



Play Collegiate Golf

"creating academic and athletic success"

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Top 10 Ways for Students to Find Their Niche at College

More easily navigate your new environment and get the most from your college experience!

Sometimes it is hard to figure out how to fit in during the initial weeks of college. Because of this, students may struggle to find a supportive group of peers right away. It is not unusual, especially for first year students, to express unhappiness, loneliness, anxiety, or homesickness during this point in their first semester. Students may call more, visit home frequently, or talk of transferring to another school. The best approach for parents is to listen, be supportive, and reassure their student that in time he or she will find their niche within the college environment. Here are some suggestions for students to more easily find their niche in college!

1. Check out the academic and social programs offered in the residence hall. Residence halls will offer a host of programming and events within the hall and attending these events can provide many chances to meet other students residing in the same hall. Look for information about upcoming programs on floor bulletin boards and at the front desk. Get involved with your living community to meet new people in your residence hall!
2. Use the fitness center, join an intramural sports team, or take part in outdoor activities offered through Campus Recreation Services. Students can stay fit and healthy while making friends in the process! As a student-athlete you most likely will work out in a separate physical facility with your teammates. However, as a student you can use the regular facilities with your friends not on the golf team!
3. Volunteering in the community is a great way to establish a network while helping others. It also can provide a meaningful way to learn more about the city you will now be spending the next four years in as a student. Visit the Office of Civic Engagement or Office of Service Learning on campus to learn more about how you can volunteer in your new community.
4. The Office of Student Life on every campus offers many different clubs and organizations that students may participate in. Joining a club or organization is a great way to meet others with similar interests. Being involved with the Student Government Association, also through student life, is a great way to gain valuable work experience in a political-style setting.
5. Students may consider working on campus if time permits. The Career Center can help students find this type of employment. Working on campus is a good way to meet new friends as well as network with many faculty and staff members. Also, research shows a positive correlation between working on campus and academic success seen by the student.
6. Students can become involved in the college newspaper, radio station, or television. This a great résumé builder for whatever major your student will be selecting!

7. Explore the campus and the surrounding neighborhoods to look for opportunities. Look for avenues to share improv comedy, poetry, or creative writing. Students may consider auditioning for a play offered through the Theatre Department on campus or at a community theatre. Students with artistic talents in drawing, photography, or painting can look for chances to showcase their work and get involved with other students who have similar interests. PGA Tour player Luke Donald is well-known for his painting skills developed while a Studio Arts major at Northwestern University.
8. Fraternities and sororities may not be for everyone, but students can make a lot of friends in a relatively short period of time by participating in Greek Life. RUSH events are normally early on in the semester (and sometimes even before the semester begins) so look for information during summer orientation.
9. Look for peer counseling programs through the college's counseling center if your student needs to talk to other students about his or her experience on campus. Having another student to confide in who is trained by a professional counselor can provide an excellent outlet for some of the challenges associated with being on a college campus for the first time.
10. Become involved within the residence halls in a leadership role. Government, treasurer, and floor spokesperson positions are usually elected early during the semester. Look for information on floor bulletin boards or at the front desk of the hall. Take the opportunity to mold your living environment!

The transition into college can be a challenging process; parents can help their students throughout this period. Encourage them to persevere and to actively look for ways to meet other students with similar interests during those first few weeks and beyond. All first year students are in similar situations and they all feel awkward in their new environment. Suggest to your student that they take advantage of the opportunities available on campus and in the surrounding city that the college is located. It may take some students longer than others to find their niche, but they will eventually find their way in their own time.

Good luck!

Dr. Fleming

Dr. Bruce Fleming is the founder of Play Collegiate Golf, created to mentor young women and men interested in continuing their competitive golf careers at institutions that support their academic, athletic, and personal goals.

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