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## **Parent & Family Newsletter**

**August 2015**

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### **Welcome!**

We hope everyone has had a happy and healthy summer! Welcome to our first Parent & Family Newsletter of the 2015-2016 academic year. We are very excited to send you this jam-packed edition with articles on Homesickness, Tips for a Stress Free Move-In, and our new Student Engagement Database, Lion's Gate. We also have upcoming deadlines and significant events posted for you in this Newsletter. In addition, be sure to read the welcome/welcome back letters from a couple of the departments on campus directed toward you as parents and family members!

Enjoy!

Susie Orecchio, MA, NCC  
Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs  
Coordinator of Parent & Family Programs

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**Highlights from the Vice President  
for Student Affairs**

With summer coming to a close, it is time to look ahead to the quickly approaching academic year.

For some of you, this is the start of a brand new experience: your student is beginning their first year at The College of New Jersey – a very exciting, and perhaps overwhelming, time as parents and family members. For others, you are continuing your journey with your student and looking forward to another year at The College.

The Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs is eager to support all of our parents and families throughout their student's time here at TCNJ. We hope this Newsletter serves as a great resource for you, regardless of what stage you are in.



Best,

Amy Hecht, Ed.D.

Vice President for Student Affairs

The College of New Jersey

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## **2015 TCNJ Parent & Family Day**

### **Saturday, September 26**

**Registration is now open!**

Please register [here](#) for the 2015 TCNJ Parent & Family Day!

See the tentative schedule for the day [here](#).

Email a photo of your family or student with a one-sentence note to [sa@tcnj.edu](mailto:sa@tcnj.edu)!

We will be creating a slideshow with these images to play during the day!

Please send to us by September 13.



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**Check Out Our Parent & Family Website  
and Like Us on Facebook  
for more information and resources:**

Click [here](#) for Facebook



Click [here](#) for our Parent & Family Website

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## **Are you a New College Parent or Family Member?**

If so, we have posted additional articles on transitioning to college for parents and families on our website. Check them out [here](#)!

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## **Homesickness 101: What You Need To Know**

*By Mark J. Forest, Ph.D.*

*Director of Counseling and Psychological Services*

We are coming upon that yearly ritual when thousands of students head off to college for the very first time, after months (and years) of preparation. First year students are typically filled with anticipation and excitement at the opportunity to start their college education living among their peers with a more independent lifestyle. Then something happens. The work starts piling up; not

all hoped for friendships pan out; there is a disagreement with a roommate; all the other students on campus seem smarter, more popular, better adjusted than you – and lo and behold thoughts of the comfort and familiarity of home start to creep into consciousness. What's going on here? First, let's talk about the basics. What exactly is homesickness?



Homesickness is the distress (feelings) and functional impairment (behavior) caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home and those we are connected to (parents, siblings, pets, familiar routines, etc.). It is often characterized by a longing for and preoccupation with thoughts of home that can, at times, interfere with the smooth adjustment to a new environment. Leaving home is a common developmental milestone that the majority of students navigate reasonably well, with only a few bumps along the way. For others, it poses more challenges and can at times lead to more serious impairments, on an emotional, interpersonal and behavioral level. Here are some things to keep in mind about homesickness:

- **Homesickness is temporary.** Students come to college with significant expectations about what the experience will be like. Many have heard that college represents “the best years of your life” (no pressure here!). The reality is often quite different. The first year of college is full of change: new environment, new people, new roles, new responsibilities, new academic pressures, and new challenges in balancing all of these things. When the reality of college life does not meet all the expectations one had coming in, it can be quite unsettling. However, as students begin to settle in to the new challenges and routines, they frequently start to feel better.
- **Change can be painful, but frequently leads to growth and feelings of competence.** For many students, coming to college is the first major life transition they have faced. Being independent, making decisions – often in the face of uncertainty, can be confusing. Working through these challenges, with the support and help of family, friends (both old and new), and college support offices can help students acquire the tools and skills they need to navigate the change – and come out the other side more confident in one's ability to cope and manage through adversity.
- **Homesickness is less about missing home and more about struggling to adjust to a new and perhaps challenging environment.** This is actually good news because it suggests that with time and engagement with other students, activities, organizations, clubs and familiarizing oneself to the new environment, feelings of homesickness will be reduced.
- **Talking about your experience helps.** Talking to a CA, roommate, friend, parent, sibling(s) – especially those who have had a similar experience of leaving home will help normalize the process and help students feel supported.
- **Draw upon established methods of coping.** Think about past experiences facing new challenges. What did your student do to adjust? What helped him/her to feel better? Doing

what has worked in the past is a good place to start.

- **If after a few weeks things aren't improving, it's probably time to talk to a professional.** TCNJ offers free, confidential counseling services to all registered students. A counselor can make an individualized assessment of your student's situation and offer resources that can help in the adjustment. In fact, Counseling and Psychological Services (<https://caps.tcnj.edu/>) will be starting a new initiative this fall specifically geared to helping new students adjust to college life. A short-term drop-in group is being offered during the first few weeks of classes. No need to register for the group, just stop by CAPS during the following times and get support and resources to help get adjusted:

- Mondays 8/31; 9/14 11:00am – 12:00pm
- Tuesdays 8/25; 9/1; 9/8 11:00am – 12:00pm
- Thursdays 8/27; 9/3; 9/10 2:00pm – 3:00pm

- **TCNJ has a large variety of opportunities for student engagement and connection.** If your student seems to struggle with finding their place, make sure they are taking advantage of the myriad of opportunities available to them:

<https://studentactivities.tcnj.edu/>. You can also read the article further down on Lion's Gate, our new Student Engagement Database, for more information on connecting to campus.

Remember, having a reaction to separation from the familiarity and comfort of what is known is completely normal, even expected. And this goes not only for students – but parents as well. It's hard to “let go” of a child that you have nurtured, protected, taught and invested in for 18 years! Be patient with your child and with yourself. Congratulations and best of luck on the exciting journey ahead.

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## Tips for a Stress Free Move In

*By Courtney Berry*

*Residence Director, Townhouses*



Welcome to one of the greatest experiences your student will have at The College of New Jersey: on-campus living. Whether this is their first time moving in or their second, third, or fourth, there are a few steps they can take to make this process

easy for them and for those helping them move in. Below are a few tips on how to make move in as stress free as possible.

- Make a checklist before your student leaves home to come to TCNJ so they don't forget any important items (laptop and cell phone chargers, laptop, ethernet cables, school books, etc). Take a look at the housing website for essential items before they pack their entire life into the car.
- Speaking of essential items, less is more! When they're creating their "forget me not" checklist, prioritize items that they need right away versus those that they could bring back to campus on their next trip home.
- Have them get in touch with their roommates prior to arriving so they can make practical packing decisions before they arrive. They don't want to end up with two mini fridges in a room or each roommate bring a rug when there is only space for one.
- Make sure they know their room assignment and have their student ID somewhere handy. They'll need to present this at check in and losing it on the first day will be a huge inconvenience to them.
- Stay hydrated! You may be making several trips to and from your vehicle, so remember to keep water handy and take your time when moving things.
- Finally, it's okay for them to bring their movie collection or some video games to share with their roommates, but don't have them bring things that can become a distraction to their roommates or themselves. There are student run organizations on campus for a reason. The more things they bring to play with in their room, the less of campus life they'll get to experience.

During move in day, don't hesitate to ask questions! ResEd staff will be present throughout the day to assist you and your student. Also, be sure to have them save important numbers in their mobile phone and get connected to their residence hall on social media for important updates and upcoming events!



## **2015 Fall Semester Opening**

First year residence halls open on Thursday, August 20, 2015



All sophomore and upper class residence halls open on Sunday, August 23, 2015

Please consult the Fall move-in schedule that details when students can move in based on the building and floor.

### **Fall Break**

Monday, October 12, 2015 to Tuesday, October 13, 2015

All residence halls will remain open

### **Thanksgiving Break**

Halls close at 9:00 am on Wednesday, November 25, 2015

Halls open at 2:00 pm on Sunday, November 29, 2015

### **Winter Break**

Halls close at 8:00 pm on Tuesday, December 15, 2015

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# LION'S GATE

*By Elizabeth Bapasola*

*Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs*

Lion's Gate ([lionsgate.tcnj.edu](http://lionsgate.tcnj.edu)) is what we call the online gateway to student engagement at TCNJ. It serves as the one-stop-shop to centralize, organize, and increase student involvement opportunities. Lion's Gate is a database that holds student organization profiles, membership rosters, budgets, events, and engagement initiatives across campus. It also includes information on and events hosted by campus offices, Schools, and academic departments across campus.

Lion's Gate highlights upcoming events that students browse each week to jumpstart their college engagement. Individuals can click on an event to find out more information including who is hosting the event, date, time, location, and description. Students can also RSVP to the event and add it to their virtual calendar. Lion's Gate also includes a campus-wide event calendar and a campus news page that will show you everything going on across campus, the latest announcements, and other organization details.

If interested in joining an organization, students can browse Lion's Gate to gain more information

and insight about the organizations they are interested in. There is a searchable directory that allows students to learn more about the 240 student organizations they are able to join. Lion's Gate also offers a recommendation tool, which students can utilize to find suggested organizations and events based on their personal interests. All organizations will have a personalized website with a description of their organization and contact information for any questions or concerns.

Lion's Gate also offers an Engagement Transcript that lists all of your student's organization involvement, executive board positions, and service hours from the time your student starts their time at TCNJ until he or she graduates. The engagement transcript provides a printable record of the student's involvement history and keeps everything in one place so students can easily manage their memberships, interests, and service hours. The student will also have the ability to customize their profile to include a profile picture and contact information. In addition, your student can control their privacy setting and notifications.

Lion's Gate is a great resource for all students to utilize. They can start browsing Lion's Gate at any time using their TCNJ email and password and logging onto [lionsgate.tcnj.edu](http://lionsgate.tcnj.edu). As parent and family members, you can also browse student organizations without needing to sign in! Whether your student is looking to join a new student organization, manage their current organizations, track service hours, or browse current campus events, there is something for everyone on Lion's Gate!

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## **Welcome Back from Records and Registration:**

Special Welcome/Welcome Back Message to TCNJ Parents  
from Records and Registration



Here at TCNJ, we want to ensure that every student reaches his or her full potential. As such, we encourage parents and families to continue to engage and support their students. We firmly believe that college should be a transformative experience that turns young adults into high



achieving, independent learners. For this reason, families should encourage their student to take charge of their academics and, autonomously, address any issues through the supportive structure offered at TCNJ. To view the complete welcome message from Records and Registration go to: <https://recreg.tcnj.edu/files/2015/07/Parent-Letter-2015.pdf>.

Important Calendar Semester Dates (Academic Calendar): Students should continuously check the Records and Registration website for important enrollment information and the Academic & Registration calendar. The College's Academic Calendar is based on guiding principles that frame important timelines and deadlines for the campus community. These include the start and length of each semester, convocation, fall/spring break, final exam period and commencement with further landmark dates that define the add/drop period, midterm progress reports, registration windows, withdrawal deadlines, grading cycles, and the Winter and Summer sessions. You may view the 2015-2016 Academic & Registration calendar in its entirety by visiting [tcnj.pages.tcnj.edu/academics/academic-calendars/academic-calendar-2015-2016/](http://tcnj.pages.tcnj.edu/academics/academic-calendars/academic-calendar-2015-2016/).

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## ADEP/AVI Welcome Letter

To Parents/Family Members of New Students

New Students' Parents/Family Members:

Congratulations on your son or daughter's acceptance into The College of New Jersey's (TCNJ) class of 2019! We join you in celebrating this accomplishment and look forward to welcoming our newest students to TCNJ's community.



While this is an exciting time, we recognize that the transition into college can also be challenging for students and their families. At the collegiate level, first-year students will be faced with many choices and their decision-making skills will be tested in both academic and social settings. As you know, the choices they make can have significant physical, emotional, legal, and academic consequences.

To assist your son or daughter in making the most of his or her college experience, we provide educational programs on pertinent issues during Welcome Week and throughout the year. We also inform students about the College's behavioral expectations through the Student Conduct Code, A Guide to Residence Living, and discussions on pertinent New Jersey laws.

We recognize that our programming will be most effective when we can build on the

conversations you have already had with your son or daughter. As partners in this process, we ask that you consider sharing the information below during your pre-college discussions over the next few weeks.

Please click [here](#) to view the full letter with additional information and instructions for your student.

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## Deadlines:

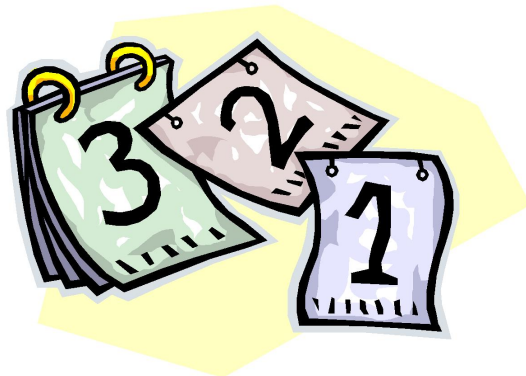
- Tuition Payment Due Date: 8/25/2015
- Tuition Payment Plan (Sign Up) Deadline: 9/2/2015
- Course Add/drop Deadline Date: 9/2/2015
- Health Insurance Waiver Deadline Date: 9/9/2015
- In addition, find more registration related deadlines [here](#).



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## Significant Dates/Events:

- Move In Day: Thursday, 8/20/2015
- Student Activities Fair: Wednesday, 9/2/2015
- Parent & Family Day: Saturday, 9/26/2015
- Homecoming: Saturday, 10/24/2015
- Midsemester Break (residence halls open):  
Monday, 10/12 – Tuesday, 10/13/2015
- Thanksgiving Break (residence halls closed):  
Wednesday, 11/25 – Friday, 11/27/2015
- Last Day of Fall classes (undergraduate): Friday, 12/4/2015
- Exam period: Tuesday, 12/8, 5pm – Friday, 12/11, 8pm; Monday, 12/14, 12am – Tuesday, 12/15, 5pm



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