



Conversations for the **CAR RIDE HOME**

The beginning of college life can be both exciting and anxiety-provoking.

Please consider this booklet as an invitation to partner with us in an effort to maintain the safety, health, and overall success of your student.

HOW TO BEGIN TO HAVE A MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION WITH YOUR STUDENT

Prior to beginning these important conversations, it may be helpful for you to ask yourself some questions regarding your beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of the Towson University experience.

For example: What are the expectations that you have for your student regarding the college experience? When was the last time you spoke with your student about these expectations? What have you discussed regarding the academic, financial, social (including alcohol and drug use), emotional, and overall wellness expectations for your student? If you have previous college-going experience, how does that experience inform your expectations for your student? How do you plan on allowing your student to create their own college experience while still providing the wisdom of experience?

THE CONVERSATION

We recommend that you begin to have these conversations now and that you continue a frequent and meaningful dialogue as your student progresses through college. Honest conversation, non-judgmental expression, and willingness to listen are the foundations to healthy relationship building. An effective technique is to be explicit while you convey your views and expectations to your student. Despite what you may think, your student relies on your advice and support as guiding principles for the collegiate journey. Identify the behaviors that you deem both acceptable and unacceptable, and be mindful that your expectations should be reasonable and supportive—and that your student is an adult who will be making decisions for themselves. You and your student may wish to work together to create realistic goals and effective strategies for making healthy decisions about college life.

ACADEMIC LIFE

Adjusting to a college-level curriculum can be quite challenging for incoming students, despite an excellent high school or previous college record. The best way to enhance educational success and reduce academic difficulties is to reach out early for support. The primary academic, on-campus resources include:

Faculty

- All professors make themselves accessible to students during office hours
- All first-year students are assigned an FYE advisor whom they will meet during Welcome to TU. Encourage your student to take advantage of the advising relationship
- Transfer students are assigned an academic advisor, and can join the Transfer Mentor Program to be paired with an additional faculty or staff mentor

Tutoring and Learning Center (TLC)

- TLC provides free peer tutoring in many introductory level courses
- TLC also offers free workshops in exam preparation, learning styles, test taking skills, time management, etc.
- Time management and organizational coaches are available to students

REGARDING FERPA

Please partner with us in supporting student's rights and responsibilities to include others in their education. FERPA (The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) protects your student's rights to have exclusive access to their educational records. Family members are encouraged to communicate with their students regarding the student's academic progress, program of study, grades, or any other information about their educational record or experience. Family members wishing to obtain a student's record should obtain that information directly from the student. In the event that the student does not have ready access to the information, upon request TU can supply that information to the student who in turn can share it with whomever they wish.

Ask Your Student:

- What strategies will you use to stay organized?
- If you don't do well on a test, what will you do?
Where can you go?
- Where are your favorite spots to study?
Where do you feel most productive?
- When you have a big research paper to write,
where can you go for help?
- What is your plan for establishing a study schedule?
How much time do you think you should dedicate to studying?
- What are some examples of effective communication
with your professors?
- What are some reasons having a tutor would be beneficial?



CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT

Meaningful engagement outside the classroom is associated with students' seamless transitions to college, satisfying collegiate experiences, and positive impacts on academic life. Student involvement is an expectation of students at TU. Campus Life creates and develops a more meaningful student experience through clubs and organizations as well as leadership development.

Ask Your Student:

- What is the social scene like? What have you been doing for fun?
- What kinds of activities are happening on campus?
- What is life like in the residence halls?
- How are you getting along with your roommate(s)?
- Who are your friends? Has it been easy to find new friends?

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Leadership development is an essential outcome of higher education and it has become a norm to have leadership programming on college campuses. Currently, Campus Life offers a variety of short-term and long-term leadership opportunities for undergraduate students and a number of new programs will be created each academic year. Have your student explore the iLead program or LeaderShape (<https://www.towson.edu/studentlife/activities/>).

TRANSITION & CONNECTION

The aim of our transitional programming is to assist students in finding their way at TU by helping them get involved, understanding the community, and assisting them through the difficult times at college. Particular work is done to help students with the challenging transitions during their first and second year.



PHYSICAL HEALTH

Incoming students are typically filled with excitement over the instant freedom they have recently acquired, in addition to the new friends they are beginning to make. In the midst of such an exhilarating time, students are usually not thinking about the possibility of an unexpected illness. We understand, and our job is to keep you well! The reality is that most college students are generally healthy. However, it is with increasing frequency that college students find themselves in precarious situations and sometimes engage in high-risk behaviors, unaware of the dangers and consequences that may ensue as a result of poor decision making.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

It is very important to have honest conversations about behaviors and possible associated health risks with your student prior to arriving on campus. A good starting point for such conversations involves the Health Form and Immunization Record which must be submitted prior to the start of your student's first semester. These are required documents for the Health Center located in Ward and West. It is essential that you review your student's medical history and have your student consult with on-campus healthcare providers if they have been diagnosed with any chronic illness or health-related concern. Coordinated and continuous care should be appropriately established with providers at the Health Center, and students are urged to have immediate access to the contact information of their private physicians at home. Finally, students' insurance cards should be carried at all times.

Ask Your Student:

- How are you keeping yourself healthy on campus?
- What's your plan if you get sick?
Do you know where the Health Center is located?
- Do you know how you would get medicine (over-the-counter or prescription) if you needed it?
- Do you know your own medical history? Do you feel confident in giving your medical history to a health care provider?
- Do you know our family's medical history?

ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

We encourage you to take time to have a meaningful discussion with your student about the realities of alcohol and drug use in college. The ability to share your expectations regarding your student's substance use in college is an essential conversation that may be used to promote responsible choices.

PREVENTION OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Before classes officially start at TU, incoming students are required to complete an online education designed to minimize risk associated with alcohol, drugs, and sexual violence. It is a research-based, comprehensive training program that empowers students to make healthy choices. Please encourage your student to fully participate in this online module and complete it before classes start.

TITLE IX

Towson University ensures that members of our community are not subjected to sexual misconduct, relationship violence, or any discriminatory harassment on the basis of sex and gender. TU has policies, procedures, and resources to prevent and address these issues, in accordance with Title IX of the Education amendments of 1972 (a federal civil rights law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex in federally funded education programs and activities).

FAMILY BELIEFS AND VALUES

Discuss your personal beliefs about alcohol with your student. Sharing your values around alcohol will create an environment of trust and understanding. If you choose to drink, explain how you drink responsibly in moderation. If you choose not to drink, explain why you have made this decision.

FAMILY HISTORY

If your family has a history of alcoholism, your student needs to be aware of such family history. Research indicates that children, or grandchildren, of alcoholics may be up to 6 times more likely to develop problematic drinking behaviors. It is important to communicate this potential risk factor with your student while explaining that some people with a family history of alcoholism may simply be unable to drink alcohol without drinking to excess.

Tigers in Recovery is the Collegiate Recovery Program (CRP) for TU. This program is designed to support TU students that are in or seeking recovery from substance abuse disorders. Tigers in Recovery and its programs help students have an authentic college experience while maintaining their recovery.

Ask Your Student:

- What are your perceptions of alcohol and drug use at TU?
- How will you decide whether or not to drink or use drugs at college?
- How will you decide how much or how often to drink?
- What are some of the risks of obsessive substance use? What are some ways to avoid these risk?
- What reasons can you give your peers if you don't want to drink or use drugs?
- How will you handle it if your roommate wants to drink?
- Who can you talk to if you are having difficulty with your own or a friend's substance use?

MENTAL HEALTH

www.towson.edu/counseling

The Counseling Center staff members have extensive experience working with students. They are interested in the personal experience of our students and seek to work collaboratively on personal, social, and academic goals. They embrace and appreciate the richness brought by the intersections of gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, age, physical and mental abilities, spirituality, socioeconomic status, physical attributes, as well as other personal and social characteristics that comprise individual identity. The Counseling Center provides a wide variety of services to support all students in their mental health journeys.

SUPPORTIVE STRATEGIES

Many of life's unexpected and challenging experiences often feel outside of a student's control. These experiences may cause stress, feelings of helplessness, depression, loss of previous ability to concentrate, or impulsive decision making. In addition, alcohol and other drug use, as well as self-destructive eating patterns, are common responses to situational stress in the college population. These behaviors can negatively impact a student's personal and academic performance. The Counseling Center works with students to combat and alleviate such forms of distress through individual and group counseling, skill building workshops, and campus-wide programming.

Ask Your Student:

- How do you know when you are stressed? What are your triggers?
- How will you cope with stressful situations when you are away at school?
- If friends and family are your support system, how will you utilize them?
- How will you know if you need additional support beyond your friends and family and what do you know about the Counseling Center services?

ENCOURAGING MENTAL HEALTH CARE

A supportive network is vital to a student's success. The Counseling Center is a valuable resource for students whether they have already been engaged in counseling in the past or are new to treatment. Clinicians will meet with students to develop a customized treatment plan that might include individual or group counseling at the Center or a referral to a community provider. We encourage families to contact the Counseling Center with any questions or concerns they have about their student. While counselors are bound by ethical and legal requirements of confidentiality, we are able to provide general consultation and recommendations to families, faculty, and other TU administrators. Additionally, if your student is coming in with pre-existing mental health concerns or needs psychiatric medication management, we recommend that they come to the Counseling Center for assistance in finding local providers or use our online referral database <https://towson.rints.com/>

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

The first six weeks of college are especially difficult for first-year students. During this time and beyond, continue talking with your student, remain supportive, call, and email your student to check in and ask questions. Each family will differ in how they express support and what is beneficial for their student. While one student may want and ask for a family member to check in on them weekly or even daily, others may find this overwhelming. Talk about what will feel best for your student and your family as a whole.



ON CAMPUS RESOURCES

Once again, we are glad to have you as a partner in your student's journey to success here at Towson University. As your student completes their first semester and beyond, here are some resources on campus that may benefit your student at different times in their time at TU.

Academic Advising Center 410-704-2472
Accessibility and Disability Services 410-704-2302
Albert Cook Library 410-704-2462
Athletics 410-704-2759
Bursar's Office 410-704-2100
Campus Life 410-704-2332
Campus Recreation- 410-704-2367
Career Center 410-704-2233
Center for Student Diversity 410-704-2051
Dining Services 410-704-2302
Division of Student Affairs 410-704-2055
Financial Aid Office 410-704-4236
Health Center 410-704-2466
Housing and Residence Life 410-704-2516
New Student and Family Programs 410-704-2309
Off-Campus Student Services 410-704-2806
OneCard 410-704-2284
Parking and Transportation 410-704-PARK (7275)
Scholarships 410-704-2647
Student Activities 410-704-3307
Study Abroad 410-704-2451
Tutoring and Learning Center 410-704-2291
University Police 410-704-4444



New Student and
Family Programs