

Conversation Calendar - Fall Semester

At a loss for words with your student? You are not alone. College-life can be exciting and confusing all at the same time. This conversation calendar provides parents and family members with ideas for conversation starters with your students. Stay connected with your student by staying connected with the college.

Before diving into the questions below, you might think about your current attitudes and beliefs about college life. Consider your attitudes, beliefs, and expectations might not be the same as your student's. Remember to keep an open mind and use this as an opportunity to not only connect with your student but to identify ways to best support them throughout their time at ACC. Honest, non-judgemental conversations focused on listening to one another can lead to positive healthy experiences.

Conversations are two-way. Considering sharing your own experience with education in the past. Whether you attended college or not, everyone can share their hopes, dreams, disappointments, and fears. The more you share, the more comfortable your student may become sharing with you. Each student will differ in how much support or communication they prefer with their family. Talk about what feels best for the family and your student.

AUGUST

How are you feeling about starting college at ACC?

Talking points:

- The unknown is scary for anyone, it's okay to feel different emotions all at once.
Students can be excited, scared, nervous, and confident all at the same time.
- Your student is not the only one who might be nervous.
- Share a time you were scared or nervous too.

What does your course schedule look like?

Talking points:

- Number of courses
- Which days/times
- Course modality - in person or virtual
- Course most excited/worried about or interested in
- Share what your typical day looks like.

What strategies will you use to stay organized?

Talking points:

- Use of digital tools like Google calendar or paper day planner
- Use of binder, folder, notebooks
- Follow a schedule for classes, study time, work, family time, etc.
- Visit with faculty member for tips, refer to course syllabus
- Share how you keep your day organized or share that you would like to learn more organizational tips too. You can learn together

SEPTEMBER

Who have you gotten to know so far?

Talking points:

- **Professors:** Professors are regular people with personalities and unique characteristics. It's normal to feel a connection sooner with some professors than others. Any instructor stand out to you? What can you do to connect with a professor you are uncertain about? Students are always encouraged to visit their instructors during office hours which is time professors set aside specifically to visit with students. Professors post their office hours in the course syllabus.
- **Classmates** - It is a little easier to get to know classmates in a face-to-face setting. Students can arrive to class early to visit with one another or hang out after class. In on-line courses, students can learn about each other during group work.
- **Student Life** - Have you checked out ACC's [Student Life organization](#)? They offer various clubs and intramural sports teams for students to join and get to know others with similar interests.
- **Share with your student a time you had to meet new people.**

What kind of support do you need this semester? College is an exciting time, but it also comes with any number of stressors. Remind your student it is okay to ask for help.

Talking points:

- Academic help
 - Visit ACC's [Academic Resource site](#) for options to help with coursework.
 - Visit with the professor. They want to help students be successful!
 - Visit ACC's [tutoring labs](#) for free help with course materials, papers, and exams.

- Financial help
 - Visit ACC's [Financial Resource site](#) for options to relieve financial stress.
- Share with your student a time you needed to ask for help.
 - If working, talk to the employer about different options at work, schedule changes, responsibilities, etc.

OCTOBER

What are a few of your favorite spots on or around campus?

Talking points:

- Navigating multiple campus(es). ACC has 11 campuses so a student may take courses at several campuses. It can be stressful to remember which campus to go to on which day. Traffic can cause stress and delays. Does your student have this experience?
- Navigating one campus.
 - Transportation: Even if a student has all their classes on one campus, it can be difficult learning where everything is located. Ask about transportation, bus schedules, parking lots, distance between classes.
 - Food: Are there places to buy food on campus? Do you have time in-between classes to eat? Are you staying hydrated?
 - Have you found the Student Life Office or another place to take breaks on campus?
 - What is your favorite place to study on campus? Have you visited the library?

- Share with your student a time you got lost driving around town or how you handled the stress of traffic. If you haven't already been to campus, consider asking them to show you around one day.

How are you feeling physically and mentally?

Talking points:

- Flu season is right around the corner. It's important for students to eat well and consider getting a flu shot to stay healthy and not have to miss class due to colds and the flu.
- Sleep is important! It's not uncommon for college students to stay up all night doing homework after going to class and working.
 - Review these articles ([Harvard article](#) and [Washington Post](#)) together to learn more about the importance of sleep.
- Mental health - It's not unusual for students to start feeling stressed and overwhelmed as mid-term exams and project come due. Encourage them to share any stress or visit with a [counselor at ACC](#) for tips on how to manage the next couple of weeks. Services are free for ACC students.
- Share with your student what you would like to change about your sleep habits, if possible, or how you manage stress.

Do you have many midterms or upcoming projects due?

Students are about halfway through the semester and may encounter mid-term exams or major projects coming due. Sometimes, it seems like the professors have all planned

them to be due at the same time, as well. While that is not the case, mid-terms can produce anxiety in students.

Talking points:

- What does your schedule look like over the next couple of weeks?
- Anything I can do to help you?
- Have you considered visiting your instructor for extra guidance on any projects/exams?
- Any study groups available? Can you start one?
- Share with your students a time in your life that is more stressful than others.
How do get through it?

NOVEMBER

We love you no matter what.

Family support and encouragement throughout the semester is important. Students will experience new challenges and failures that they have not before. Your emotional support through it all can make a world of difference to them. Students report that emotional support is more important than financial support!

Talking points:

- Provide positive feedback
- Offer encouragement
- Believe in them
- Avoid criticism or judgment
- Share a time that you failed at something. What did you learn from it?

What do your future goals look like for the next semester?

Now is the time for students, if they are not graduating, to start thinking about the next semester of courses. Family members can lend a listening ear to students as they talk through possible schedules and goals.

Talking points:

- How are you feeling about your selected major or area of study? Do you want to continue with it?
- How many courses do you hope to take this semester? Is it more or less than last semester?
- What would make your next semester even better than the current one?
- **Have you thought about applying for any ACC Scholarships?**
 - Encourage your student to apply for scholarships. There are scholarships tailored for everyone. You don't have to have perfect grades to qualify. Check out ACC's [scholarship site](#) for more information on deadlines.
- Share with your student what your goals are for the next few months. What can you do to make your "next semester" even better?

Any special plans for the holidays?

The fall semester is full of holidays, starting with Thanksgiving break. While families are excited about their students having extra time off from school, it is important to remember that students may have to use the time to study for upcoming final exams or complete end-of-semester projects.

Talking points:

- What are your plans for the holidays?
- Anything special you would like to do over the holiday?
- It is important to ensure students do not feel guilty about completing coursework over the holiday.
- Share a time with your student when you had a time conflict or were torn between two important things.

DECEMBER

Have your values or beliefs been challenged or changed at all?

Congratulations to your student for persisting to the end of the semester! They have grown intellectually, socially, and culturally. This growth may inspire change in your student. Communication can help family members understand this growth.

Talking points:

- Are you able to be yourself around your friends and classmates?
- How do you think you have grown?
- What is something new you experienced this semester?
- What are your perceptions of alcohol and drug use among college students?
- Share a time with your student when your values or beliefs changed.

What excites you most about the major or area of study you have chosen?

Students will start to take classes directly related to the major soon. It is a wonderful experience to connect with them about their future career aspirations.

Talking points:

- Have they visited with ACC's [Career Services](#) office?
- Have they visited with ACC's [Transfer Services](#) office?
- Are there student organizations related to their career goals?

What are your plans for the winter break?

Revisit the earlier discussion regarding holiday breaks. This is a great time to have an open discussion about expectations regarding family time, works schedules, and ensuring your students has time to rest after regroup after the semester.