

Academically Speaking: Second Semester Pressures

Now that your student has the fall semester under her belt, she's likely looking toward what the spring will bring. Will her classes be tough? Is she on academic warning or probation? Are there classes she's really looking forward to?

The reality of how she did academically last fall has likely sunk in with your student by now. She knows where her challenges are and she has confidence in other areas. You can help your student succeed academically by understanding the issues that are foremost on her mind. These may include:

- How can I bring up my GPA this semester?
- Are any of my academic scholarships in jeopardy due to my grades?
- What subjects do I need help with?
- Can I keep my grades up so I'm eligible for admission to my major/certain scholarships/Dean's list?
- I need to declare my major soon – what should I choose?
- How can I make it through my tough classes this semester?
- Will I still be able to be on the _____ team?
- Should I stay in the Honors program?
- I think I might have a learning disability or test anxiety—where can I get help?
- How am I doing in staying on a four-year graduation track?
- Am I completing the general education requirements needed for graduation in a timely manner?
- Do I need to retake any classes?
- What professors inspire me and can I get into more of their classes?

If your student didn't do that well during the fall semester, there's no need to lose hope. She will have to buckle down and work smart this semester, of course. Yet, there are many resources available on campus to help her in this pursuit. She can ask her academic advisor for help in formulating a schedule that is reasonable. She can go to the campus Writing Center for help with sentence structure, grammar and

paper writing. She can talk with a campus counselor about test anxiety and learn some tricks to overcome this stressful affliction. One bad semester doesn't have to be the end of the world!



And, if your student did well academically this fall, she's likely putting some pressure on herself to live up to that success. Quality work is one thing to strive for while perfection can be too much pressure. Students need to take academic risks sometimes in order to

learn well and expand their horizons. So, if your student says she wants to try a language course instead of the tried-and-true music theory class that she knows she can likely get an "A" in, it may be worth the risk. She knows what kinds of subjects pique her interest – and a student who is interested and engaged is more likely to learn and retain information than one who is just coasting along.

Academics are your student's main reason for being in school. And with your encouragement, her commitment and the assistance of campus professionals, she can make this a positive, learning-filled semester.

Where Should I Study?

One thing your student may have discovered about himself is that he needs a certain kind of environment to study effectively. You can encourage him to take a good, hard look at where he can maximize his study time by considering places such as:

- The library
- The laundry room
- His room
- Study lounges
- The (student government, newspaper, etc.) office after-hours
- The commuter lounge
- The dining hall
- The interfaith center

Just encourage him not to study in an area that is too isolated because that could put his safety at risk.