Dear USD Parents,

Do you ever wonder what your student is doing on campus? What classes they are taking or what classes they are NOT taking? These are a few questions I heard from parents when I sat on a Parent Board meeting. As a senior here at beautiful USD, it was a perspective on college life I never considered. Can you blame me? I am not going to be a parent anytime soon. However, the discussion started me thinking about why I am always so open with my parents and why some of my friends are not.

You, as a parent, are paying for your student’s college education, or at least a portion of it. You have every right to know if your student is spending his or her college career wisely. However, college brings freedom to your student. Your rules and curfews, which govern your student at home, do not govern your student at school. He or she makes his or her own rules. They do not want you making decisions for them. There is also this little thing called FERPA preventing you from calling USD directly and demanding your student’s record. Even if your student did give you full access, the best way to learn about your student’s classes and extracurricular activities is to ask him or her.

You may be thinking, WHAT DO I ASK THEM? HOW DO I ASK THEM? Well that’s where I come in. I am a first generation college student, so my parents had no idea what I was getting myself into or what kind of class plan I needed. Trying to figure out what I needed to take and at what pace was as confusing for me as it was for them! Nowadays, first generation parents are not the only ones with these problems. Even if your student is a second or third generation college student, a lot has changed since you where in college.

The most important thing to remember is ALWAYS LISTEN TO YOUR STUDENT. If your student feels comfortable coming to you, then he or she will tell you when changes occur or feel more willing to tell you about changes when you ask. Listening also acknowledges your student’s freedom in making college decisions. Many of my friends were scared to talk to their parents about changing classes or dropping from 15 units to 12 units. Parents unconsciously put a lot of pressure on their students, adding to the pressure of school itself. You need to know that your student always wants to do well, so encouragement is always the best method to keep your student on track.
I am not promoting laziness in students, but sometimes there are reasons for a student only needing to take 12 units a semester, such as AP credit. I had AP credit, so now, as a senior, I only have to take 12 units a semester. If your student slacks or drops a class, because he or she does not feel like working hard, then set him or her straight! All I am suggesting is to listen to your student and know what is going on in his or her life, before getting upset. Maybe even sit down with a counselor at OneStop and set a four-year plan with your student. I am not a parent and have no idea what it is like to be one, but I hope my advise gives you a little insight into the mind of your college student and helps you stay up to date with his or her college career at USD.

Sincerely,

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Here are my Top 10 questions to ask your student:
1. How was your day?
2. How are your classes?
3. Do you like your professors? Do you have a favorite professor?
4. Are your classes hard this semester?
5. Do you have a lot of reading/tests?
6. Did you join any clubs/fraternities/sororities?
7. When are your mid-terms-finals?
8. What is your major/minor? Why?
9. Are you working on Core (aka GE) classes?
10. How many classes do you need to graduate?