



Parent and Family Newsletter

NOVEMBER 2022 Issue 1

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Dear parents and families,

As the calendar turns to November, you can count on your student being busy as they juggle classes and life. They may be sitting on some important feelings, including stress, and wondering about mid-term grades, if they are going to fail a class, and if they should stay enrolled in or drop a course. These topics are important yet can be difficult to discuss; however, I encourage you to talk to your students about these — and other — matters and offer your support. This is a great opportunity for you to help your student reflect on their experiences and to suggest they seek support from any of our student success resource centers on campus. Learn more at MinotStateU.edu/asc/. This is also the time of year to make sure that health and wellness habits are in place. The [Wellness Center](#) offers around-the-clock options for physical and mental health activities.

Our dining center will be shut down from Thursday, Nov. 24 until 5 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 27. The Office of Student Affairs will be hosting a traditional Thanksgiving meal on campus at noon on Thursday, Nov. 24 in the Beaver Dam for students.

Contact me at kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu and I will make arrangements for any requested meeting.

Respectfully,

Kevin Harmon,
Vice President for Student Affairs

Be seen. Be heard. Be empowered.

Help your college student learn to manage conflict

By Vicki Nelson, CollegiateParent.com

Maya is upset because she's fighting with her roommate all of the time. They can't agree on cleaning up, having overnight guests, or playing loud music.

Sam is in a bad mood because he thought he'd made some close friends in his first weeks at college, but now they argue about politics all of the time and can't seem to get past their different viewpoints.

Clinton just can't seem to find common ground with his history professor. They disagree about what makes a good enough excuse for handing an assignment in late.

Toni and her mother argue on the phone almost every time they talk. Her mom wants Toni to come home on weekends and Toni wants to stay on campus to spend time with her friends.

All four of these students are experiencing conflict. They came to college to have new experiences and to meet new and different kinds of people, but negotiating those differences has created problems.



Conflict is a normal part of life.

One reason these students may be upset by the conflict they are experiencing is because they didn't anticipate it. Conflict can be as simple as not agreeing with someone or as complex as an all-out, long-lasting dispute. These students need to understand that some conflict is inevitable.

According to psychologist and writer Kenneth Kaye, "Conflict is neither good nor bad. Properly managed, it is absolutely vital." The goal is not necessarily to eliminate all conflict, but rather to see it as a natural, healthy process and to manage it.

If your college student is experiencing conflict — if any of the scenarios above sound even a little bit familiar — it is important to talk with your student about it

It's all about your approach.

Sometimes, the problem isn't the conflict itself, but how we approach it that can cause issues. Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann, two professors at the University of Pittsburgh, analyzed five ways of approaching conflict. Your student may find that one of the following five approaches might help. The key is thinking about how much you want to get your own way (being assertive) and how much you are willing to let the other person get their way (cooperativeness).

- 1. Accommodating (*letting the other person win*).** This keeps the peace at all costs (you give up your side) and can work well for minor situations, when something doesn't matter as much to you as it does to the other person, or definitely when you realize that you are wrong.
- 2. Avoiding (*keeping your fingers crossed that the problem will resolve itself*).** Basically, you ignore the problem. This may work well when the issue isn't really important or worth the effort and it can give both people time to think of a more appropriate way to approach the situation later.
- 3. Compromising (*partially satisfying both people*).** Both people give up something that they want

to find a compromise. This will lower levels of tension and stress and may be a good first step when people don't know each other very well. It's the approach we were most often taught as children.

4. Competing (*getting your own way, often at the other person's expense*). This is a zero-sum game where someone is going to lose. You stick to your guns and force the issue. This may be necessary when a quick resolution is required or as a last resort when the issue matters more than the potential relationship with the other person.

5. Collaborating (*working together creatively to find a solution*). This approach takes time and commitment to resolve the issue by confronting the problem (not the person) together. It requires a level of trust, allows both people to feel they have a stake in the outcome, and helps build a long-term relationship. Both people have a shared responsibility for the outcome.

Think about these five approaches to conflict and how they might work in each of the scenarios above. There is no correct solution, but the outcomes could be very different.

Immediate strategies for managing conflict.

Although it's important to talk to your college student about accepting some conflict as normal and about taking different approaches to conflict, it may also be necessary to help your student take immediate action. Here are some suggestions:

- Cool off first. If you're having an argument, choose your words carefully and think about what you do.
- Talk about it with the other person — calmly. They probably want to find a solution, too.
- Focus on behavior and events, not personality. ("When you leave banana peels on the floor, I slip and fall." NOT "You are such a slob.")
- Listen to the other person's point of view. Really, really.
- Identify any points that you can agree on. This is a starting place.
- Be specific about the cause of the conflict. What exactly is the problem? Don't let it grow out of proportion.

- Prioritize issues. If there are several things you disagree about, choose one to settle for now.
- Brainstorm solutions together. Get creative. Think outside of the box. (Collaboration!)
- Develop a short-term plan together and agree to revisit later to see if it is working.
- Be respectful and optimistic. Believe that you can find a solution.
- Get help from a neutral third party (Residence assistant? Academic advisor?).

On the subject of respect, your student should be more formal in how they go about requesting a meeting with a professor and how they conduct themselves during a conversation than they might be when communicating with a peer.



Can conflict ever be a good thing?

Although we don't like to see our students unhappy or stressed, a little conflict can actually be a good thing. Difficult situations can help students build communication and strategy skills, define their values more clearly, learn how to negotiate, and practice flexibility. Finding a solution to a difficult situation can be extremely satisfying.

Sometimes, students may just need to move on. They may need to make new friends, change roommates, take a class with a different professor next time, or learn to say no to family. As parents, when we encourage our students but stay out of the fray, we can take pride in watching them learn to take control of their own lives and continue to grow.

Financial Aid Information

2023-24 FAFSA

The 2023-24 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) opened on Oct. 1 at [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov). The 2023-24 FAFSA covers the Fall 2023, Spring 2024, and Summer 2024 semesters. Get an early start on applying for federal financial aid for next school year by submitting your FAFSA now!

Unpaid balances

When students have an unpaid balance on their Student Account in Campus Connection after waivers, scholarships, grants, and federal loans have been applied, there are a few payment options. We always encourage eligible students to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to ensure they have accessed all types of federal aid available first, but when those options have been exhausted, there are some additional options that might be considered.

- 1. Personal savings or earnings from work.** Some families are able to cover the remaining balance by accessing funds from savings or earnings from employment.
- 2. External scholarship opportunities.** Follow the [MSU Financial Aid Office Facebook](#) page to learn about opportunities from various organizations that come up throughout the school year. We also share timely financial aid related reminders.
- 3. MSU Tuition Payment Plan.** This plan allows families to spread out the fall and spring semester payments over three months, rather than having to pay the entire balance at once — in September for the fall semester and in January for spring. There is a \$50 fee for enrolling in the plan each semester and students typically must enroll in the Tuition Payment Plan and pay their first payment on or before the standard fee payment deadline for the semester. More information about the tuition payment plan is available at [MinotStateU.edu/busoffic/pages/tuition-payment-plan.shtml](https://minotstateu.edu/busoffic/pages/tuition-payment-plan.shtml).
- 4. Federal PLUS Loans.** The Federal Direct PLUS Loan is a loan available to parents of dependent students who file the FAFSA. You can apply online at studentaid.gov.

- 5. Private education loans.** Private education loans are non-federal loans offered by a variety of lending institutions. Students are typically the borrower but usually need a co-signer with good credit in order to qualify. For more information and a link to FASTCHOICE, a tool that allows students to compare the terms of several different private loans borrowed by MSU students in the past three years, visit [MinotStateU.edu/finaid/loans/index.shtml](https://minotstateu.edu/finaid/loans/index.shtml), select Private Loans, then click the FASTCHOICE icon. Students are not limited to using lenders on this list.

If you or your student would like assistance determining how much to borrow in a PLUS or private loan, our staff members are happy to assist you. Please call the financial aid office at 701-858-3375.



UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

NOVEMBER

- 2** – Native American Cultural Celebration, 11 AM–2 PM, Student Center, 3rd floor
- 3** – Last day to withdraw from second 8-wk. classes and receive a 75% refund
 - International Cultural Celebration, 12:30–2:30 PM, Student Center, 2nd floor
- 10** – Last day to drop a 16-wk. class
 - COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic, 11 AM–3 PM, Conference Center, Student Center, 3rd floor. No cost. Appointments can be made [HERE](#).
- 11** – Veterans Day, University closed
- 16** – Last day to withdraw from second 8-wk. classes and receive a 50% refund
- 21** – Last day to drop 8-wk. classes
- 23** – Thanksgiving vacation, no classes
- 24** – Thanksgiving, University closed
- 25** – Thanksgiving vacation, no classes

View more dates, deadlines, and events at [MinotStateU.edu/calendar](https://minotstateu.edu/calendar).

Sophomore slump — fact or fiction?

By Diane Schwemm, CollegiateParent.com

Depending on who you talk to, sophomore slump is either “ubiquitous” and “unavoidable” or a total non-issue.

If your second-year student isn’t experiencing it, you can feel grateful. However, if you sense a slump, you’re not alone.

Here’s what may be going on and how you can help your sophomore turn things around (or fend off the syndrome altogether if you are the parent of a first-year student).

The novelty — and relative ease — of freshman year is over.

Students and parents alike agree that sophomore year means the “excitement and new experiences” of freshman year are a thing of the past, “but you haven’t found your rhythm like you do in junior year” (Ziv, Pomona College).

Catherine, a Baylor University student, agreed. She also pointed out that even as enthusiasm and motivation falter a bit, academic pressure increases for second-year students. “Many of the prerequisites are out of the way and sophomores begin taking upper level classes and classes specific to their majors. Accountability is higher,” she said, and there’s none of the “wiggle room” professors sometimes allow freshmen. The “slump,” in other words, can equate to a GPA dip as well as a generalized slump in spirits.

Being prepared for change will help students deal with the transition and enjoy the many good things that come with sophomore year like closer friendships, leadership opportunities, faculty connections, and more relevant classes.

Some second-year students are still searching for a place on campus — a club, team, or campus job that might create a feeling of home. Students who don’t know what they want to major in may feel anxious and unfocused. “My son is slow to understand his big picture and how he can make the best use of his talents,” one parent observed.



Schools recognize that sophomore slump is a problem.

Many universities have instituted Second/Sophomore Year Experience (SYE) programs to counter the lack of momentum and connection that can lead to sophomore slump. At large universities, SYE living-learning communities are designed to keep students living on campus and engaged. Ohio State, for example, has documented higher retention and graduation rates among students who live on campus sophomore year as opposed to moving off campus (for retention, 95.7% vs. 88.6% and for graduation, 88.2% vs. 76.5%).

SYE programming includes events that connect students with faculty members. At Duke, students attend career luncheons in the faculty dining hall; Colorado State University hosts a True Faculty Story Dinner Series just for sophomores; Williams College calls their monthly meet-ups that introduce sophomores to a variety of featured guests M&Ms (“learn, meet, mingle, and munch”).

Special opportunities may include unique study abroad programs just for sophomores, peer mentoring, special outdoor experiences, Academic Transition Workshops, monthly newsletters, social programs, leadership opportunities, and parties to celebrate being halfway to graduation.

This is what students who escape sophomore slump do, and do well.

They get involved.

- “Sophomore year I led a service group that brought food to low-income and homeless people near my university,” a recent graduate recalled. “It kept me busy and provided a refreshing contrast to academics.”
- “My daughter started to go to church which was something she did growing up but did not do freshman year,” one parent said. “It helped her feel more connected.”
- “My son sings in two choral groups,” said the parent of a current sophomore. “He’s saving money for a Glee Club spring break trip to South America.”



They focus on major and career.

- “My daughter started to get more into the classes for her major and loved her major, so that really helped,” the parent of a recent graduate said.
- “I’m working as a physics T.A. — it’s more connected to what I’m learning than my previous campus job,” commented a current sophomore.
- “My daughter is busily researching study abroad and domestic exchange program,” said the mother of current sophomore.
- “My son wanted a ‘serious’ summer job between sophomore and junior year so he was hyper-focused on resumé-writing and -building,” recalled the parent of a recent graduate.
- “Sophomore year, my daughter spent a good portion of second semester researching and

applying for internships in New York,” said another parent. “Her persistence paid off — she found meaningful summer work in a community education program and she got internship credit.”

- “I did an internal transfer and now I’m in the program where I can take the classes I really want,” a current sophomore said. “College finally makes sense to me!”

They enjoy deeper friendships, better housing, and expanded social opportunities.

- “The sophomore housing situation gave both my kids another level of independence and fun with self-selected roommates,” Lucy remembered, “but they weren’t saddled yet with the stress of being renters.”
- “I’m getting off campus more — to see a concert in L.A., or going up to San Francisco to stay with a friend over fall break,” said a current sophomore.
- “Last year, my son was in a one-room double with a guy he barely spoke to. This year he’s living with a great group of friends,” a parent of a current sophomore reported. “They all have singles but they hang out in the common room and do things together. I can tell he’s happy.”

They take care of health and wellness.

- “I took multiple dance classes, for class credit and for recreation,” a recent grad said. “This kept me in shape and was great stress relief.”
- “Health problems were casting a cloud earlier this semester,” said a current sophomore. “But I recently figured out that I have a ton of allergies and if I take care of that going forward, it should help my outlook.”
- “Sophomore year was when I discovered I could rent hiking and ski gear very cheaply from the Outdoor Club,” an upperclassman recalled. “I got outside more and that actually helped my grades.”

Parents can support slumping sophomores by listening and encouraging. Students who feel unfocused and indecisive may benefit from time in the career center or an appointment with an academic advisor. Involvement on campus and good health are both spirit-boosters. When students are grounded in the positive, they can be more resilient if or when they do hit a bump in the road.