What Do They Expect? The Impact of the Social/Personal Transition from High School to College on the Academic Experience
Matthew D. Quick, Ph.D.
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Background
• VP and Dean of Students at Rockhurst University – Catholic, Jesuit University; a still unyet converted Protestant who has been at Rockhurst 15 years, but they are still working on me!
• Prior to Rockhurst was at University of Wisconsin Oshkosh for 3 years; BA in Business Economics from Wheaton College (IL), an MA in Educational Policy & Leadership from The Ohio State University, and a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from the University of Kansas – my children are convinced I’m not that smart and that’s why I had so much school!
• Father to three kids – 7th grader at Oxford Middle School, an 11th grader at Blue Valley Northwest, and a Freshman at Pepperdine University – while I love the Blue Valley School District and Overland Park, I think Katelynn has the best educational environment in Malibu, CA

Framework of Expectation vs. Reality – as you encounter students that you are preparing to go to college or trying to engage with a college student in an instructional or helping role, here’s some contrasting expectations about college life and points of reality about college life that I sometimes see chasms between

1. These are going to be the best days of my life! And yet . . .
   • Entry into college brings about a wide range of emotions – for the student and those that love him/her
   • There are a lot of new things and “firsts” when students come to college – it takes a lot of time and energy to navigate these
   • Students sometimes think that some of the hard things they dealt with in high school will go away – chronic depression or anxiety, “growing out of” a learning disability or ADHD, an addiction, etc. – but some don’t
   • There is lots of unstructured time – some students have not practiced things like managing time and projects because their lives are often so structured at school and home at the primary and secondary levels

2. Students are knowledgeable because they have so much information available to them, and the technological age makes things easier and better. And yet . . .
• The volume of Email, Social Media, Texting, Signage, Radio, TV/Cable/Satellite, Streaming, and Print Media can be simply overwhelming
• Some students assume many sources of information are truthful; however, Wikipedia, Google, Snapchat, and even CNN are not the most reliable of primary sources for a paper or decision making
• Many students are not practiced in wading through the tidal wave of information - and then filtering and integrating it
• If something doesn’t work with the technology, some students can move into “melt down” mode pretty quickly (just come observe a computer help desk!)

3. Since my parents are out of sight at college, they are out of mind. And yet . . .
• Some parents are used to having a web-based tool like Blue Valley’s ParentVue as a way to “keep tabs” their kids – now the updates are less often and not as easily available thanks to FERPA
• Some parents do lots for their kids – for some college students this may be their first trip alone into a library or remembering to their own medication or cleaning their own sheets (or not cleaning them 😞)
• Some students depend on a call from their parents to wake them up
• Some parents text, call, Facetime, Snapchat, Tweet, Insta, or contact their student multiple times a day much to the annoyance of their son/daughter (and some not at all for weeks on end much to the despair of their son/daughter)

4. I really don’t want to bother the faculty and staff members – much less upperclassmen.
• In high school you met with your faculty or staff members if you were either trying to impress them or you were in a world of hurt
• These staff and faculty in college are intimidating – they have Ph.D.’s, use big words, and I’m not really sure what I would talk with them about And yet . . .
• Many students fail to see the value in engaging relationally with faculty and staff members (and upperclass students) and seem surprised when doing so leads to a positive, sometimes life-changing experience (for both parties)
• Work study positions, supplemental instructor roles, and being in structured leadership or service roles on campus with supervisors or advisors can lead to a level of connection and transformation that is unanticipated and remarkable