

Dear Parents,

Your child is embarking with us here at Eastern University, upon a new and significant period of growth and change. We are prepared to assist our new students (both first time in college and transfers) with many developmental supports when they leave EU they will be ready, depending on the choices that they make here, to face a challenging and sometimes broken world and make a difference. The fact is that beginning now your child is starting a new phase of their life at EU. This means changes for your student and for you! Here is some information for you to read and reflect on concerning these next few years.

Some students will pack up and leave home with a big smile of anticipation, hug and kiss every member of the family good-bye, move onto the campus in one neatly packed car-load, make friends quickly, call home/e-mail/Skype/text you regularly with several positive and upbeat stories to tell, get great grades, become best friends with their roommate(s), send you hand written thank you notes for the care packages, offer encouraging and sage advice about University life to younger sibs, send extra book money back home, eat balanced meals, exercise regularly, attend a local church each Sunday and return home at the next academic break, better groomed, healthier, and much wiser than when they left home.

Some students will leave home screaming or crying - or both, need two cars and a U-Haul to get everything to campus, make one friend whose nickname is Spike (because of her tongue jewelry), call only when things are going wrong or when money is low, get mid-semester warning notices for C- or D in five classes, abhor their roommate, never mention the care package you sent, discourage siblings from ever going to college, eat only Lucky Charms, soda and ice cream, come home for Thanksgiving with Spike's hairstyle and a tattoo to boot, then refuse to go to church with the family.

Thankfully, **most** students fit neither of these profiles. Your student will most likely fall somewhere between the two. With this in mind:

Expect Change - Ways of thinking, acting and dressing may differ from one month to the next. Don't argue or yell. Exploration is a positive part of development. Talk calmly about what you like and don't like (once), and then wait. Attitudes and values may undergo significant revisions several times over the college years. Majors will change. Appearances will change. Friends will change. **Change is OKAY.**

Expect Conflict - Learning to live in community is challenging. Living independently is new. Living up to the expectations of professors, staff and a couple of new roommates (all at the same time) is very, very difficult. Learning to handle conflict independently is an important life skill. **Conflict is OKAY.**

Expect Challenges - New friends, new surroundings, new freedoms, and lots of changes add up to BIG CHALLENGES for your student. Some students and parents don't like challenges, but remember: challenges are good. Most character development comes through life's challenges. **Challenge is OKAY.**

If you want to help, you should:

- **Support through the changes.** Some changes you'll like; some you won't. Either way, your student will likely change again and again and you'll want to maintain a good relationship so that you will be included in the knowledge of the "new" change when it happens. **Keep communication open.**

- **Support through the conflicts.** We would all rather avoid conflict, but unfortunately there is not much in life that is more growth-producing. Listen a lot. Students develop a sense of mastery as they learn appropriate methods of conflict resolution. **Encourage independent mastery over conflict.**

- **Support through the challenges.** Help your student learn to accept challenges as part of life. Listen, encourage, and pray. Offer advice; then allow your student to manage things. **At EU we communicate information directly with the student.** Students must read memos, e-mails, campus mail and postings, and then follow-up on things appropriately. If they don't do these things, there will be consequences that will need to be resolved. **Learning to follow procedures and master challenges independently is an important life skill.**

We in Student Development have been through these changes, conflicts and challenges with many, many students, some of whom have been our own! Call us if **YOU** want support, advice or just a listening ear. Tell your student that we are here for him/her and encourage them to come in to talk about anything with us at any time (really). We are here to help your student as they learn and develop during their time at EU. We wish you the best during this significant phase of life for both you and your child.

Sincerely,



Dr. Bettie Ann Brigham
Vice Provost for Student Development
(610) 341-5823
bbrigham@eastern.edu