



Milwaukee School of Engineering Counseling Services Newsletter

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Transitioning to College

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The college years are times of significant transition and challenge for an individual. Transition simply means change. Higher levels of anxiety are always experienced by people who are in a state of transition regardless of whether the change is perceived as good or bad. There are many issues college students face when starting college. The topics in this newsletter include:

1. Myths and Facts about the College Experience
2. Overcoming Homesickness
3. Academic Problems
4. Major and Career Choices
5. 10 Things We Wish You Didn't Have to Know

1. Myths and Facts About the College Experience

Myth: A good student does not need assistance during his/her college or university experience.

Fact: Many students come to college with the belief that to ask for help is a sure sign of inadequacy. Nothing could be further from the truth. MSOE has an abundance of resources available to you. You are paying for these resources through tuition or fees. Become familiar with and make use of your campus resources, such as:

- Counseling Services: http://www.msOE.edu/st_life/couns
- The Learning Resource Center: http://www.msOE.edu/st_life/lrc
- TRIO Programs: http://www.msOE.edu/st_life/trio

For more facts and myths about the college experience, visit <http://www.campusblues.com/art2.asp>

2. Overcoming Homesickness

Few people are immune to homesickness. Here are a few tips to help you through it now or in the future.

- Admit that you have it. Much of what you know and can rely on is back home. Homesickness is a natural response to this sense of loss.
- Talk about it with an older sibling or friend who has gone away from home. It takes strength to accept the fact that something is bothering you and to confront it.

- Bring familiar items from home to your new location. Photos, plants, even stuffed animals help to give one a sense of continuity and ease the shock of a new environment.
- Familiarize yourself with your new surroundings. Walk around. You will feel more in control if you know where buildings, classes, and services are.
- Invite people along to explore. Making friends is a big step to alleviating homesickness.
- Keep in touch with the people back home, but put a limit on telephoning. Write them reports of your activities and new experiences. Let them know you'd like to hear from them, too.
- Do something. Don't wait for it to go away by itself. Buried problems often emerge later disguised as headaches, fatigue, illness, or lack of motivation.

3. Academic Problems

Failing exams or classes? Feeling overwhelmed? Experiencing severe test anxiety? Having trouble studying? Thinking about quitting school or changing your major?

You are not alone. These are common problems for college students, including really smart and capable people. Common reasons for academic problems include issues regarding motivation, time management, study skills, social distractions, substance abuse, learning disabilities, and psychological issues.

If you are troubled by academic problems for these or any other reasons, take advantage of the resources at MSOE. Don't wait until it's too late to ask for assistance. Speak with your professors. Contact MSOE Counseling Services or the Learning Resource Center to discuss these issues.

Read more about Academic Problems at <http://www.campusblues.com/acad.asp>

4. Am I in the right major? What are my career goals?

Wondering if your major is right for you? Are you unsure of what someone with a degree in your field is expected to be good at? What kinds of jobs are available for someone with your major? It is not uncommon for many college students to ask themselves these questions. There are many ways in which you can find answers:

- Explore the MSOE website and look under each academic program's website (<http://www.msoe.edu/acad.shtml>). There, you'll find program goals, educational objectives, and course and track information for each major.
- Explore the Prentice Hall website (<http://www.prenhall.com/success/MajorExp>) which has extensive information about various majors, what they are about, and what kind of jobs you can expect to find after graduation.

- Talk with program directors or professors about your major. Discuss your professional goals and what types of careers you are considering.
- Meet with upper-class students who are in your major to learn about what coursework and internship opportunities lay ahead.
- Find a mentor to answer your questions and serve as a resource while attending MSOE. Learn more at http://www.msoe.edu/st_life/mentor OR find a mentor at <http://www.mentornet.net>
- Schedule an informational interview with a professional in the field. Informational interviews are an excellent way to gain first-hand knowledge about a specific occupation, including the work environment, the tasks associated with the occupation, and its rewards and limitations.
- Make an appointment with a counselor at MSOE Counseling Services (http://www.msoe.edu/st_life/couns) for a career assessment. Career Assessments may assist you in identifying your interests, personality characteristics and values and how they relate to different career possibilities.
- Call or visit the Placement Office which has an abundance of services, including job listings, career and job search videos, and graduate school information. The Placement Office can also assist in providing salary information, resume and cover letter assistance, developing a job search strategy, and improving interview skills (<http://www.msoe.edu/placement>).

5. Things We Wish You Didn't Have to Know

Source: http://www.lions.odu.edu/~kkilburn/dr_mom/dr_mom_wish.htm#top

- As much as campus officials try, no environment is completely safe. Know what the risks are and how to minimize them.
- MSOE provides an escort services for students after dark. Find more info at: http://www.msoe.edu/pub_safety/shuttle.shtml. Or, use a buddy system and don't wander around dark, deserted parts of campus alone or with a relative stranger.
- Invest in a good basic self defense course, and then be sure to practice the skills you've learned.
- Remember that most women are in more danger from people they know than from strangers – so take the precautions you already know about to avoid date rape and similar kinds of assaults.
- If something happens, know how to report it and to whom. Remember that victims are never to blame, and that no matter the outcome, you always did your very best. Take advantage of all available resources to assist in the recovery process and try to give yourself the gift of patience with the process.
- Sexual harassment is less of a problem than it once was, but certainly hasn't been eliminated. The good news is that MSOE has published policies on what constitutes sexual harassment and how to deal with it (http://www.msoe.edu/st_life/vp/stlife.pdf). The bad news is that for a student to confront a faculty member or other campus official can be difficult at best. If you feel you've been harassed by anyone on campus, you may want to start by talking it over with a trusted friend or family member. Or, contact MSOE Counseling Services.

- You've heard more than you want to about the problems of binge drinking, drug abuse, and eating disorders. Unfortunately, what you've heard is probably true, so try to pay at least a little attention and exercise more caution than you think necessary (it'll still be less than your parents would like).
- If you or someone you know is in trouble, get help. Believe it or not, there is a whole community of folks out there who want nothing more than to give it to you. Start with the folks in Student Life; they should be able to direct you to the right person in the right place to take care of you (http://www.msOE.edu/st_life)

Links for more information:

- Campus Blues: <http://www.campusblues.com>
- Dr Mom's Guide to College: http://www.lions.odu.edu/~kkilburn/dr_mom_home.htm#top
- From Dependence to Independence: <http://www.netac.rit.edu/publication/tipsheet/transition.html>
- Loneliness: <http://www.couns.uiuc.edu/Brochures/loneline.htm>
- Overcoming Procrastination: <http://www.couns.uiuc.edu/brochures/procras.htm>
- Stress Management: <http://www.couns.uiuc.edu/brochures/stress.htm>
- MentorNet: <http://www.mentornet.net>

MSOE Counseling Services is located on the Second Floor of the Kern Center (K-230). To Schedule an appointment with a Counselor, call (414) 277-7590. For more information, visit Counseling Services at: www.msOE.edu/st_life/couns