

Issues Faced by College Students

“One of the most dynamic periods of psychological growth occurs during the college years. In this period young adults begin to integrate their identity, enhance their intellectual development, and internalize a personal set of beliefs and values.” (Blimling, 1995*)

Freshmen-

As freshmen enter college, they often have numerous personal and transitional concerns. These include, but are not limited to:

- Fitting into a new environment
- Developing intellectual, physical, and social competence (e.g. “I am good enough, smart enough, and belong at college.”)
- Managing emotions (e.g. love, rejection, doubt, anger, anxiety, etc.)
- Struggles with identity (e.g. social, spiritual, sexual, political, etc.)
- Finding a job on or off campus
- Finding and joining clubs, teams, social networks, etc.
- Academic overload, expectations of professors, college schedule
- Balancing academics and social aspects of college
- Learning the norms and offices on campus
- Finding support
- Living with a roommate (or roommates)
- Experiencing freedom for the first time
- Homesickness
- Extreme introversion/extroversion
- Difficulties with sexual relationships
- Taking responsibility for their actions

Sophomores-

Sophomores are sometimes considered an in-between class. They have made it through their (often challenging) first year, but might not be ready to focus completely on their future after college. As a result, sophomores might be concerned with:

- Streamlining co-curricular interest
- Choosing a major
- Studying abroad
- Ending relationships that developed freshman year. Often students are quick to form intimate relationships after arriving at college to replace the network of family and friends they left behind. If this (or other) relationship ends, the student can be left feeling alone and rejected.
- The Sophomore Slump- By the end of their sophomore year, students may begin feeling impatient. They have completed two years of college but have two more before entering the real world. Some students question whether or not their education has been worth the time and energy they have invested, thus becoming uncertain about whether or not they will complete will complete the next two years. They may reflect on their college experience and reevaluate whether or not to continue their education.
- Obtaining better housing- trying to live with, or at least close to, their social group
- Beginning a resume

Juniors-

Unlike sophomores, juniors are beginning to see the end of the road. They are more likely to be engaged on campus and serve in student leadership positions. As they look beyond their college life, juniors may face some of these issues:

- What they have accomplished and what lies ahead
- Taking on the role of upperclassmen
- Serving as role models and student leaders
- Thinking about a senior project
- Maintaining a resume
- Seeking more public or community involvement (volunteering opportunities)
- Finding internships
- Becoming more concerned with issues surrounding them (drugs, sex, religion, politics, etc.) and attempting to sort out their own personal beliefs and feelings
- Changing values
- Watching older friends graduate and leave and becoming uncertain regarding how these important relationships will be maintained without the convenience of close proximity.
- Thinking about the future- family pressures, reevaluation of choices previously made concerning academics, friends, etc.

Seniors-

Seniors are in the home stretch. This is the year that may bring extreme emotions; students are excited and happy to graduate, but anxious about leaving the place that had been their home for the past few years.

Seniors are often concerned with:

- Life after college!
- Pressures of completing goals and other requirements for graduation
- Shifting values from idealism to realism- students are faced with an end and forced to move forward. They most move away from their selected comfort zone.
- Career decisions and anxiety
- Graduate school (whether or not to attend, applications, testing, recommendations, etc.)
- Loss of "college student" identity
- Fear of the adult world
- Possible marital plans or worry about how graduation will affect intimate relationships
- Saying goodbye to friends
- Struggles with independence-financial, being "cut off" from family, moving on their own, etc.

*Reference:

Blimling, Gregory. *The Resident Assistant*. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Iowa: 1995