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Letter from the Dean of Students

Dear UNCW parent,

As UNCW's dean of students I have the distinct opportunity to meet with all new students and their parents during orientation. This gives me a chance to cover a wide range of issues from how students can be successful in college to how they might lose their opportunity to be here if they misbehave. I always qualify my remarks by indicating that the majority of our students do very well here, reach new heights, graduate and go on to do great things. Tongue in cheek, when I tell most parents at orientation about our great students, they typically envision their own son or daughter as one of the students to whom I am referring.

On average 30 students each year are dismissed from UNCW for conduct-related reasons, most of which are alcohol and drug-related. Considering this represents less than 1% of the UNCW

student population, we are doing well. Though the percentage is modest, I'm careful to always highlight for students and parents the significant negative consequences for those who get dismissed, including the impact on their educational record, loss of money invested in their education, and displacement from one of the best educational environments in the country. When I meet with suspended students as they leave campus, the chief regret they have is losing the opportunity to be a student at UNCW.

Recent strides in the area of student civility education at UNCW are in no small part due to the combined efforts of our tireless staff, and the direct conversations we have with new students about what it means to be on their own without mom and dad pointing out each pitfall. We also provide education on community standards to

our students. More than ever, students are tethered to their parents by email, cell phone and text messages. We attempt to teach them that the college experience is uniquely theirs.

I'm happy to report that our efforts pertaining to community standards education with UNCW students are paying dividends. Though conduct suspensions per year remain consistent, during the fall 2008 semester we observed (compared to the previous year) a 24% decrease in total student referrals to the campus judicial system and a 15% decrease in total number of incidents in the residence halls. We also experienced a 44% decrease in the number of total alcohol violations and an 84% decrease in incidents of campus violence perpetrated by students, and a 71% decrease in harassment.

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Having Difficult Conversations

A frequent topic of conversation on campus is how the current economic conditions may be affecting students. Worries about how to meet school expenses, angst about worsening economic conditions, and concerns about future employment prospects affect not only students but their families as well. Avoiding difficult conversations about money matters can be an added stressor. Here are some tips for having difficult conversations.

Don't put it off. Avoiding a matter doesn't make it better or go away. If you expect a conversation to go badly, it likely will. Check your expectations and focus on the positive outcomes.

Have a clear idea of why you want to have a conversation.

Know ahead of time if the conversation is strictly to convey information, to discuss perspectives or to seek solutions.

Set some rules. Pick a time to meet that works for everyone involved. Allow people to feel prepared. Set a time limit and make a plan for following up on the discussion.

Start the conversation on the right foot.

Broaching a topic with "I'd like to talk about..." is less loaded than saying "We need to talk." Be direct, but diplomatic as well.

Know that feelings will be part of the mix. Discussing difficult topics can make people defensive and uncomfortable. Acknowledge people's reactions to the subject and be careful not to take those reactions personally.

Don't leave things unresolved. It's important for everyone involved to feel like they have said what they need to say. If you run out of time or someone needs time to think things over, make plans to talk again.

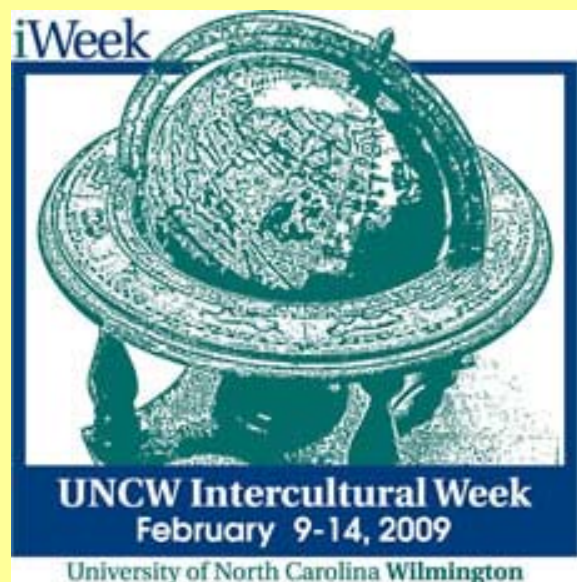
Taking time to talk about difficult topics will deepen the channels of open communication between you and your student.

*Jim Dolan, Ph.D., Staff Counselor
Counseling Center*

Traditions: Intercultural Festival

The Intercultural Festival is a showcase of dance, dress, music, food, and customs from around the world. This year's theme is "Global Mobility: Immigration, Economic Development, and Cultural Identities." The festival is the culmination of Intercultural Week, which hosts lectures, films, and various programs around campus to educate the student body as well as the Wilmington community on global issues and culture.

*Denise Galbraith, Student
Transition Programs*



Spring Break or Bust!?!?!?

To many American adults, the words "Spring Break," equal P-A-R-T-Y. To many American students, the words "Spring Break," equal P-A-R-T-Y! However, this is not always something to panic over. There are many students who work at their job over break, want to relax, or decide to go home to see their families. Regardless of where your student is spending the week off, it is beneficial to share these few simple suggestions for their safety and your sanity.

Planes, Trains, & Automobiles: Make sure they fill you in on their flight, hotel, and road trip plans. It is always good to get phone numbers of their hotel and the cell phone numbers of others in the group in case of an emergency.

Under the Tuscan Sun: If traveling to a warmer climate, remind them to load up on sunscreen and fluids (preferably water). It is im-

portant to avoid over-exposure to the sun which could lead to blisters, fainting, and vomiting. The last thing you need is a dehydrated lobster with heat stroke.

Cocktail: If your student chooses to drink, encourage him/her to space and pace. It is best to stick to one drink per hour and alternate with water to stay hydrated. Remind them to watch their drink being made, and to never leave it unattended. Also, a cab ride or a sober friend is critical for the end of the night.

The Volunteers: Is your student talking about wanting to do something, but doesn't know what? Mention UNCW Alternative Spring Break trips! This year, UNCW's Center for Leadership Education and Service (CLES) is taking a trip to the Appalachian Mountains for students to volunteer at the Appala-

chian Eco-Service. Another option is the Rappahannock Reservation where student will help sustain an endangered way of life while learning another culture. The costs are low for these trips. For more information, please visit www.uncw.edu/stuaff/leaderv/sbtrips.htm.

Although "Spring Break" often has a negative connotation attached to it, it is not always sex, drugs, and rock and roll. MTV, Hollywood, and the media do an excellent job of portraying Spring Break as a free-for-all to act completely crazy. Talk with your student and make sure you're on the same page. It's okay to have a good time, just not "Girls Gone Wild" good time. Spring Break is about relaxing, rejuvenating, and having a good time. As you already do, encourage them to be safe and smart!

*Trisha M. Schleicher, Health Educator
Abrons Student Health Center*

Homecoming Court 2009

King:

Mick Glassmacher

Men of the Court:

Scott Busiel, James D. Crawford, Brian DesRoches, Robert Warrington Phillips



Queen:

Erin Albee

Women of the Court:

Jennifer Cockrell, Peyton Jeter, Marie Mimiaga, Shantresa G. Young

Reflections from a Senior

As a senior it is easy to look back on my four years at UNCW and realize that there are many things that I have learned and benefitted from, as well as things that I would not want to ever see or do again (like chemistry class). One thing that I am excited to share with others is my on-campus job experience.

I have spent the last two years as a Peer Educator for CROSSROADS, which is UNCW's Substance Abuse Prevention and Education Program. It has allowed me to take part in many opportunities that I might not have gotten the chance to do otherwise. I have met a group of fellow Peer Educators who I look forward to seeing everyday. Please share with your student my Top 5 Reasons Why I Loved My On-Campus Job:

5. It is convenient. Who doesn't love being able to walk right from their dorm or apartment to their job? Students who don't have cars on campus can find it difficult to get to and from a job. Finding a job on campus eliminates this issue completely.

4. It helps build skills. Through working with students on our campus during events, at educational programs, and even at information tables, I have learned program planning skills and feel comfortable with public speaking. I am a marketing major. Through designing flyers and



publicizing events to students using various methods, I have developed skills that I can include on my resume .

3. I made new friends. I love my roommates and sorority sisters, but by working on campus I have met so many other students and co-workers with whom I never would have interacted without my job. We have such different backgrounds and beliefs about certain topics, but we have created

lasting friendships for which I am so grateful.

2. It will help me with my career choice. There are so many offices from which to choose to work in on campus, and there is undoubtedly one that can help you with your career. For me, I have had the change to gain hands-on experience in marketing that will help me get an edge in the workplace.

1. I have built a connection to the student body. Working at CROSSROADS really makes me feel that I know what is happening on campus, and I feel so connected to the student body. I hear about and am able to attend many activities that I probably would have never heard about if I didn't work on campus. Not only do I feel connected to the students, I have had opportunities to eat lunch with Chancellor DePaolo and talk to Vice-Chancellor Leonard about programs we are trying to implement; these opportunities assure me that my voice is being heard.

*Alisha Phillips, Peer Educator
CROSSROADS*

Spring 2009 Commencement Ceremonies

Date	Time	School/College
May 8	2:30 p.m.	Cameron School of Business
May 8	5:30 p.m.	School of Nursing & Watson School of Education
May 9	10:00 a.m.	Sciences, Arts, & Humanities in the College of Arts and Sciences
May 9	1:00 p.m.	Social Sciences in the College of Arts and Sciences

For more information about commencement, visit www.uncw.edu/commencement.

However, incidents of intoxication and drug possession increased 30%. It's no secret, as I discussed at orientation, that drug and alcohol education and prevention factors prominently into our work every single year. Your vigilant awareness, education, support and action in this area continues to be critically important. While fewer conduct issues occurred, we are spending more time helping students manage their lives, cope with disappointment and failure, and categorize their stress in ways where they understand that stress is a natural by-product of the college experience which can be overcome with the help of university staff.

After this year's freshman class attended their community standards session at orientation in June, we sent them a follow-up survey in August to gauge what they remembered from the session. About 250 students returned the survey. Here's what we learned:

- 90% agreed they are responsible for their behavioral decisions on campus, in the classroom and in the Wilmington community.

- 73% agreed that community standards are about being conscious of how their behavior affects others.
- 87% agreed they need to be careful when using Facebook and MySpace.
- 87% agreed that UNCW is a community of high standards and behavioral expectations.
- 88% agreed that movies such as *Animal House* aren't an accurate portrayal of American college life.
- 89% agreed that complying with the UNCW Honor Code means doing their own work.

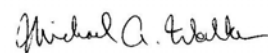
Along these lines, most students (95%) said they were very confident they would finish their freshman year. This exceeds the average UNCW freshman retention rate of 83%. Most students (82%) said they are very confident they would graduate from UNCW. This figure exceeds our six year graduation rate of 65%.

An element of the survey worth noting to parents is that when asked if the student discussed community standards/

behavioral expectations with their parents after orientation, only 44% said "yes." This underscores the need for parents to continue to establish an open dialogue with their student about the importance of community standards and the impact of individual behavior on others. The rest of the results as noted above are great news to UNCW and our staff who are invested in teaching new students about the critical importance of civility and community standards.

Thanks for your investment in your student's success at UNCW, and for the cooperative spirit which drives you to work with the university to help your student have a successful experience. In a future Splash article, I will provide an update on our renewed focus on academic integrity and revising the UNCW Honor Code. Be well until then.

Regards,



Michael Walker
Dean of Students



Office of Transition Programs

601 South College Road
Wilmington, NC 28403-5997

Phone: 910-962-3089

Fax: 910-962-7151

E-mail: transitions@uncw.edu

www.uncw.edu/transitions

The Office of Transition Programs provides a comprehensive array of programs designed to meet the unique needs of undergraduate students and parents from orientation through graduation. Programs generate an intentional connection for the students through engaging interactions with other students, faculty and staff. Ultimately through this community participation each student is provided the opportunity to improve critical thinking, problem solving, academic achievement, interpersonal and intrapersonal growth and civic responsibility.