Have Graduation Specs in Place.
If your student is graduating, has he ordered his cap and gown and filled out all the necessary paperwork? Have plans been made for out-of-town visitors? What’s the plan for after the graduation ceremonies when it comes to dinner reservations? These kinds of details can sneak up on you.

Know What the Summer Will Bring.
It’s difficult for students to plunge into their summers without having a plan. Does she have a job lined up? An internship? Or will she study abroad or take classes somewhere else? By getting these details hammered out now, your student will be able to take full advantage of her full summer.

Planning for a Successful Summer
The end of the term is right around the corner and there are decisions to be made and plans to be prepared. Here are some things to think about as you and your student ready for a successful summer season…

**Figure Out Storage.** Is your student moving off campus next year? Is there too much stuff to fit in the family car? If so, you’ll need to figure out storage options. Those might include checking with next year’s landlord, seeing if there’s storage offered on campus or renting a storage facility in town. That stuff needs to go somewhere!

**Determine Classes for Next Term.** Is your student all set with classes for next term? Those might include summer classes, internship credits or fall term choices. Or maybe she’s transferring. Just make sure those academic ducks are in a row.

**Other Summer Considerations**
- Scholarship deadlines
- Having housing lined up for the fall
- Transportation home after the spring term is over
- Budgeting for summer costs
- Living arrangements for the summer
The Need-to-Know about Distracted Driving

Too many of us are focusing on texts and phone calls, instead of keeping our eyes on the road. In 2012, 3,328 people were killed and an estimated 421,000 more were injured in distracted-affected crashes. But these aren’t simply statistics. They are children and parents, neighbors and friends.

Distracted driving is any non-driving activity a person engages in that has the potential to distract him or her from the primary task of driving and increase the risk of crashing.

There are three main types of distraction:
- **Visual** — taking your eyes off the road
- **Manual** — taking your hands off the wheel
- **Cognitive** — taking your mind off what you’re doing

While all distractions can endanger drivers’ safety, texting is the most alarming because it involves all three types of distraction.

Did You Know?

Research on distracted driving reveals some surprising facts:
- 11% of all drivers under 20 involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the crash.
- A quarter of teens respond once or more to a text message every time they drive.
- 20% of teens and 10% of parents say they have extended, multi-message text conversations while driving.
- Sending or receiving a text takes a driver’s eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds – like driving the length of an entire football field, blind.
- Headset cell phone use is not substantially safer than hand-held use.
- Engaging in visual/manual tasks, such as reaching for a phone, dialing and texting, increases the risk of getting into a crash by three times.
- Using a cell phone while driving, whether it’s hand-held or hands-free, delays a driver’s reactions as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08 percent.

So, as your commuting student gets in the car each morning, talk with him about distracted driving. As your on-campus student catches rides with friends, talk with her about distracted driving. It’s a real issue with tragic consequences. That text or call can wait. It’s time to keep our eyes on the road.

Sources: Fastlane.dot.gov; Distraction.gov

Younger, inexperienced drivers under 20 years old have the highest proportion of distraction-related fatal crashes, according to Distraction.gov.

Utter Distraction

Other distracting activities include:
- Using a cell phone
- Eating and drinking
- Talking to passengers
- Grooming
- Reading, including maps
- Using a GPS or other navigation system
- Watching a video
- Changing the radio station, CD or other device

Dorm vs. Residence Hall

When someone asks why the term “residence hall” is used to describe a living space instead of a “dorm,” here is an acronym to help explain the rationale...

A **Residence Hall** is a...
- Really
- Exciting
- Sensationally
- Individually
- Designed
- Experience that
- Nurtures a
- Community
- Environment and
- Houses an
- Abundance of
- Life and
- Love

While a Dorm is a...
- Dull
- Ordinary
- Room of
- Mine

Source: Ideas passed on by Stephanie Hubbard and Kelvin Butts, 1993.
Figuring Out Our Families

Taking a look at birth order

National Sibling Day is coming up on April 10, so focusing on family dynamics makes a lot of sense. Part of the equation can be birth order, which, according to some experts, plays an integral role when it comes to why we are the way we are.

Kevin Leman, author of *The Birth Order Book: Why You Are the Way You Are*, says that the following general characteristics fit various birth orders:

**An Only Child or First-Born**
may be a perfectionist, reliable, a list-maker, well-organized, critical, serious, scholarly, an achiever, self-sacrificing, a people-pleaser, conservative, a supporter of law and order, believe in authority and ritual, legalistic, loyal and self-reliant. Only children or first-borns often feel confident that others take them seriously.

**A Middle Child**
may be a mediator, have the fewest pictures in the family photo album, avoid conflict, be independent, extremely loyal to a peer group and have special friends. Middle children can have the most contradictory characteristics, such as being friendly and outgoing or quiet and shy. They may be the ones in the family who get “lost.”

**A Youngest Child**
may be manipulative, charming, a bit of a showoff, a people person, a good salesperson, precocious, outgoing, affectionate, uncomplicated, rebellious, critical, temperamental, spoiled, impatient and impetuous. Youngest children may sometimes be viewed as absent-minded and have a tough time being taken seriously.

**Other Factors**

Of course these are generalities and characteristics may vary. Birth order is about the tendencies we have, based on where we fall in the family.

Other factors that may influence birth order include:

- **Spacing.** If there are more than five years between children, a “second family” of sorts begins, causing children to take on different roles than those mentioned above.
- **Gender.** If there are two girls in a family and one boy (or some other mix), that can impact how birth order plays out.
- **Physicality.** The size of kids, their physical beauty/plainness, disabilities and more can also turn “typical” birth order patterns around.

No one person fits all these characteristics. Birth order is but one tool to examine family patterns and relationships in that never-ending quest to figure out your family!

Source: Family Issues Facts from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, www.umext.maine.edu/onlinepubs/htmpubs/4359.htm

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Being a Coach & Encourager

One of the key roles that parents and family members can play during their student’s time at school is that of coach. This is different from doing things for your student or setting him off completely on his own. It’s a more nurturing, developmental approach that can have great results!

**Coaching Strategies**

**Listen to your student talk about her college vision** – What is she looking forward to, what does she hope to accomplish, what will equal success in her eyes?

**Inspire him to unlock his true potential** – Encourage self-exploration, trying different classes, meeting new people and getting involved so he can explore what fits best. You can ask leading questions to help this process along.

**Encourage her to take action when needed** – This is something she needs to do on her own; no one else can do it for her.

**Empower him** – Some students may not fully know where to begin, so adapt a “Yes, you can!” attitude and talk with him about things he can do, one step at a time.

**Solicit suggestions** – Instead of putting words (and actions) in your student’s mouth, let her contribute to the process too. It’s important that she learn to trust her own ideas and instincts, rather than leaning on those of others.

**Provide tools** – Do your own campus research so you can point out resources he can tap into, from the...
Sharing the Funny during National Humor Month

The Month of Mirth is upon us, as National Humor Month takes center stage. And infusing a little bit of humor into your student’s life could be just what she needs during this busy month!

Here are a few ways to do just that:

**Dress Up the Family Dog.** Or guinea pig, cat, pot-bellied pig or neighbor! Take a photo of this goofy site and email or text it to your student, along with a fitting caption.

**Make Some Mad Libs.** At www.eduplace.com/tales you can create your own “Wacky Web Tales” and come up with some pretty wild stories. Send the link to your student, along with a sample one you did, just to make him giggle.

**Tap Into Your Inner Muppet.** Encourage friends and family to quickly take the “Which Muppet are You?” quiz at www.buzzfeed.com/jenlewis/which-muppet-are-you. It’s a hoot to see which Muppet personality best fits you!

**Send a Funny T-Shirt.** Whether it has your student’s favorite cereal on it, a photo of her little nephew making a wacky face or a word she finds silly (“persnickety,” perhaps?), send it along for a fashionable funny!

**Find a YouTube Clip.** What was it that made your student laugh when he was a kid? Chances are, you might find a clip of it on YouTube! Type in a keyword like “Cookie Monster” or “Grover” or “Smurf” and you just might encounter a funny blast from the past that you can send along to your student.

Sending a bit of mirth to give your student a laugh could be just what he needs right now!

**Candygram!**
Use an index card or piece of cardstock/cardboard, with different candies conveying your special message…

- You make me Snicker — thanks for the laughs!
- I appreciate all the Nuggets (Hershey’s Nuggets) of knowledge you share!
- Sending Mounds of support!
- You have so many great Twix up your sleeve!
- You’re putting in a Whopper of an effort at school — I’m proud of you!
- I love you is the Reese’s-son for this card!

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continued from page three

Students may sometimes bite off more than they can chew. That can manifest itself with an overwhelming class load, too many hours at work or taking on student leadership positions in bulk.

**Encourage reflection** – As you coach your student through her college process, make sure that both of you set aside time to reflect on how things are going. The process of doing without reflection isn’t half as satisfactory, or effective!

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**Providing Encouragement**

Students may sometimes bite off more than they can chew. That can manifest itself with an overwhelming class load, too many hours at work or taking on student leadership positions in bulk.

One of the roles of a coach is to encourage students to “add rungs to their ladder.” They don’t need to take huge steps all the time — sometimes they can add smaller steps in between to help them get where they want to go.

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**Energetic him** – We all need a boost now and then to keep us going. Provide him with the energy that comes from having someone recognize a job well done or root him on in person, when possible. He’ll feed off your energy!

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**Encourage creativity** – Nothing says that your student has to do things the same old way! Encourage her to tap into creative ideas, ways of thought, problem-solving strategies and more.

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**Provide Encouragement**

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**Push her toward the journey** – While it’s easy to get derailed from our path sometimes, having a coach to push us along and provide encouragement makes it easier. Talk with your student about how she’s feeling being on a certain path and try not to make demands that she stay on that path if it’s not feeling right. There are plenty of variations that might fit her more effectively.