



WELCOME TEMPLATE FOR NEW COLLEGE STUDENTS

Create some welcoming activities for freshmen or other students who want connection.

Ask a few of your student government leaders to lead groups of first-year/new students for campus walks the first week or so — preferably before school starts each new semester. These ambassadors literally show participants important places on campus — academic advisory, financial advisory, and tutoring areas; counseling and wellness offices and share how to sign up/in; great places to study; fun places to meet new people, etc. Walk by professor offices so that students know where to find their professors. (added bonus: ask professors to be in their offices for a quick hello if possible.)

Invite representatives from on-campus interest groups to share about their group and when/where they meet and sign up new participants. You could also set this up as a “fair” along a major sidewalk with each group having a table and offering pamphlets about their group, and asking for students to sign up to join. Hey, a cookie and hydration table are always a plus!

Offer some times for connection that cost nothing, are easily accessible, and give students a place to feel supported. Perhaps advertise that upper division students are meeting in a room at the library to talk about what they have learned that helped them most to succeed. Address loneliness and homesickness and have upper division students share what helped. Create lists of places to go for help for campus/off campus employment; drug alcohol support groups; tutoring for every academic areas or general help with writing or researching; counseling and mental health help; places just to hang and meet others, etc.

Have some “just join us” activities. For instance, *We Walk Wednesdays* when anyone can join a group walking around the track or make this a challenge so students get their 10,000 steps a day. *Speaker Special*, in which community experts come for an hour every other week and discuss a special topic or invite national experts to Zoom in; and whatever you can come up with. Perhaps start some intramural groups that students just sign up to join (no skills needed): frisbee or hackie sack, soccer, dodge ball, chess/checker tournaments, paint-by-number murals, board games with winners moving on to play others, bowling, ping-pong tournaments, bike someplace, etc. Post pictures of everyone as they play.

Do a weekly send-out of all campus-related activities for students to join, especially those that offer free food. This has the advantage of letting students know there are many healthy activities to join.

Create a “bingo” card that new students can get stamped by different entities around the campus. They cannot get the stamp unless they learn about the place or group. When

the card is complete, they bring it in for a free coffee card or access to something for free on campus.

Ask students to write their concerns about coming to college on sticky notes. Group these as you collect them. Then ask upper division students/counselors to address these concerns in a very public way. Perhaps in a meeting, a collegewide email, or social media. Share the major concerns and how/which campus entities might help as well as what other students have done to deal with these issues. Also, use college leaders or graduate assistants to lead a “What Helps” campaign along with this activity. Doing so ensures that those who wrote something also address what they have done in the past to get through their issue.

Ask your on-campus food service to do a nutrition activity on a “slow” afternoon and ask them to provide healthy snacks while nutritionists share why our bodies and brains need healthy food to do their best work. Provide information about hydration and how to access healthy food on a limited budget. Discuss the importance of enough sleep and exercise. Perhaps the food service might offer a night per month that includes all campus students in a movie and popcorn, a chili or spaghetti feed, or some other activities that create community among all students. These costs might be shared by a community sponsor.

Ask campus athletic coaches to provide an overview a couple of nights in weight rooms and gyms about gym etiquette and what is available to students who wish to do physical training. They might do a walk around to show the machines, showers, etc. Have an especially engaging coach share the importance of healthy body as it creates a healthy mind (and vice versa).

Offer a community day in which community groups and businesses set up stands/tables to share what they do and how they support students around the university. Perhaps they will offer freebies, such as key chains or re-fillable water bottles. Ask your mental health center to offer free classes explaining the latest in brain science, how to quell anxiety, how to help with depression, how to overcome test anxiety, how to meet people, or any other issues that students identify. There are some excellent YouTube videos that the center might share and have discussion groups related to these ideas.

Within the campus housing, replicate any of the above ideas targeting each house or dorm so these students come together perhaps once a month for something new. Suggest “potlucks” in each housing group so that participants meet over food. Or perhaps do a college-wide Guinness Book of World Records potluck and aim for a record (someone will have to contact Guinness). To be sure food is safe, require that people only bring something still in its wrapper from a store.

The Idaho Lives Project is a partnership between the Idaho State Department of Education and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. The Project is funded by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Suicide Prevention Program and the Garrett Lee Smith State/Tribal Youth Suicide Prevention and Early Intervention Grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

This publication was supported by the Grant Number 2 801 OT 009017, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.