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Preparing Your Student for College

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This fall, Prince graduates joined thousands of other college freshmen beginning their journey as collegiate students. Many former students packed their belongings and moved into dorms while others became commuters who, along with their parents, must re-define their role in the family as they become more independent. While this is an exciting time in the life of an individual and family, it is not without its challenges. A startling number of college freshmen from high schools all over the country, even those who were successful high school students, find themselves struggling academically at the collegiate level. This trend is a growing concern for both parents and educators. Therefore, it is imperative to understand how we as educators and parents can help our students successfully transition to the collegiate level.

One of the greatest challenges students face when entering college is processing information in regards to critical thinking and problem solving. At the university level, it is necessary for students to have the ability to think critically about the information presented while also drawing conclusions and making inferences on their own. Similarly, they must understand the material presented in class well enough to apply this information conceptually in a more meaningful way. This ability is unfortunately lacking for many college students and is subsequently concerning for educators. One way to better prepare our students for the rigor of academics in college is to begin a transition of fact-based knowledge to conceptual learning in high school, a practice being implemented at Prince now for several years. Studies show students who take Advanced Placement classes in high school, and score higher on the SAT/ACT, are more likely to be prepared for the academic challenges presented at universities and colleges (Arum, 2016). Therefore, we should encourage our students to take the most challenging high school classes their capabilities allow to ensure they have the skills necessary to succeed in college. However, it is important to consider that the success a student might have in a single high-rigor course could be impacted when other co-curricular activ-

ities and coursework are added, especially if those other courses are also high-rigor.

An additional challenge collegians face is increased responsibility. For the first time, many students find it their sole responsibility to wake up, arrive to class on time, and complete assignments in a timely manner. In high school, much of the learning is teacher-driven. Teachers give assignments in class, post them online, and then remind students to complete these assignments. Additionally, teachers often seek out students who are struggling in an effort to determine a plan for improvement; parents also contact teachers to help devise such a plan. Likewise, parents may also ensure students complete assignments and study for assessments at home. However, at the college level, learning is almost completely student-driven. Students must take responsibility for completing assignments and turning them in on time. Students must also determine the best route for successful studying in preparation for the assessment of material covered in class as well as in supplemental reading assignments. Struggling students must take the initiative to contact professors for help in a given class. This assumed responsibility is quite difficult for many students. As educators and parents, we must begin to help high school students accept more responsibility for their own learning success. While tools like RenWeb and Moodle are beneficial, they must not become an excuse for student failure. During the later high school years, parents should begin to transition out of a highly active role in their child's academic progress, shifting the initiative to the student and prompting them to attend to their work and studies in a more independent manner. Helping high school students learn the value of responsibility will be a catalyst for success in college and beyond.

By giving high school students more responsibility and empowering them with a clear purpose for their learning, we as parents and educators can help make the transition to college life easier and aid our students' development academically, personally and spiritually throughout the college years.

References:

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