

A STUDY OF STUDIES

HOW TO HELP YOUR COLLEGE FRESHMAN SUCCEED

FROM A KID WHO'S 1/5 OF HIS WAY TO GRADUATING

story **jeff back**

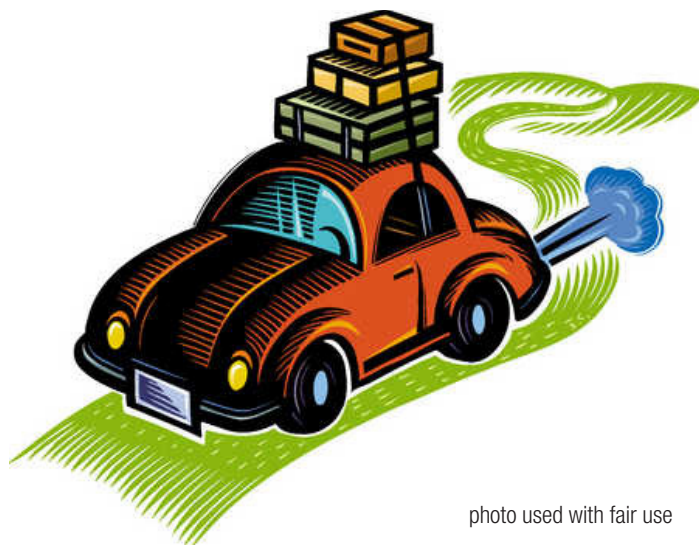


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It's that time of year again. Parents, I know it's a difficult one. Finals have been passed. Graduation caps have been tossed. And the "Congratulations" cake has been eaten (and eaten and eaten.) But as college orientations come and go, the magic of high school graduation begins to wear off as the thought of sending your first-born off to school strikes fear into hearts and sweat onto brows.

It's completely natural; don't worry. And I promise you this—he'll be all right. You just want what's best for him. He knows that. But as your pesky co-workers whose kids are still in diapers email you links to buy *The Naked Roommate* on Amazon at work, you can't help but worry over what you would, could and should have done differently to help your university-bound teen succeed.

If you take nothing else from this piece, however, just know: no matter what you do or don't, he's going to make it. There's been a lot of research done on the topic—and no, it doesn't all look pretty—but at the end of the year you'll look back and wonder just how quickly time flew.

The first proven piece to work is a bit of a tall order. If you can, make your student a senior. A 2011 survey says so—students in their final year of college are significantly more academically, emotionally and socially adjusted. [1] So when you get that whole time travel thing figured out, think about taking a spin from move-in to move-out day. Just think about it.

I know, time travel sounds like it could take a lot of work, but you have a whole summer! And it's better than the alternative. The

same study found that first-year students suffer from more mental tensions and increases in irritability, anger, anxiety, avoidance of social functions, feelings of loneliness and pessimism. [1]

Get tinkering.

If you can't get that done in time, just remember to convince your up-and-coming academic that he can do anything and everything. A pair of studies published in 2012 and 2013 concluded that self-efficacy is the key to college success. The first, a study of career development among first-year college students, suggests that higher college self-efficacy after the first semester leads to greater success and persistence in later years. [2] The latter determines academic self-efficacy is directly linked to higher GPA scores among the college ranks. [3] I know. Self-efficacy is a bit of a tricky term.

Think Thomas the Tank Engine and *The Little That Could*.

"I think I can... I think I can... I think I can"—that's exactly how your little guy should be sounding on move-in day.

Now, of course your student will be excited to do new things and meet new people. Just be warned: a 2008 study on the facets of personality and drinking argues that heightened excitement and sensation seeking as well as sociability in a student are indicative of college-age drinking—and its consequences. [4] Be sure to remind him that not every night has to be "legen—wait for it..."

"...dary."

When it comes to move-in day, be sure to check your kid's schedule before you head home. Make it a point for your student to have 8 AM classes on Friday mornings. Always. A study on the daily drinking habits of first-year college students found that students who drink on the ever-popular "Thirsty Thursdays" are less academically engaged. [5]

At the end of the day, YOFO. You Only First-Year Once. It's a time for your son to buck up and start figuring out this big thing we call life. And, at the end, if it isn't quite what you'd hoped, remember the survey about seniors; it will get better. Remind your son of this, and always be there for him when he has questions—you're only a phone call away.

Oh, you have a daughter? Then don't worry; you're good to go. That same 2012 career development study found girls to have a higher shot at success anyway. [2]

THE STUDIES

[1] Bharti Sharma. (2012). Adjustment and emotional maturity among first year college students. *Pakistan Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 9(3), 32

[2] Wright, S. L., & Jenkins-Guarnieri, M. A. (2013). Career development among first-year college students: College self-efficacy, student persistence,

and academic success. *Journal of Career Development*, 40(4), 292-310. doi:10.1177/0894845312455509

[3] Elizabeth J. Krumrei-Mancuso, Fred B. Newton, Eunhee Kim, & Dan Wilcox. (2013). Psychosocial factors predicting first-year college student success. *Journal of College Student Development*,

54(3), 247-266. doi:10.1353/csd.2013.0034

[4] McAdams, K. K., & Donnellan, M. B. (2009). Facets of personality and drinking in first-year college students. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 46(2), 207-212. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2008.09.028

[5] Hoepfner, B. B., Corriveau, D., Fingeret, A., Barnett, N. P., Jackson, K. M., Colby, S. M., . . . Wood, M. (2012). Daily college student drinking patterns across the first year of college. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 73(4), 613-624