

Clemson LIFE™ Program

Changing Roles of the Family

Postsecondary Education
Conference

October, 2010

A new research study

- The key to a successful college experience for young adults is that they are given a chance to learn what they can do and what they can't.
- There is a definite link between responsibility and confidence
- This process should start by the age of 12

The College Experience

- Parents must give them a chance to try – and must give them a chance to fail.
- Postsecondary transition programs provide a safe place for this
- Young adults should be “given the chance to fail and learn from their mistakes. That means parents need to step back a bit.”

Transition to College

This change is difficult for all parents

Especially for our parents

IDEA vs. ADA

The way parents adjust to their new role determines how successful their son/daughter will be.

Role of the Program

■ Collaboration

- It is important that the program and the parents work together for the best of the student

■ Communication

- The program must communicate well and often with the parents

■ Expectations

- The expectations of the parent must be aligned with the focus of the program

Collaboration

- United front – change is not easy
- Requires support at home during weekends and longer breaks to avoid losing ground
- Parents should make every effort to meet program deadlines as to money deposits, signatures, etc.

Communication

■ Progress reports

- Programs should keep parents informed as to progress on a regular basis

■ Housing/Independent Living

- The residential supervisors should maintain regular contact with parents, especially at first. Blogs or FB postings help.

■ Newsletters/websites

- Circulate updates to friends and family to encourage support.
- The website is your closest friend – use it!

Expectations

■ Programs

- ***Help parents and students choose a program that fits their needs and expectations.***

■ Parents

- Choose a program that fits your son/daughter and that matches your expectations
- Understand that the program ***will do things differently than you do at home.*** Give them the benefit of the doubt before you get upset about procedures.

Programs: Considerations

- Explain program procedures clearly during Open House sessions and summer orientation sessions
- Give parents written instructions listing requirements and expectations; money management, for example
- Send frequent email reminders and updates

Parents: Considerations

- Talk with your student about their preferences.
- Help them analyze their strengths and weaknesses.
 - Do they need a more structured program or a more open one? (reaction to authority)
 - Do they need more social interaction or not so much? (need for “down time”)
 - Can they adapt to change or do they need more transition time?

How Do I?....

- Visit several programs and ask questions
 - See thinkcollege.net for a list of programs.

For example.....

- Just as an example, we have identified certain characteristics that contribute to success for ClemsonLIFE students

Who would make a good ClemsonLIFE student?

A young man or woman who

- Has an intellectual disability, not behavioral – no defiance issues
- Is motivated to live independently
- Is motivated to obtain a job; wants to work
- Has some type of employment/volunteer experience
- Can perform a basic hygiene routine independently
- Is not stressed out by change; can be flexible
- Enjoys being around other people most of the time; social
- **Has parents who will support their independence**

Two sides need to prepare

The students have major changes coming:

- A transition to adult life
- Peers, maybe for the first time
 - Typically good in authority situations
 - May not be good in peer situations
- Away from home – making decisions

How Can Parents Prepare Them?

- Work on these skills at home:
 - Money
 - Reading
 - Conflict Resolution Skills
 - Laundry
 - Cooking – recipes
 - ***Anything they CAN do, they SHOULD do, including work***
 - They are going to be college students so treat them like college students and expect them to act like college students!
 - Don't let the schools let up either!

Address Behaviors

- Address behaviors that might prohibit them from being employed – or promoted – successfully
- Foster independence – not passivity. Expect them to do for themselves.
- Keep the bar high
- Treat them as adults – they are!
- Prepare them for learning to live independently
- And prepare yourself to let them go.....

Thank you!

- Questions?
- Comments?

- Contact information:

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