

First-Year College Student Milestones

Compiled by Amy Baldwin, Ed.D.

First Semester

	WHAT STUDENTS EXPERIENCE	WHAT CHALLENGES THEY MAY FACE	WHAT STRATEGIES CAN BE EMPLOYED
FIRST MONTH	Excitement of moving in and moving on to the next phase of their lives	Homesickness, loneliness and isolation, relationship changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that the transition about the changes in their relationships • Show up and speak out to make friends
SECOND MONTH	The reality of college expectations, a more “relaxed” schedule	Uncertainty about what they should be doing, low initial grades, stress from “adulting” for several weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with faculty • Find a peer mentor or coach • Develop effective time management strategies
THIRD MONTH	Feeling more comfortable with the pace of college, confident they can handle social activities with academic work	Increased course work demands, unwillingness to ask for help, attempting to resolve relationship or roommate issues themselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with grades and make adjustments • Visit tutoring and other resources • Visit counseling
FOURTH MONTH	Expanding their circle of friends, discovering new intellectual experiences	Changes in family dynamics, registering for next semester, health issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get involved in campus organizations • Communicate with family • Seek medical attention <i>early</i> for health issues
FIFTH MONTH	Completing final projects and final exams, looking forward to break from college	Stress, uncertainty about the future, anxiety about final grades, financial strains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with faculty for final push • Talk with advisor and financial aid counselor • Ensure all final tasks are complete before break

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Second Semester

	WHAT STUDENTS EXPERIENCE	WHAT CHALLENGES THEY MAY FACE	WHAT STRATEGIES CAN BE EMPLOYED
FIRST MONTH	Excited for new semester, new start, feeling “wiser”	Unresolved academic struggles, renewed homesickness, self-management challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form study groups and visit tutoring early • Be proactive about health issues • Use planner to set goals and tasks
SECOND MONTH	Feeling more “at home” and comfortable, relationships strengthening	Experiencing change in personal values, health issues, feeling like an “imposter”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen current relationships and develop ones with faculty and staff • Balance personal activities with course work
THIRD MONTH	Eager to think more broadly about career and life plan	Concerned about spring break plans and expenses, stress from planning for summer and next fall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate summer classes, internships, and employment possibilities • Check in with advisor about degree plan
FOURTH MONTH	Choosing a degree plan, feeling like an adult “finally,” making better choices with time and self-care	Anxiety about choosing a degree and increased expectations, continued struggles with self-care (sleeping, eating, avoiding alcohol and drugs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop positive, affirming strategies for reducing the effects of stress • Explore future goals with an advisor or career coach • Participate in campus information sessions on study abroad, internships, service learning
FIFTH MONTH	Planning for summer work, internship, travel, or classes; looking ahead for next year	Stress, uncertainty about the future, anxiety about final grades, financial strains, needing a break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in with faculty for final push • Talk with advisor and financial aid counselor • Ensure all final tasks are complete before break