

Appendix C.

Calendar of Common Student Issues by Month

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Not all students will experience all these issues and concerns, and they won't always surface during the month indicated. However, experience suggests that these issues often do occur during the months identified, and know this might be helpful to you as you work with students who many have some pretty typical first-year issues.

September

- Homesickness - especially for freshmen.
- Roommate conflicts caused by personality differences, lack of understanding and unwillingness to compromise or the new experience of having to live with someone.
- Initial adjustment to academic environment - feelings of inadequacy and inferiority develop because of the discrepancy between high school status and grades and initial college performance.
- Class size, especially in mass lecture halls, lack of personal interest by professors and performance expectations are also major factors.
- Values exploration - students are confronted with questions of conscience over conflict areas of race and alcohol experimentation, morality, religion and social expectations.
- New social life adjustments - including new freedom of not having to check with parents about what time to be in, having the opportunity to experience new areas, making your own decisions on when to conduct social activities and establishing yourself in a peer group.
- Long distance relationship - torn between being loyal to your significant other from home and going out with new people. Can the expectations of both people be adequately met?
- Financial adjustment - involves adjusting to a somewhat tighter budget now that they are in school as opposed to when they were living at home. Students who are supporting themselves have to adjust to budgeting their money also.
- Family problems seem amplified because the student may either be caught in the middle, relied on for the answer or because they are far away, feeling helpless in helping reach a solution.
- Adjusting to "Administrative Red Tape" with students soon realizing that it may be a long and frustrating process when trying to find an answer to what seems to be a simple question, or trying to work something through the administrative process.

October

- Academic stress from midterms builds with the great demand for studying and preparation. For some students this may be their first exam of the semester. For many, the midterm workload pressures are followed by feelings of failure and loss of self-esteem.
- Roommate problems continue, but they are smaller in scope than previous months.
- Values exploration continuing, especially in the area of sexuality.
- Dating/non-dating/friendship anxieties extremely high. Non-dating students feel a sense of loss of esteem because so much value is placed upon dating. For women who do date, the pressure to perform sexually increases and consequently increases feelings of

rejection, loneliness and guilt and in some instances leads to unwanted pregnancies.

- Homesickness may still be felt by a number of students.
- Students may decide to withdraw from school because they realize that college is not the place for them, they return home for personal reasons or they transfer to another school.
- Financial strain sets in from lack of budgeting experience.
- Time conflicts between academic and social expectation emerges.
- Adjusting to new study habits includes not just being able to study the way they did in high school. More time and greater workload needs to be incorporated into their schedule for studying.
- Disenchantment with school - low reward level because student begins to realize that life at college is not as perfect as they were led to believe by parents, teachers and counselors. Old problems seem to continue and new ones are added. An external reality they had put their hopes in has failed them.

November

- Academic pressure begins to mount because of procrastination, difficulty of work assigned and lack of ability. Pre-finals stress starts to emerge as preparation begins for taking the exams.
- Social apathy causes frustration because of academic pressures.
- Depression and anxiety increase because of feelings that one should have adjusted to the college environment.
- Problems develop due to increased alcohol consumption because students see this as an easy, acceptable way to relieve stress and from not knowing how to handle alcohol responsibility.
- Roommate problems may start to emerge again. This is mostly due to the pressure of school; tempers become shorter and people are less tolerant of others.
- Living unit dissension causes uncomfortable feelings with residents, resulting from apathy, academic pressures, need for vacation from school.

December

- Final exam pressures including anxiety, fear and guilt increase as exams approach and papers become due. Increased use of alcohol and drugs is related.
- Extracurricular time strains - seasonal parties, concerts, social service projects and religious activities drain student energies.
- Financial worries occur with the thought of holiday gifts and travel costs.
- Pre-holiday blues emerges, especially for those who have concerns for family, those who have no home because of family conflicts.
- Friendship tensions become high with the onset of final exams.
- Pressure increases to perform sexually due to the approach of vacation and extended separation.

January

- Anxiety about second semester performance begins since they may not have done as well as expected the previous semester, and they have added pressure of doing well to be able to stay in school or to keep grades competitive with their peers.
- Some students experience unwanted weight gains over the break with the holiday foods

and home cooking.

- Reincorporating social and academic life is difficult at first with not having to worry about school for an extended period.

February

- Depending upon the weather, some people will experience cabin fever if the weather forces them to stay inside for a lengthy period of time. With the lack of organized activities to compensate for this, anti-social behavior sometimes occurs, such as excessive property damage.
- Relationship anxieties increase as either couples begin to strengthen their ties (engagement) or experiencing weakening relationships.

March

- Academic pressures increase with the approach of mid-term exams.
- With the pressures of the end of the semester approaching, many students start to increase their use of alcohol and drugs. This can cause them any problems, both biologically and behaviorally.
- Living arrangement anxieties occur with the forcing of decisions - Should I move out? Live in the same building? Stay with the same roommate? Will a friend be left out of the plan?
- Summer job hunting will be heavy over spring break. Worry about finding a job or not finding one will cause severe anxiety.
- Trying to find money to use for spring break is a problem, especially when your peers are going to a place other than home and you are not able to join them.

April

- Academic pressures increase with the end of the semester approaching.
- With nicer weather, women fear the threat of sexual assault.
- Summer job pressures continue.
- With spring arriving, everyone wants to fall in love. Many students go through rejection or the fear of rejection or envy towards their friends who have found a significant other.

May/June

- Anxiety develops because of the realization that the year is ending and a deficiency in a number of academic areas still exists.
- Finals pressures are at a critical level with papers, take-home exams and studying. Some of the major effects of the pressure include: increased use of coffee, no-doz, vivarin, and amphetamines; and increase or decrease in alcohol consumption. Less sleep and a lower tolerance level with friends/peers.
- Anxiety for couples who will be separated for the summer. Also, the fear that their significant other will find someone else while they're apart.
- Anxiety of having to go home after having been independent the past year, especially if they are having conflicts with their parents.
- This list was compiled from the HousingDISCUSS listserv.