

# Getting to Know Your Student's Friends

**G**etting to know your student's friends is an important way to connect. Peers have great influence on many college students – and your student is likely no exception.

The process can be easier than it may seem at first glance. The following suggestions can help bridge the gap between you, your student, and her friends:

- **Just Ask.** Your student is probably excited about the new friends she has met at college. Remember names and the next time you two talk on the phone, ask how those friends are doing.
- **Connect to Classes.** Has your student chosen a major? If so, ask if he's met anyone interesting in any of his classes. Even if he hasn't, this might give him a chance to vent about the people he's met that he dislikes – which opens the gate for him to tell you about the better people he's met other places.
- **Look at Photos.** Does your student have a camera? If so, ask her if she's taken any pictures of the people with whom she spends time. Again, students are generally excited about their new surroundings, and will jump at the chance to show people their new homes and the people they live with. Once you see faces, you will have a better time picturing what your student means when she talks about how her roommate never does her laundry or how she always walks to class with the redhead down the hall.
- **Visit.** If the school is close enough where a drive to take your student out to dinner is a feasible option, do so, and ask him to invite his roommate or one or two of his friends. This way, you get to spend time with your son and meet and talk to his friends at the same time. He will appreciate the offer you extended to his new friends, and his friends will love you for buying them dinner.
- **Extend Invitations.** Let your student know that you'd be glad to host a friend or two at your house during winter or spring break. It's important for friends to see each other's homes as a way of connecting on a deeper level.



## What NOT to Do

When it comes to meeting friends, there are certain things *not* to do, also. Consider avoiding the following:

- **Badgering Your Student for Information.** If he doesn't want to tell you, he's not going to – and excessive questioning will most likely make him clam up in the future, too.
- **Making Your Student Suspect You Don't Trust Her.** Let her know you are excited to meet the new friends just to see who is in her life, not because you are hesitant and unsure if you're going to approve.
- **Don't Judge on Appearances Alone.** Just because your student's new friend has a ring in her lip or his roommate doesn't dress like your idea of a successful young man doesn't mean they aren't good people and great influences. Your idea of an acceptable friend may be based on stereotypes—so check yourself before you say anything that might cause hurt feelings.

Getting to know the important people in your student's life will help you both feel more connected. The effort is well worth the reward.

## Don't Try TOO Hard

In an effort to get to know their student's friends, some parents go overboard and get too involved. Be careful to keep your distance while also showing interest. It's important that students have friendships of their own that they can share with you, on *their* terms.

For instance, if you meet a male friend that you sense your daughter might have a romantic interest in, don't hint around or put your daughter in an uncomfortable position. Instead, just get to know the young man as her friend—and let them figure out the rest!