired with a veteran, proven student leader (commonly called an OL, for Orientation Leader) who is committed to helping their students get off to a great start throughout the first year.

New Student Orientation includes practical advice, mentoring, and training on academics, networking, campus traditions, student organizations, leadership, and even where to find free food.

Encourage your student to sign up for New Student Orientation today. There’s no additional cost, and they’ll be on their way to a great start at TU. They can log in at https://cc.utulsa.edu/. Then look for “New Student Orientation.” If you’re interested, you can follow the Orientation experience on Twitter and on Instagram.
Parents and families go through their own transitions and changes as they send their student to college. The relationship with our student changes just like our daily routine does. The TU Parent & Family Association is here to welcome you to our family. We've been where you are. We too brought our student to admission events, moved them into a residence hall, bought books, and reminded them to eat healthy and get enough sleep.

TUPFA (the TU Parent and Family Association) shares insights and resources with TU parents. We also host the annual Parent & Family Day, and offer opportunities to network and connect with other TU parents and TU alums.

Two easy ways to get information from the TU Parent & Family Association:
- Like the TUPFA page on Facebook at this site (no Facebook account is necessary)
- Sign up for occasional emails from TUPFA through their Mail Chimp account. You can sign up at this link.

Visit this page for the most up to date schedule for parents and families.
We are excited to welcome you and your student to our hometown. If you’d like to learn more about Tulsa, we can point you to a few starting points of discovery:

- The Tulsa Chamber of Commerce Site
- Travel Oklahoma
- Wikipedia (of course)
- More about Tulsa from the utulsa webpage
For those families, going to college in your own backyard brings with it some unique issues to consider:

**Orientation** – The week-long new student orientation isn’t a “get to know Tulsa, Oklahoma” event. Instead, Orientation is a “succeed quickly at TU” event. Students build important relationships, connect with campus organizations, learn how to get ahead at TU, and build self-efficacy they’ll need in the coming months and years. Yes, they’ve lived here all their life, but they still want to be part of Orientation.

**Visiting Home** – There are plenty of students who live really close to campus and who visit home regularly, whether that’s weekly or a couple times a month. Other students get so busy with studies and campus life that checking in with family and friends happens less often. Talk with your student before the academic year starts about their plans, but also keep in mind that their schedule, expectations and needs may shift after classes begin.

**Plan as if College is Far Away** – The same way it’s easier to be late to event that’s around the corner than one that’s on the other side of town, families and students who live near TU can sometimes underestimate the amount of planning and work required to be ready for the start of college. Both your student and your family will have busy routines as classes begin. Even if you live a few blocks away, there is still a lot of information to learn and a huge paradigm shift for your student when classes start. Start planning earlier than you think you need to, and organize more than it feels like you should.

**Listen for ways to Help** – With almost a thousand new students coming to TU each fall, and many of them from other states or even other countries, there are plenty of times that a local family who knows how to get to Target or a little bit about the history of our town can add to a conversation, give directions or help an international student feel more at home.