



# Understanding Transition

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## **Student Mentor Program OCAD University**

Brent Everett James  
Student Life Coordinator, Campus Life

Student Centre, 51 McCaul Street, Level 1  
416-977-6000, Ext. 275  
[bjames@ocad.ca](mailto:bjames@ocad.ca)

OCAD University  
100 McCaul Street  
Toronto, ON M5T 1W1



# UNDERSTANDING TRANSITION

The first-year at university represents a new kind of challenge for students. Each student's expectations differ widely, and the campus response may not always meet his/her expectations.

There are some things ALL students can expect:

- To be challenged both academically and personally
- To not understand everything
- To not always see the relevance of what they are asked to do

But they CAN expect that resources will be available to help them, such as YOU, a Peer Mentor in OCAD University's Student Mentor Program.

# STAGES OF TRANSITION

The following 10 stages reflect what many new and first-year students go through during their first year of university:

## **Early Summer Anticipation**

This is when high school seniors graduate, begin to look toward the future, and may have feelings of sadness, accomplishment, and anticipation.

## **Midsummer Anxiety**

Students begin to realize that soon they will be leaving their home, family, friends, and the security those things offer.

## **Late Summer Panic**

The student is plunged into the collegiate environment perhaps with a new roommate, university bureaucracy, classrooms, homework, and a foreign social world.

## **The Honeymoon**

New friends and no tests for at least three weeks, let's go have some fun!

*Set small, measurable goals every day:*

Large tasks can best be handled by breaking them down into smaller projects. Setting small, measurable steps on a daily basis will help you feel in control of your workload. Accomplish a lot with a little planning and self discipline.

*Schedule time to relax:*

Be sure to treat yourself for all the hard work you do! At least once a week set aside a few hours to do something you love; hiking in a local park, shopping, call or visit family, go to the gym, or chill out with friends. This allows you to recharge your battery and be more productive.

## **5. Use Your Resources and Ask for Help When You Need It**

*Take advantage of FREE campus services, including but not limited to:*

- A/V Loans
- Campus Life
- Campus Services & Security
- Career Services
- Centre for Students with Disabilities (CSD)
- Diversity & Equity Initiatives Office
- Dorothy H. Hoover Library
- Exhibition Services
- Financial Aid & Awards
- Health & Wellness Centre
- IT Helpdesk
- Laptop Program Helpdesk
- OCAD Student Union (OCADSU)
- Visual Resources
- Writing & Learning Centre

For a complete listing, including location, hours of operation, and more, see "Campus Referrals", page 18 in the *Student Mentor Handbook*.

### **The End of the Honeymoon**

Where did all of this hard work come from? And where did all of the time go? Homesickness may appear at this phase.

### **The grass is always greener...**

Students may think that transferring somewhere else will solve their problems. No doubt they would be doing better at another university.

### **You can't go home again**

This starts the first time students come home to visit. They are hit with the harsh realization that life for the rest of the family goes on without them.

### **Primitive coping behavior**

Well into the first semester, students have finally learned to use the Library, and they are excited about the things they have learned.

### **Realization**

This stage usually precedes exams and critiques. Students realize the great amount of work ahead and know that their future depends largely on their academic success.

### **Putting it together**

Sometime during the second semester, students see university as a total experience. They realize that hard work and achievement must be priorities but do not totally exclude time for having fun. They have learned what it takes to make the most of the college years.

## **STUDENT CONCERNS**

Listed below are topics that may concern many students as they enter university. Following the concerns are questions many students have but may not know how to vocalize.

It's important to be aware of these questions, and it may even be helpful to talk with your Mentee about his or her concerns before classes begin.

### **Reasons for being in university:**

Why am I here? Is it because I want to be?  
Is it because my parents want me to be?

**Separation difficulty:**

Can I survive on my own? Will I make new friends?

**Establishing identity on campus:**

Who am I? How can I do my own thing and maintain the respect of friends, family, and myself?

**Social acceptance:**

How will I fit in? What behavior is acceptable in the university setting?

**Relating with new and different people:**

How will I react to people who differ from me in religious belief, value judgments, sociopolitical/economic level, race, etc.? How much difference should I and can I accept?

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Provide Mentees with tips towards success from the following five main themes:

**1. Get What You Came For—An Education***Choose your major in an informed way:*

It is natural for students to be uncertain of their choice of major at this stage. Help them by making proper referrals to Academic Advisors.

*Make studying a part of your daily schedule:*

New students can underestimate the amount of information they must master. It's difficult to make up for lost time, so keep up on all your readings.

*Know what's expected of you:*

The on-line Fall/Winter Calendar is an important resource, outlining the courses needed to complete your degree. Academic regulations used to evaluate your progress are also online.

*Ask for help:*

Be sure to talk to your Professors and/or TAs if you need help understanding assignments or if you have questions about a grade you received.

*Polish your Academic Skills:*

All students will have to work harder than in high school in order to get good marks. If you're worried about making the grade, be sure to use the free services available to students in the Writing & Learning Centre who want to polish their writing and study skills.

**2. Maintain a Positive Attitude***Live in the present:*

Give 'now' a chance. As life changes, it is natural to compare past experiences to the present. While the past is familiar and comfortable, take advantage of opportunities to make new friends and get involved.

*Keep good company:*

Surround yourself with 'encouraging' people. Friends who have a positive attitude will make you feel good about yourself.

**3. Get Involved***Participate in Orientation & Welcome activities:*

Encourage all new students to participate fully in all Orientation activities. These provide unparalleled opportunities to make new friends and learn about OCAD University.

*Student-run groups:*

An important part of campus-life is getting involved with student groups and interacting with other students who share similar interests. Get involved in an existing group or start your own.

*Share your Care:*

The simplest but most powerful piece of advice. Positive energy goes a long way in the world, so even if you're stressed or frustrated, show your fellow students, faculty and staff that you care. It can be contagious.

**4. Stay Balanced***Get organized:*

Buy a laminated wall calendar and write down your essential dates. Include readings, assignment dates, due dates, exam dates, etc. Put the calendar up where you can see it every day. Also keep the information in a planner that you carry with you.