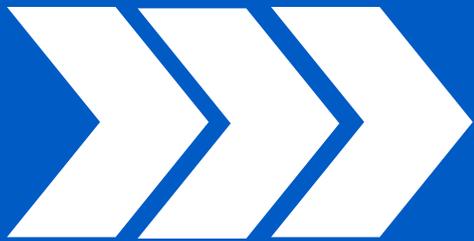


# OREGON GEAR UP TOOLKIT

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## The Transition to College

supporting seniors through the summer and the first year of college

REACHING HIGHER

RIGOR

RELEVANCE

**RELATIONSHIPS**

RAISING AWARENESS

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7 8 9 10 11 **12** 13+

**Parents** Community Teachers



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*Updated January 2020*

# RELATIONSHIPS

Students who have relationships with people who expect them to go to college are far more likely to attend.

## Strategies

- Draw on the power of peers.
- Provide opportunities for every student to develop positive relationships.



**DOWNLOAD PRINT-AND-USE RESOURCES:** [bit.ly/1RJoPHI](http://bit.ly/1RJoPHI)

*Look for the printer icon and green text throughout the toolkit!*

- Care Package Instructions
- Alumni Events (posters & agendas)
- College Student Contact Log
- Monthly Text Messages for Students

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## Sources & More Information

Harvard Graduate School of Education, [Summer Melt Tools](#)

National Center for Education Statistics, [College Navigator](#)

UCLA Higher Education Research Institute, [CIRP Freshman Survey](#)

[Factors Influencing Student Retention in Higher Education](#)

# WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Students need continued support in order to successfully complete a college degree. Researchers estimate that anywhere between 10-40% of students who planned on attending college upon graduating from high school do not end up enrolling in the fall. This phenomenon, coined “summer melt”, is the first obstacle of many for first-year students.



More than half of first-year students in Oregon’s community colleges and over 25% at 4-year public colleges will not return for their second year. Students who are engaged on campus and have social supports are more likely to have greater academic success, persist and graduate.

## GETTING STUDENTS TO AND THROUGH COLLEGE

The transition from high school to college can be daunting for many students as they adjust to new responsibilities and demands. High schools can help bridge the gap for students in the summer after graduation and through the first year of college, providing an external source of support and information as students navigate a new environment.

High schools should **provide information and resources** that address common challenges in the first-year of college, **build college cohorts** by promoting peer networks that support each other, **maintain communication** regularly with encouragement and advice, and **keep alumni connected** with their hometown, with college students serving as near-peer mentors and role models for current students. **Keeping parents connected** and supported is critical, too.

### first-year students:

**36%**

had difficulty adjusting to the demands of coursework

**61%**

felt lonely or homesick

**48%**

struggled with time management

# PROVIDE INFO & RESOURCES

## SENIOR YEAR

Address common challenges and issues that come with the transition to college during **dedicated class time, Advisory or workshops**. Topics to cover include:

- support services on college campuses
- choosing classes and academics in college
- budgeting and money management
- getting involved and finding friends
- homesickness
- what to bring

### ▶ IT'S A PLAN: COLLEGE CHECKLISTS

Monthly checklists with resources and action items for students, parents and educators. Download the *College Support Resources Scavenger Hunt* and *Creating a Budget* worksheets.

[oregongoestocollege.org/downloads](http://oregongoestocollege.org/downloads)

### ▶ U101: FREE ONLINE COURSE

A free, self-paced online course that covers strategies for exploring and selecting a major, getting the most out of campus life and more. Best for students going to a large 4-year college.

[coursera.org/learn/college-life](http://coursera.org/learn/college-life)

### ▶ SUPPORT SERVICES DIRECTORY

A directory of on-campus resources for each Oregon college and university that address common challenges.

[oregongearup.org/resources/critical-resources-first-year-college-students](http://oregongearup.org/resources/critical-resources-first-year-college-students)

## SUMMER & IN COLLEGE

Using a variety of [communication methods](#), inform students of key next steps, remind students of support services available and be available for questions and concerns from students and families.

Encourage students to self-advocate to find the information and support they need on their specific college campuses. Ask guiding questions and end conversations with a concrete next step for students; check back with students to ensure they followed through.

### ▶ BIG FUTURE

Information and advice from students on what to expect in college as well as packing lists, checklists and more.

**Next Steps:** [bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/making-decision](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/making-decision)

**Academics:** [bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/academic-life](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/academic-life)

**Campus Life:** [bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/campus-life](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/campus-life)

### ▶ ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**I'm First:** An online community for first-generation college students.

[imfirst.org](http://imfirst.org)

**First Generation Movie:** Host a free screening at your school.

[gocollegenow.org/about-the-film](http://gocollegenow.org/about-the-film)

**Set To Go:** Emotional health resources for students and parents for the first year of college.

[setto.go.org](http://setto.go.org)

# BUILD A COLLEGE COHORT

## SENIOR YEAR

Host a **Senior Cohort Night** 📅 prior to graduation, in which students who will be attending the same college have an opportunity to gather and develop peer relationships that can be further developed and sustained throughout college. Consider including a “digital cohort” for students who will be the only ones from your high school on their campus and/or partnering with nearby high schools to increase the size of cohorts.

Identify one **student ambassador on each campus** who can help facilitate communications among the cohort and who can encourage intervention when needed.

## SUMMER

Host a **Summer Send-Off** 📅 picnic or BBQ in late summer or early fall.



## IN COLLEGE

Plan **first-month-of-school visits to campuses** where multiple students are enrolled. Host a dinner or other event at which your alumni can reconnect and share their experiences. (Bonus ideas: drop off care packages and collect college addresses.)

As your cadre of college students grows, develop a program to have on-campus “buddies,” **pairing a first-year student with sophomores, juniors, or seniors who graduated from your high school.**

The **Posse Foundation** is one example of how a group of students can support each other on campus with guidance and encouragement from an outside organization. Explore their model at [possefoundation.org](https://possefoundation.org) for ideas on ways to create an intentional support network of students.

# MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION

## SENIOR YEAR

Conduct a [12th Grade Exit Survey](#) with all seniors at the end of the school year to ascertain fall plans and gather contact information for next year.

## SUMMER

Utilize **social media** (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) to build and maintain relationships. Consider having a “class of 20XX” group in which students can engage their friends and you can offer encouragement, tips, and reminders.

### ► SUMMER MELT TOOLS

Get a step-by-step approach to combatting summer melt with this guide developed by the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

[sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/summer-melt-tools](http://sdp.cepr.harvard.edu/summer-melt-tools)

Send regular **text messages**, beginning immediately after graduation, with general reminders about next steps.

### ► IT'S A PLAN: COLLEGE CHECKLISTS

Share social media posts and text message reminders for students and parents with key action items.

[oregongoestocollege.org/downloads](http://oregongoestocollege.org/downloads)

[facebook.com/oregongoestocollege](https://facebook.com/oregongoestocollege)

[twitter.com/ORGoesToCollege](https://twitter.com/ORGoesToCollege)

[instagram.com/oregongoestocollege](https://instagram.com/oregongoestocollege)

## IN COLLEGE

Utilize **social media** (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) to build and maintain relationships. Consider having a “class of 20XX” group in which students can engage their friends and you can offer encouragement, tips, and reminders.

Send regular **Text Messages**  with general reminders about key college responsibilities.

Send monthly [postcards](#) containing study skill tips & tricks or pertinent reminders and an encouraging note from high school students and/or staff.

Assign a **counselor or volunteer mentor** (based at the high school) to all first year college students. This person is responsible for touching base with the student at regular intervals, potentially with a task-oriented purpose.

**Extend existing mentoring programs** into the first year of college.

Develop a “**Friends of XX School**” program in communities where several of your students attend college. Assign these adult “friends” to your alumni and task them with being someone the student can turn to when in need of assistance, support, or advice.

Keep track of your communication with individual students with a **College Student Contact Log** .

# KEEP ALUMNI CONNECTED

## IN COLLEGE

When on **campus visits**, invite alumni to share a meal with middle/high school students. Gather a group of 3-5 and ask them to host a panel discussion about life as a college student.

**Invite alumni to return to the middle/high school** during their fall/winter/spring breaks. They can offer informational sessions in the college center, sit on a panel about college life, or visit a class to talk about their experiences.

### ▶ ALUMNI & PARENT PANEL

Agenda and resources for an event featuring alumni now in college and their parents.

[oregongoestocollege.org/downloads](http://oregongoestocollege.org/downloads)

Send **Care Packages** 📦, [curated and packed by current students](#), parent organizations or the alumni association, to college freshmen. Include something to remind them of home, something to help them with their studies, a fun treat they can share, and an encouraging note.



*Hermiston High School students send care packages to alumni now at college.*

*Photo: Facebook/Generation College*

Organize a **Homecoming Tailgate** 📺 specifically for recent alumni, especially those who are attending college. Celebrate community and provide a forum for alumni to talk about their experiences – include talking about challenges and possible solutions.

Host a **Holiday Party** 📺 for recent alumni at the start of winter break. Include a celebration of success after the students' first finals. Invite alumni from 5-10 years out to talk about their current lives/careers. Use this as an opportunity to build connections based on career interests.

## KEEP PARENTS CONNECTED, TOO

Develop a **parents' group** that brings together parents of seniors and first-year college students; encourage an agenda that provides support for both.

Send **parent newsletters** with information about how to help support students while they are away.

### ▶ PARENT NEWSLETTERS

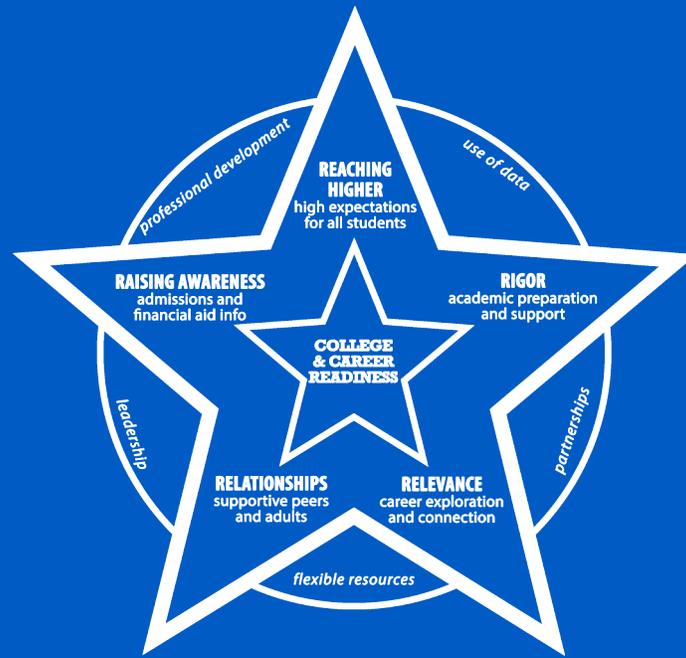
Quarterly newsletters to print or e-mail with information for parents of college students.

[oregongearup.org/resource/parent-newsletters](http://oregongearup.org/resource/parent-newsletters)

Host **parent workshops** at key points in a student's transition to college to help parents deal with the changes in their children – first weeks away, coming home for break, etc.

# COLLEGE TRANSITION PLANNING GUIDE

	SENIOR YEAR	SUMMER	IN COLLEGE
Provide Information & Resources			
Build a College Cohort			
Communicate Regularly			
Keep Alumni Connected			
Keep Parents Connected			



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**COLLEGE.** It's not a dream, it's a plan.