

Questions Every Parent Should Ask Their First Year Student
(Adapted from Innovative Educators)
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We want to urge open conversations between parents and their students. There are six adjustments that all students have to make:

1. **Financial: College costs a lot of money and some students may need or want to work, and some may want to look into ways to pay for college such as loans.**
 - **Ask:** How much money do you think you will need this semester? Do you plan to get a job? If so, how many hours a week do you plan to work on a job? How will you balance your classwork, a job, and having fun?
 - OS3 recommends that if a student decides to get a job, they should not work more than 10 hours a week in order to balance classes and homework, social life, and the job.
 - Students looking for a job can work with the Center for Career and Professional Development (210 Glendening Hall) or use <https://smcm.joinhandshake.com/>
 - **Also ask** about financial aid: What financial aid (scholarship, grant, loan) is available for you? When is the FAFSA due? When can we work together to submit the FAFSA? What do you know about taking out a student loan? Who can you contact to get more information?
 - OS3 suggests referring your student to the Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) for help with FAFSA, loans, grants, scholarships, and financial literacy in general. Call 240-895-3000 or email osfa@smcm.edu.
2. **Cultural: Learning about the lives, backgrounds, culture of other students and learning about the college setting helps students to connect with others and recognize that they belong.**
 - **Ask:** What has been the biggest surprise for you at the College? Of the people you've met so far, who comes from the furthest away? Who among your friends is most like you, and who is least like you? In what ways are they the same or not the same as you? What have you learned about your roommate/hallmates/new friends?
 - OS3 recommends that students make friends with people from a variety of backgrounds, life experiences, etc.
3. **Intellectual:** This relates to how students think and work out problems, and create solutions.
 - **Ask:** What topics have you and other students discussed outside of class? What's the buzz on campus about [recent news event]?
 - OS3 suggests that students stay informed on current events, talk with peers and faculty/staff about world events outside of class, and think beyond themselves about their place in the world.

4. Academic: Students have to work hard and do well.

- **Ask:** How do you feel you are adjusting to your classes and classwork? Did your high school prepare you for your college classes? How are you managing challenges in your classes and with your coursework?
 - OS3 recommends that if students are struggling in classes, they should meet with a staff member in OS3 for coaching, tips on study skills/time management/note-taking, test-taking, etc. If students are having trouble with writing, they should make an appointment with a peer mentor in the Writing & Speaking Center. They should also meet with their instructors during the instructors' "student visiting hours" (a.k.a. "office hours").

5. Social: Students need to believe that they belong on our campus. They need friends and can connect with their professors. Joining a club, and getting to know others helps students want to stay.

- **Ask:** Who are your friends? What activities are you doing (outside of classwork)?
 - OS3 suggests that students get involved with a club, SGA, Programs Board, intramural sports, club sports, volunteering, advisory council, etc. It is vital to students' well-being to engage in at least one recurring activity each semester (to have fun, learn leadership and work-related skills, meet other students). This will help the student feel a sense of belonging and connection with others.

6. Emotional: Recent research suggests that students are experiencing more anxiety than depression on campus. Students tell us that they are stressed more today than before Covid. This stress hurts students and impacts their mental health.

- **Ask** students to think about how they are adjusting to college. Are they feeling high levels of stress, anxiety, depression or low mood cycles?
 - OS3 recommends that students who may be dealing with anxiety, depression, overwhelming stress, etc. meet with one of our trained counselors in the Wellness Center. They can call 240-895-4289 to make an appointment or go to walk-in hours Monday through Friday, 1-3 PM. For emergencies, students can use the 24/7 Proto-Call Helpline: 240-895-4200.

We urge parents and family members to ask open-ended questions (questions that need more than a one-word answer), and listen patiently and without judgment to the student's responses. Providing support is one of the most important tasks you can do for your student. For additional suggestions, advice, or assistance, or if you wish to share info with us, please feel free to contact Joanne Goldwater, the Seahawk Family Liaison (and Associate Dean for Retention & Student Success) at jagoldwater@smcm.edu or 240-895-4388.

Sources:

"3 Questions Parents Should Ask Their 1st Year Student".

[2 Minute Takeaways – Innovative Educators](#)

Lee, J., Jeong, H. J., & Kim, S. (2021, April 23). *Stress, Anxiety, and Depression Among Undergraduate Students during the COVID-19 Pandemic and their Use of Mental Health Services*. National Library of Medicine. Retrieved August 12, 2023, from [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8062254/#:~:text=Anxiety%20\(27.7%25\)%20and%20depression,et%20al.%2C%202020](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8062254/#:~:text=Anxiety%20(27.7%25)%20and%20depression,et%20al.%2C%202020).

