

Vision and Mission

VISION

We will build strong, supportive relationships between families and the university to ensure every family is connected to the institution and prepared to support their student's academic journey.





MISSION

The Office of Family Engagement at the University of Kansas connects families with resources and opportunities to support their student's KU experience.



Table of Content

- 2. About the Guide
- 3. Setting Boundaries & Expectations
- 4. July
- 5. August
- 6. September
- 7. October
- 8. Holiday Break Conversation Starters
- 9. November
- 10. December
- 11. January
- 12. February
- 13. Spring Break
- 14. April
- **15.** May
- 16. June
- 17. Summer Break Conversation Starters

About the Guide

The transition to college is a significant milestone for both students and their families. As parents, your role continues to evolve as your student navigates this new chapter in their life. While they are gaining independence and learning to manage responsibilities, your support remains crucial to their success and well-being.

This guide is designed to provide you with practical tips, conversation starters, and strategies to stay connected with your student throughout their college journey. Whether your student is facing academic challenges, adjusting to campus life, or exploring new opportunities, your involvement and understanding can be impactful to their experience.

By using the tools in this guide, you can support your student in a way that fosters independence while ensuring they know you're there for them every step of the way.



Setting Expectations & Boundaries

Prior to beginning these important conversations, it may be helpful to ask yourself some questions regarding your beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of the University of Kansas experience.

Start having these conversations now and continue them regularly throughout your student's college years. Honest, non-judgmental dialogue is key to building a healthy relationship. Be clear about your views and expectations, as your student values your advice and support. Set reasonable expectations, recognizing that your student is an adult who will make their own decisions. Work together to create realistic goals and strategies for making healthy choices.





July

Discuss how often and through which channels you'll stay in touch—whether by phone, text, email, social media, or letters. It's important to agree on a plan that works for both you and your student, ensuring communication without taking up too much of their time.

Conversation Starters Prior to Arrival

- How would you prefer we communicate—phone calls, texts, emails, or social media? Let's figure out what works best for you.
- How often would you like me to check in with you? Is once a week enough, or would you prefer more frequent updates?
- What are you most excited about?
- What are you worried about?
- What would you like to accomplish in your first year at KU?
- How often would you like me to visit, how often would you like to come home?



August

The first year of college is a big transition for both students and families. Your student may feel overwhelmed by new surroundings, services, and roommates, while changes at home may also raise concerns.

- Students will want to explore campus, meet new people and exercise their independence. Give them the freedom to do so.
- Ask questions about your student's classes, roommate(s), friends, and new life.
- Expect changes in their behavior, look, and schedule. As they begin to flex their freedom, they might not remember to call home as often.
- Don't worry (too much) about depressing phone calls and letters. With change
 often comes homesickness and the longing for something familiar. Try to
 remind your student to get involved and this will become the new normal,
 making connections will become easier over time. If concern persists <u>Submit</u>
 a CARE Referral.
- If your student is living on campus, encourage them to get to know their Resident Assistant (RA). If your student is living off campus and commuting, encourage them to get involved in a student organization, find a campus job, or get involved in intramural activities.



September

Once your student settles in, they'll make friends, explore campus, and adjust to college life. During your regular check-ins, make time to discuss their overall health, including mental and physical well-being. This covers sleep, exercise, nutrition, and alcohol use. The University of Kansas offers many resources, from healthy dining options to counseling services, to help students maintain a balanced lifestyle, which is key to their success.

- Encourage your student to use the library as a resource and a quiet study space. Also, encourage your student to talk to their professors and advisors the first few weeks of the semester about any concerns or questions during faculty and staff office hours.
- Reassure your student that feeling overwhelmed is okay for students learning to manage new academic demands and personal responsibilities.
- Anticipate that your student may call home to let off some steam, share their
 worries or sort through situations out loud. Use these moments as opportunities
 to let them do their own problem-solving by listening, asking questions, and
 affirming your belief in their decision-making.
- If your student is depressed or anxious, encourage them to talk to a counselor at **Counseling & Psychological Services** (CAPS).
- Encourage your student to achieve a sense of balance including a healthy diet, adequate sleep, exercise, and relaxation.
- Encourage your student to check out programs and services at <u>Ambler</u>
 <u>Student Recreation Fitness Center</u> (SRFC), to keep them active, relieve stress, and meet other students.



October

Students involved in campus organizations are more likely to feel connected, achieve higher grades, and develop skills that benefit them after graduation. These experiences, often outside the classroom, can have a lasting impact on their college journey.

- KU has over 500 registered student organizations. Ask your student if they've found anything they like thus far and if not, encourage them to check out the <u>Student Engagement Center</u> and <u>Rock Chalk Central</u>.
- Involvement in a pre-professional or major-related organization can help students connect with like-minded peers in a particular academic area and it can open up opportunities after graduation.
- Encourage your student to cheer on their fellow Jayhawks at athletic events throughout the year. For a schedule of events visit <u>kuathletics.com</u>
- Trust them to make the right decisions. Your shared values have given them a foundation to build upon as they discover their personal values.



Holiday Break Conversation Starters

- What was the best part of your first semester?
- What classes did you enjoy most, and why?
- What is something you learned this semester that surprised you?
- How are you feeling about your friends and social life on campus?
- Have you discovered any new hobbies or interests?
- What has been the biggest challenge for you so far this year?
- How have you been managing stress?
- What do you think you want to focus on in the spring semester?
- How are you managing your time between schoolwork, social activities, and personal life?
- What campus resources have been helpful to you this semester?
- How are you feeling about the holidays and coming home for the break?
- What do you miss most about home, and what have you learned to do on your own?
- Are there any changes at home that you've noticed, or is everything pretty much the same?
- How can I help you get ready for next semester?



November

As midterms end, your student will soon face final exams and projects, which can be overwhelming, especially if earlier procrastination catches up to them. The pressure increases with both academic demands and campus events competing for their attention. Encourage your student to stay focused, break tasks into manageable steps, and seek help when needed, whether from professors, tutors, or by taking breaks. Your support during this stressful time can help them stay organized and manage stress.

The holiday break helps your student refocus their energies for the remainder of the semester. Still, your student should not put studying and coursework completely aside, as finals are quickly approaching

- While your student is home during the Thanksgiving break, be sure to celebrate the semester's victories and work together to discuss any challenges.
- Start encouraging your student to think about pursuing a part-time job or internship over winter break.
- If your student expresses concern about tackling coursework and upcoming finals, remind them about the <u>Wingspan: Center for Learning and Writing</u> <u>Support</u>.
- Reiterate the importance of adequate sleep, healthy eating, exercise, and relaxation. Encourage your student to find time for a favorite sport or hobby they can pursue to keep up morale and maintain balance.



December

As the holidays approach, your student may feel the pressure of finals, academic deadlines, and holiday plans. Check in with them to ensure they're prepared for exams and encourage them to use resources like study groups, office hours, and tutoring services.

After exams, many students head home, but this transition can be challenging. They may need to readjust to family routines and dynamics. Discuss expectations for the break, such as curfews and responsibilities, to accommodate their newfound independence.

Your student's emotions may be on a bit of a roller coaster during this period. For many students, this is the time when they begin to really feel connected to campus, but it is also when the reality of their academic progress begins to affect them.

- Accept that your student's grades may differ from the grades that they would receive during secondary education/high school/ previous academic environments. Remind them that college is supposed to be more difficult, but they will adjust in time. Be sure to let them know that you are proud of them, you recognize their hard work and that you love them.
- Offer support by calling, texting, sending emails, or visiting them if you can.
 Check with your student first to make sure they have time to visit with you during this stressful time.
- It's easy to forget about financial/tuition obligations during this time, but make sure your student's payments and other fees have been paid for the upcoming semester. Remember, <u>Student Accounts and Receivables</u> sends ebills statements the 21st of each month and are due on the 15th the following month.
- Encourage your student to participate in morale-boosting activities and traditions that take place during finals week.



January

After completing the fall semester, your student may consider changing their major, which can be worrying, but it's a normal part of the college experience. Choosing a major can be tough, and many students don't have it figured out right away. Encourage your student to explore their interests through academic advising, career counseling, and conversations with professors. Internships, volunteer work, or part-time jobs can also provide valuable career insights.

- If your student struggled to meet their academic goals in the fall, suggest a visit to **University Academic Support Centers**, which offers a variety of resources to address your student's individual academic performance needs.
- Encourage your student to speak with their academic advisor if they have concerns about their major.
- Second year students should begin to select a major, refine career options, and begin defining their purpose. Encourage your student to participate in many employment and graduate school fairs, workshops, and services sponsored by <u>University Career Center.</u>
- Be sure you and/or your returning student submit the appropriate financial aid applications for the upcoming academic year. Contact <u>Financial Aid &</u> <u>Scholarships</u> with any questions.



February

At the University of Kansas, understanding and appreciating different experiences is key to the college experience. Encourage your students to broaden their perspective by studying or interning abroad, taking global-focused classes, attending cultural events, or joining clubs or organizations that align with their interests.

These experiences enrich their educational experience, foster empathy, and develop valuable skills for both personal and professional growth.

- Encourage your student to consider international opportunities. Whether it is for a week, a semester, or a year, studying abroad allows your student to learn another language, take major and elective coursework, discover new places, make meaningful connections around the world.
- Encourage involvement through service learning. <u>Center for Service Learning</u> and <u>Center for Community Outreach</u> provide opportunities for students to learn more about others, service to people in need, and explore different parts of the country and world.
- Recommend a visit to <u>Study Abroad & Global Engagement</u>. They offer over 165 programs in more than 70 countries with options for every major.



March

By March, your student may feel fatigued with final exams and projects ahead. Encourage them to stay organized, break tasks into smaller steps, and reassess study routines. Suggest using campus resources if needed. Remind them to balance work with breaks, exercise, and sleep for overall well-being.

- Encourage your student to meet with their academic advisor to confirm registration dates for summer and fall classes.
- Send care packages complete with snacks, multi-vitamins, and encouraging words before or during mid-terms to give your student a little boost.
- Send a text or email to check-in say hello and let your student know you care, and you are there if they need you.
- If your student is considering going on to graduate school, they should start thinking now about applying. A good rule of thumb is to begin the application process at least one full year in advance of anticipated graduate school enrollment.



April

As the semester ends, your student may feel pressure from assignments, group projects, and events, leading to stress and lack of sleep. Encourage healthy habits like regular sleep, balanced meals, exercise, and breaks.

Remember, their journey to independence is gradual. Your support will help them manage both academics and personal responsibilities with confidence.

- Encourage your student to use the library as a resource and as a quiet study space. Also, recommend that they talk to their professors about any concerns or questions.
- Advise them to look into job shadowing, volunteering, working or interning in the career field of choice for the summer. It is not too early for your student to look into summer educational opportunities.
- Summer is a great opportunity for your student to get ahead or take a class that may be a little more challenging. Encourage them to look into summer courses at KU or a college campus near home.
- Emphasize the wisdom of approaching finals with the attitude of doing the very best they can, and not worrying tediously about what has or has not happened so far in the semester.



May

As finals wrap up, your student may feel a mix of emotions about leaving campus or staying in Lawrence for work or study abroad. Encourage them to finish strong and help with the transition.

Summer at home with a returning student may require adjustments. Discuss expectations for curfews, responsibilities, and social activities to ensure balance and boundaries.

For graduates, May is a time to celebrate achievements and look forward to new adventures, whether it's a new job, graduate school, or another exciting opportunity.

- Keep the lines of communication open and supportive. One of the best strategies students have against stress and fatigue is talking with someone they trust.
- Prepare yourself and other family members that the student who returns may not be the student you sent off to college. It may help to renegotiate curfew hours and family responsibilities for the summer.
- Once your student returns home for the summer, review the events of the past year with your student. Identify areas of concern and encourage your student to consider possible solutions.
- Summer is often a time for students to work and make money to take back to school.



June

Even though the spring semester is over, your student may still face transitions over the summer.

If your student takes summer classes, either at KU or elsewhere, remind them that these courses are fast-paced. Encourage them to manage their time wisely, balancing academics with summer activities.

- Help your student feel "at home" again by jointly planning family activities. This
 may give them a sense of control over their actions and environment.
- Your student's relationship with hometown family and friends may have changed.
 Work with your student on coming to terms with, or redefining, those personal relationships.
- Make time to visit your student if they are going to be away for the summer. Your student will appreciate the extra effort you've taken to spend time together.
- Spend quality time with your student discussing what worked and what didn't last semester, and how to use the experience to make the next semester even better.
- Review your student's financial needs for the upcoming year. Talk to your student about the importance of credit and money management. There are several resources of financial assistance available: grants, scholarships, and loans. Encourage your student to apply for as many as possible by checking out <u>Jayhawk Finances</u>.



Summer Break Conversation Starters

- What's been the most surprising or unexpected thing about college so far?
- What are you most excited about during your summer break?
- How's the transition been, coming back home after being at college for a year?
- Have you had the chance to catch up with any of your college friends over the break?
- What's something new you learned this year, either in class or outside of it?
- How's the social scene at college? Are there clubs or activities you're involved in?
- What was your biggest challenge this year, and how did you deal with it?
- Have you thought about what you might want to study or do after graduation?
- Is there anything you need or want from home this summer—whether it's space or family time?





Counseling and Psychological Services

1200 Schwegler Dr. 2150 Watkins Memorial Health Center (785) 864-2277 | caps.ku.edu

Empowering students by supporting and promoting their mental health and well-being through a range of therapy and psychiatry services—including 24/7 support through Telus Health Student Support—anchored in values of authenticity, belonging, compassion, dignity and hope.

Office of Family Engagement

1450 Jayhawk Blvd. | 132 Strong Hall (785) 864-4060 | family.ku.edu

Connects families with resources and opportunities to support their student's KU experience.

Health Education Resource Office

1200 Schwegler Dr. (785) 864-9570 | hero.ku.edu

Partners to create and support innovative approaches for achieving optimal health and maximizing academic and professional success in the KU community through wellness education. Healthy Hawks thrive!

Hilltop Child Development Center

Main Location West Location

1652 Ousdahl Rd. 2509 Town Center Dr.

(785) 864-4940 (785) 856-4433 hilltop.ku.edu hilltop.ku.edu

Provides care to KU and the Lawrence Community for over 400 children per day and serve over 350 families. Hilltop is the only nationally accredited (NAEYC) early childhood development center in Douglas County.



Housing and Residence Life

422 W. 11th St. | DSH (785) 864-4560| housing.ku.edu

Houses nearly 5000 students living on-campus in a variety of communities that include nine residence halls, three apartment buildings, and twelve scholarship halls. Our teams strive to create learning-centered communities through individual support and respect.

KU Memorial Union

1301 Jayhawk Blvd.| (785) 864-4651 union.ku.edu

Serves as the community center of KU, providing programs (SUA, KJHK, Big Event), services (dining, conference, and bookstore) and facilities (Kansas/Burge Union and DeBruce Center).

Ambler Student Recreation and Fitness Center

1740 Watkins Center Dr. (785) 864-3546 | recreation.ku.edu

Provides space for students, faculty, and staff to improve their physical health and wellbeing. The Ambler Student Recreation and Fitness Center is home to cardio and strength equipment, an indoor climbing wall, intramural sports, sports clubs, group fitness classes, personal training, outdoor equipment rentals, and outdoor recreational fields to the KU community.

Legal Services for Students

1565 Irving Hall Rd. | 2030 Burge Union (785) 864-5665 | legalservices.ku.edu

Provides quality, confidential legal advice, advocacy, representation, and education that supports student success. Licensed, experienced attorneys and legal interns handle a variety of civil and criminal issues, helping to address and resolve legal issues and obstacles that confront the student population.



Student Engagement Center

1299 Oread Ave. | (785) 864-4350

Serves as a hub for student involvement, leadership development, impact programs and resources, and community programs. Through the Student Engagement Center, KU students deepen their connection to each other and KU by exploring communities and opportunities to thrive during their Jayhawk experience.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Education Center

1565 Irving Hill Rd.| 1030 Burge Un ion (785) 864-5879 | sapec.ku.edu

Promotes social change and the elimination of sexual violence through prevention education, inclusive programming, and campus wide collaboration.

Sorority and Fraternity Life

1565 Irving Hill Rd. | 1040 Burge Union (785) 864-4861 | kusfl.ku.edu

Coordinates the efforts of KU's social sororities and fraternities and governing councils: Interfraternity Council (IFC), Multicultural Greek Council (MGC), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), ad Panhellenic Association (PHA).

Student Conduct and Community Standards

1450 Jayhawk Blvd. | 126 Strong Hall (785) 864-5665 | studentconduct.ku.edu

Works with students and the university community to resolve conflicts and address non-academic misconduct. Creates holistic learning environments through inclusive conflict excellence and education focused community membership and standards.



Student Support and Case Management

1300 Sunnyside Ave. | Suite 350 (785) 864-7022 | studentsupport.ku.edu

Provides individualized support services to and meets with students experiencing barriers to their success to address academic, financial, health and other needs and assists in connecting students to available campus and community resources, such as the KU Campus Cupboard and Emergency Aid Network.

Watkins Health Services

1200 Schwegler Dr. Watkins Memorial Health Center (785) 864-9500 | studenthealth.ku.edu

Provides comprehensive and affordable outpatient healthcare by licensed professionals in a nationally accredited facility to support the Jayhawk learning experience.

