

a new chapter

How parents fit into their students' lives at college

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—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 career center (it's not just for seniors anymore!) to the wellness center to the study abroad office.
- Encourage creativity—There's nothing saying 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.

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

Providing Encouragement

As students dig into their college life, they 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.