

TIPS FOR PARENTS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

ON STAYING IN TOUCH

How often should I call? In the midst of transition, parents often struggle to find the balance between abandonment and constant intrusion in their student's life. Here are some tips for maintaining a balance that works:

- **When you feel the urge to talk, email or text instead.** Use technology to express your feelings, including text messaging, email, or instant chat programs. Emails are a permanent record that your student can keep and look at whenever he or she misses home.
- **Be clear about your expectations for contact.** Set a standard early with which you and your student are comfortable. Plan to talk on the phone once or twice each week or to be notified when your child leaves for a retreat or a weekend trip with his/her roommate. You may want to set a standard day (Sundays are popular) and let your student initiate the call.
- **Send a care package.** Students love getting mail; it is a reminder that there is a world outside of writing papers, classes and club meetings. Packages do not need to be huge boxes that are difficult to carry across campus; a letter from home, some pictures and some of his/her favorite candy are perfect reminders of your love.
- **Plan visits in advance.** Thinking of coming to Family Weekend? Great idea! Let your student know what activities you would like to sign up for and let him/her pick where the family is going to dinner on Saturday night. (Family Weekend is October 25-27, 2013). Be mindful of major tests or papers due around this time as classes are still in session. It's also nice to schedule a visit during periods when there is not a lot of activity on campus. Ask your student the best time to visit.
- **Visiting home.** Your student is accustomed to late hours and leaving and coming as he or she pleases without having to call or check-in. Be upfront about your expectations and ask your student for input in setting new house rules that show respect for parental authority and student independence.

CONVERSATION PIECES

Questions Students Don't Mind Answering

- How has your experience been so far? How has it met your expectations?
- How are you spending time outside of class? What kinds of activities are available?
- What interesting people have you met?
- Have you been able to talk with (insert name here) from high school? How are they enjoying their college experience?

* Keep questions open. Allow students space to talk. Asking too many questions at once may lead to your student feeling trapped or overwhelmed. Pointed or overly specific questions may make the student feel undue pressure.