Make Your Best Start

COLLEGE TRANSITION IS A TEAM EFFORT

- We are partners with you to help you succeed.
- We want you to grow, to experience, to learn from the struggles and the successes, and to stay healthy & safe.

We know you talk a lot of things over with your parents - but do you really know their expectations?

- They have a helped shape your thinking and decision-making, and how you relate to the world.
- You might be thinking, “we’ve talked about these topics a thousand times. I know what decisions my parents would prefer I make.”
  But have you talked about it lately? The situations and people will be different now that you are away at college. There will still be choices about making friends, finding fun things to do, when to sleep or to get up, going to class or not. And yes, there will be choices about drinking, drugs, and having sex too.

Take a risk: initiate the “difficult” or awkward conversations with your parents.

Talk about the choices you are inclined to make in various situations and what they think

- When you talked about coming to college, what did your parents mean when they asked you to “Be Careful” and “Make good Choices?” When you promised to be careful, what did you just promise? Talk about specifics so everyone is clear about expectations. Consider what you would do in various situations.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT WWU

➤ Alcohol and Drug use:

- At Western, many students make the choice not to drink at all (about 27%) and most who do choose to drink, do so moderately (1-4 drinks)
- WWU enforces state and federal law as well as university policy (That also means NO marijuana on campus)
- In the event of an emergency, it is worth the risk of getting an MIP or university sanction to ensure the wellbeing and safety of friends or others
- Fun late-night and weekend activities that don’t involve drinking or drugs are abundant on campus
  There are unlimited ways and opportunities to get involved

➤ Sexual Health:

- 28% of Western students choose to abstain from having sexual relations
- If you have already made the choice to be sexually active, strongly consider consistently using protection 100% of the time (64% of students said they used protection the last time they had sex)
- Sex when drunk or high is not consensual sex and can carry many health, legal and emotional risks

➤ Keep yourself & your friends safe:

- When making friends, avoid “instant” intimacy – take time to get to know people
- Use the “buddy system” – go to and leave events with friends (and watch out for each other while you are there)
- Trust your instincts in unfamiliar surroundings or with unfamiliar people – use normal safety precautions – and please keep your doors locked.

➤ Dealing with stress: Emotional Health

- Learn the difference between healthy stress that motivates and distress that overwhelms and immobilizes
- Learn skills to cope with normal stress and challenges in healthy ways
- Learn the difference between sadness and depression
- Develop a support system (See below for the differentiation)
- Reach out for help when things don’t feel right
- Talk to someone you can trust (and use the Counseling Center)
- Be aware of isolation (Students with a good social support system do better and can cope with the ups & downs of college life more easily)
- Remember staying active helps you feel better physically and emotionally, and is a great way to work off excess stress
Know the difference between Sadness and Depression

**Sadness:**
- Goes away in a few days
- Interest and enjoyment return quickly
- General stress, worry, or disappointment does not lead to hopelessness or despair
- Sleep, appetite, and energy level are not greatly disrupted

**Depression:**
- Is persistent and increases sadness and anxiety
- Interest and enjoyment in activities disappears
- Helplessness and despair can overwhelm and immobilize
- Sleep, appetite, and energy are all impacted
- Interferes with daily functioning
- Needs assistance from professionals – call the Counseling Center or Student Health Center

### For Wellness: To be your best – physically, emotionally AND academically

Build these into your daily routine:
- Good sleep – 7-8 hours helps you feel, and look your best – as well as helping your brain do all that work your academic load demands (focus, concentration, memory)
- Eat healthy - good basic nutrition helps your body to function best
- Physical activity – anything that gets you moving, and remember activity is fun, not just exercise and sweat
- Connection and involvement – staying connected with others is good medicine
- What makes all this worth the work? What do you want out of life? Find your meaning and purpose.

### For Academic Success:

- Talk to the faculty
- It’s OK to ask questions
- It’s OK to “not be perfect”
- Get involved in practical application of classroom learning
- Get involved – volunteer, leadership, internship, etc.
- Use the academic support resources!
  - Tutorial and Academic Skills Center, Math Center, Writing Center, Western Library

### This is a new Beginning:

- Transitions are not easy
- Many emotions are involved
- Trust and Listening are key
  - When you know you have your parents support and trust, you:
    - Have more self confidence
    - Can stand up for what you believe
    - Knows you have support back home
    - Are better able to say “no” when needed
- Keep the communication open – keep your parents involved. They are interested in you. Think about what situation & choices you might face and talk about them – before Sept.

### Resources for your questions and concerns

- Prevention and Wellness Services (Old Main 560 / 650-2993)
- Alcohol & Drug Consultation & Assessment Services (Old Main 560 / 650-3643)
- CASAS - Consultation & Sexual Assault Support Services (Old Main 585 B / 650-3700)
- Wellness Outreach Center (Viking Union 432 / 650-7557) [open Sept. - June]
- Counseling Center (Old Main 540 / 650-3164)
- Student Health Center (Campus Services Building, 2nd floor / 650-3400)
- Dean of Students Office (Viking Union 506 / 650-3706)