

The day I have been dreading for about twenty years is unfortunately finally here. I'm an empty-nester now. My youngest, Alayna, has completed her associates degree and is ready to head off to a university to work on her bachelor's degree. Our oldest, Abrielle, just finished her bachelors and is living and working in Wichita. That leaves Jen, me and Max (the dog) as the only occupants in our now too big and too quiet house.

For months we have been collecting items for the move. When I went off to college, everything I took fit in the trunk of one car. I had the standard, "half a room" with the bathroom down the hall that I shared with 25 others. But Alayna wanted an apartment, which is certainly the trend in residence hall living, so that meant furniture, decor, kitchen supplies, and much more. It's a lot of stuff.

You also have to know Alayna. She is very prepared and discerning. She recently spent 20 minutes in the store choosing just the right clothes hangers. She should get hangers from her sister who seems to not use them. Abrielle keeps her clothes in three piles on the floor – clean, dirty, and questionable.

My youngest has checklists for everything and (I'm not kidding) uses a label maker to label which moving boxes go into which rooms. There are numerous spreadsheets involved and time schedules on who does what during the move-in day. It feels like we are preparing for D-Day.

If you are wondering, Alayna is going to major in Supply Chain Management, which focuses on getting items from one place to another on time, on budget, and in the right amounts. It seems she has chosen the perfect major.

We found her an apartment that is easy walking distance from the building at K-State that houses the majority of her classes. It is also near a tutoring center at KSU called, "Aggieville," so hopefully she can take advantage of that. That's a joke by the way. At Oklahoma State where I did my undergraduate studies we had a similar tutoring center known as Eskimo Joes.

She is excited to leave and should be. She has earned the right to attend KSU through hard work and has picked a major that plays to her strengths and enjoyment. So as she heads off to school I offer this advice to her and everyone else that's about to start their higher education.

First, call your Mom. Regularly.

Remember that college is a lot like a bank account, you are going to get out of it everything you put into it with interest. So, don't sit in your apartment alone watching TV. There are so many clubs and activities to join. Meet people and create a circle of friends. Studies show that students who report strong friendships in college are more likely to stay and complete degrees.

If you hate your major, change it. College students change their major three times on the average. It's not a failure to say, "Maybe this isn't for me, but I am interested in something else." It is a good thing! While that decision might slow down getting the degree a little by changing majors, if you hate your major chances are you won't complete the degree at all. Keep in mind that just a few years after graduation most people are not working in their major. I have a degree in Radio, TV and Film and now I'm a college president. Your mother has a degree in math and she's a counselor now. A major or even a completed degree doesn't mean you'll wind up doing that job for the rest of your working life. Learn to seek other opportunities not get locked in.

Don't study alone. Research on college retention shows that students who study together for exams do better than those who go it alone. The best way to learn something is to teach the material to each other. So form a study group in your classes, especially the classes that are hardest for you. You'll make a higher grade, plus you'll have the opportunity to make new friends!

Be prepared for setbacks. I have seen many students who are "4.0" kids who have never made a B in their lives get challenged in a class and fail to make an A. They sometimes fold like a pair of deuces after that, even to the extent of contemplating quitting college. I've also seen "B/C" students make it through just fine. While GPA is important, it isn't everything. In fact, one study showed that the average GPA of some of the most financially successful people is 2.9. While you should always try your best, you can't expect to be great at everything. Sometimes your best will earn you a C. That's ok. I've made a few Cs myself, and look how I turned out.

If you see that the class is going to be a challenge, get help as soon as you can. K-State, NCCC and practically every other college in the country offers tutoring to students. Talk to your instructor during office hours, get a tutor as soon as you see that this class will be a struggle. You would be surprised (or maybe you wouldn't be) by the number of students who come for tutoring in week 14 of a 16 week semester. At that point it's probably too late.

You should also go to class. Every time. The majority of success is showing up – so do that. When you get a job after college, you're going to have to go there nearly every day too, so it's a good habit to continue.

And finally, call your Mom. Did I say that already?

Soon she will be adjusting to her new life and Jen and I will be adjusting to ours as empty-nesters. Change is coming for all of us. We will adapt and although there are miles between us our love goes with her. (I was going to add "as does my credit card" to that last sentence but Jen thought it ruined the spirit of the ending, so I didn't.)

Good luck at K-State Alayna! To all of the area students who are headed to NCCC or other institutions in the fall – best of luck! And call your mom.

If you have any questions or comments about this article or anything else please contact [binbody@neosho.edu](mailto:binbody@neosho.edu).