



## Tips for Adjusting to College Life and Resources

For many 1<sup>st</sup> students, college may be their 1<sup>st</sup> experience living away from home for an extended period of time. It is a definite break from home. The individual's usual sources of support are no longer present to facilitate adjustment to the unfamiliar environment. Here are tips for students which may provide realistic expectations concerning living arrangements and social life on campus. In addition, students may benefit from information concerning resources available to them at the **SF/CS office**.

- **The first few weeks on campus can be a lonely period.** There may be concerns about forming friendships. When new students look around, it may seem that everyone else is self-confident and socially successful. *The reality is that everyone is having the same concerns.*
- **If they allow sufficient time, students usually find peers in college to provide structure and a valuable support system in the new environment.** *The important thing for the student to remember in meeting new people is to be oneself.*
- **Meaningful, new relationships should not be expected to develop overnight.** *It took a great deal of time to develop intimacy in high school friendships; the same will be true of intimacy in college friendships.*
- **Increased personal freedom can feel both wonderful and frightening.** Students can come and go as they choose with no one to "hassle" them. At the same time, things are no longer predictable. The strange environment with new kinds of procedures and new people can create the sense of being on an emotional roller-coaster. *This is normal and to be expected.*
- **Living with roommates (or in close quarters with others) can present special, sometimes intense, problems.** Negotiating respect of personal property, personal space, sleep, and relaxation needs can be a complex task. Communicating one's legitimate needs calmly, listening with respect to a roommate's concerns, and being *willing to compromise to meet each other's most important needs can promote resolution of issues.*
- **It is unrealistic to expect that roommates will be best friends.** Roommates may work out mutually satisfying living arrangements, but the reality is that each may tend to have his or her own circle of friends.
- **College classes are a great deal more difficult than high school classes.** There are more reading assignments, and the exams and papers cover a greater amount of material. Instructors expect students to do more work outside the classroom. In order to survive, the student must take responsibility for his or her actions. This means the student needs to follow the course outlines and keep up with the readings. The student must do the initiating. If a class is missed, it is up to the student to borrow lecture notes from someone who was present.

SF/CS office provides individual and group counseling to students experiencing difficulty in adjusting to college life. Among the most common concerns students bring to our office are: low self-confidence; finding, enhancing, or ending a relationship; getting along with others; puzzling or distressing emotional states; family problems; self-defeating behaviors; controlling use of alcohol and drugs; life purpose and direction; and career decision-making.

Consultation with a counselor is an opportunity for the student to describe personal concerns and what he or she hopes to gain from counseling. If Counseling Services, itself seems to offer the most appropriate services, the student may decide to continue counseling and meet regularly to work on his or her concerns. Counseling may be conducted either individually or in a group with other students expressing similar concerns. If appropriate, the student will be introduced to other resources, on or off campus, which can offer different or more appropriate services from those available at **SF/CS**.