

“Transition to college is a multi-faceted event. Of course, families and students are excited for all that college has to offer. Students dream of studying what they are passionate about, debating into the night with new friends and experiencing so much independence. Parents are proud of their child’s accomplishments and may even feel some envy as they remember their own college days. But the transition to college also forces students and parents to renegotiate their relationships with each other. Students may be anxious about meeting new people and learning the ropes of a new environment. They may also miss family and friends and feel that they are missing out on the events happening back home. Parents will be adjusting to letting go of their now adult children. They will be adjusting to less contact and may even have to watch their child struggle on their own without swooping in to try to fix things.

To help with this transition, students may want to:

- Stay busy and involved at MU. Go to floor events, go to Organization Fest and think about joining clubs, and challenge yourself to talk to new people in class and at dinner.
- If you remain in strong contact with parents, try to gradually reduce it. Maybe increase the time between texts or phone calls home.
- If you are struggling, talk to those who can help: RAs, Hall Directors, Hall Ministers, or come to the Counseling Center.

Parents may want to:

- Talk with your student about how much contact seems right. Suggest an amount of contact that helps them to stretch their independence.
- Consider visiting for Family Weekend in October. With a visit scheduled, you may be able to focus on that trip and rest assured that it’s only 6 weeks until you see your student again.
- Know the resources at MU and suggest them to your student if they are struggling.

It can be helpful to consider past transitions for the student to get a sense for what to expect. If it took a while for the student to get used to grade school or high school, you may expect that it will take a little while to get used to MU. Rest assured that many students feel out of sorts at first, but within some weeks feel much more at home.

For further information, visit the Counseling Center’s [For Parent’s](#) link.

Some years ago, Rebecca Norgord, a student in the School of Education, very eloquently put into words what many families go through as a student transitions to college. Rebecca graciously allowed us to post her speech for your enjoyment:

My parents have always been the most influential people in my life. My mom’s biggest dream was always to have kids. I was adopted from India at six months old and my younger sister was adopted from the same orphanage three years later, at seven months old. My mom left work to stay at home with us, and I was fortunate that my parents sent me to private schools my

entire life. At every turn, my parents sacrificed to provide me and my sister with the best and I had an ideal childhood.

When it came time to write college applications, I realized that my future, which included the terrifying reality of leaving the comfort of home, had arrived. That summer I tried to avoid the inevitable future and indulge in the present. Eventually move in day came, and there was no turning back. I remember the 30 minute drive from my home in Waukesha to Marquette. I asked my parents to turn up the music, to drown out their persistent questions asking if I was excited and if I was ready. I kept my eyes glued to the passing scenery. There was a point in the car ride when I realized we passed the familiar, and were heading into the unknown. Miller Park was the closest to the city of Milwaukee my family ever had reason to go, so seeing the unknown landmarks after that gave me a lump in my throat. Technically home was close, but it felt like my family would be worlds away after they dropped me off.

Finally we got to campus and unpacked. Then, the dreaded goodbye. I remember like it was yesterday, walking my parents to the car, feeling the tears sting in my eyes. My mom told me that she loved me so much, and she was so proud of me, no matter what happened. Then she reminded me that if I ever needed anything they were always there, and finished with the same advice I would get everyday before leaving for high school "make good choices".

By the time I returned to my room, I had composed myself. Luckily, Orientation had started and the whole day, and week really, was filled with activities and meeting new people. There wasn't time to dwell on missing my family. Even with the all the fun I was having and the excitement in the air, there were really hard moments. The first night was the worst. I remember lying in bed, looking at the old stuffed animal I brought from home, and I just lost it. This wasn't my bed, it wasn't my home, and the people around me weren't my family.

Throughout September, I called my family all the time. My goal was to talk to them once a day, even if it was for two minutes, just to say hi. However, as homework started piling up, my friendships started forming, and I got more involved within clubs, it got harder and harder to keep this up.

Finally winter break came and I was so excited. I would be home for a whole month and I imagined that my family would be just as I left it. Instead, it was the first time I was home long enough to see how different my home life had become. I realized that my sister had grown much closer to my mom, and at times, I felt like a third wheel. It seemed that my family had moved on without me. When I talked to my mom about this, she told me something that hurt at the time. She said that they weren't going to put their lives on hold because they were missing me. They had to keep going, keep figuring it out, just like I did. She told me that what was really important was that we needed to enjoy the time that we did have together. Since then, I have tried to really take my mom's advice to heart. Now, my parents and I put much less emphasis on constant contact with each other. They don't usually know what I'm up to from day to day, but my mom is still the first person I call when I get a good grade on a test, after the new episode of our favorite TV show, or I need someone to listen.

I have grown closer to my parents in ways that I didn't know were possible. We all have our own distinct lives, but I continue to rely on my family when I need to feel grounded. So throughout the ups and downs that the next few months will bring for you and your student, I hope you know that while it might not always seem like it – especially when we ask you to turn up the music – this is the time when we need your love and support more than ever before. Good luck to you and your students and welcome to the Marquette family.