Looking Ahead: A Timeline of Possible Adjustments

Possible September Challenges
- Adjusting to sharing a room, sharing a bathroom and living in a residence hall.
- Getting to know roommates, making rules for the room, and adjusting expectations.
- Homesickness, especially for those who have never lived away from home or have had a very stable childhood. Missing the strong friendships left behind at home or in high school. This may induce “melt-down calls” to parents.
- Getting to know new people, making college friends, and finding an initial niche (someone to go to meals with, someone to hang out with).
- Setting expectations for long-distance romantic relationships.
- Taking care of daily personal responsibilities without parental direction or support: buying books, waking up for class, doing laundry, eating and sleeping well, managing money, caring for one’s own health, housekeeping, etc.
- Challenges of managing freedom. Making lifestyle decisions regarding drug and alcohol experimentation, morality, class attendance, and social pressures.
- Finding the pace of college academics, how much time it takes for the college work load, and how to balance it with a social life.

Possible October Challenges
- Dealing with the intensification of academic demands and the necessity for study skills and time management. Grades begin to come in.
- Mid-term exams and term papers are all due at once.
- Taking care of one’s health as cold season and stress-related illnesses arise.
- Most first-year students have an initial group of friends; others experience tension as friendships shift to other groups. Some may experience loneliness or disillusionment as the adjustment process is unfolding.
- Early college romances may fizzle.
- For students and their families, Fall Break is often the first trip home from school, and families must reconnect and redefine expectations.
- Long distance romantic relationships may become more of a challenge.

Possible November-December Challenges
- Taking care of one’s health as colds and stress-related illnesses may increase around finals time.
- Some first-year students may not yet have found a group of friends or a niche that feels comfortable, and may feel anxious about this and question their college choice.
- Budgeting money for planned holiday gifts and travel expenses.
- Finding a job for Winter Break employment.
- Excitement and managing time as final papers and tests demand time alongside seasonal parties, social service projects, and religious activities.
• Finishing papers and studying for final exams.
• Pre-existing roommate and social tensions may increase as all students are under stress.
• For college romantic relationships, deciding how to weather the six-week separation.
• Apprehension for those who have concerns for family, those who have no home to visit, and for those who prefer not to go home because of family conflicts.

Possible January – February Challenges
• Readjusting to school and again being away from the security of home and friends.
• Those with a tendency to seasonal depression may go into a slump due to weather, darkness, and lack of outdoor activities.
• For first-year students, college may have lost some of its initial charm and novelty.
• Adjusting friendships, as some students leave to study abroad, or roommates change.
• Project deadlines are approaching and may cause stress for seniors.
• Transfer students begin the process of making friends and finding a niche.
• Winter illnesses and snow days may challenge academic time management.

Possible March Challenges
• Managing time as mid-term papers and tests demand time alongside seasonal parties, planning for Spring Break, social service projects, and religious activities.
• Mid-term exams and term papers are all due at once. Grades are coming in.
• Pre-existing roommate and social tensions may increase as all students are stressed.
• Making decisions about Spring Break, money issues, job or peer trip plans.
• Spring Break provides needed relief for students who need time to relax.
• Taking care of one’s health as allergy season starts.
• Determining whom to room with and where for the Fall semester are of great importance, as deadlines approach.

Possible April Challenges
• Many students experience optimism because the school year is perceived as on the “downhill slope.”
• Spring fever sets in: Managing time as a full activities calendar comes and academic demands continue to increase.
• Looking for summer jobs and housing
• Pre-existing roommate and social tensions may increase as all students are stressed, particularly seniors.
• Deciding on courses for the Fall, pre-registration, and choosing a major.
• Anticipation and also sadness as the end of the school year nears, particularly for seniors.

Possible May Challenges
• Completing unfinished work, taking final exams.
• Solidifying plans for summer school, travel, work, and housing.
• Saying good bye to friends and planning on how to keep in contact over the summer.
• Deciding the destiny of romantic relationships for the summer.
• Making the transition back to living at home and maintaining college identity and independence.
• Patience and understanding on the part of the family at home can go a long way in empowering first-year students to ride these tides of the academic year.