Talking Points
a parent guide to discussing responsible decision-making
In May, just days after 6,991 confident University of South Carolina graduates transitioned into new adventures, visitors in Columbia began to see a campus bustling with renovations and new construction in anticipation of the incoming class. What our visitors don’t see, however, is the intense preparation of both faculty and staff as they craft a student environment that will offer your student academic success and personal transformation.

Research tells us that the first six weeks in the lives of our new students set the tone for the future. There is built-in tension as they learn to balance new freedoms with new responsibilities. As a parent, I certainly understand that it is also a time of transition for each family. I remember how I felt as my son and daughter left for college. Like you, I was proud of their many achievements but also apprehensive about their wellbeing. I want to assure you that our students’ wellbeing and academic success is top of mind. That is why I am asking for your help.

I ask that you take the time this summer to discuss with your student the importance of making healthy and informed choices. Your student will need to be prepared to tackle such tough issues as underage drinking and drug use. In addition, conversations concerning healthy relationships, safety in an urban setting and bystander accountability will set a critical foundation for future success. Some of these topics can be uncomfortable. That is why we are providing this topical guide to help you initiate conversations about responsible decision-making while also introducing the importance of the Carolinian Creed and what it means to our community.

Your support is essential. Together, we can work to create a healthy community of leaders and scholars at Carolina. Go Gamecocks!

Harris Pastides
President
The Carolinian Creed

The community of scholars at the University of South Carolina is dedicated to personal and academic excellence.

Choosing to join the community obligates each member to a code of civilized behavior.

As a Carolinian…

I will practice personal and academic integrity;
I will respect the dignity of all persons;
I will respect the rights and property of others;
I will discourage bigotry, while striving to learn from differences in people, ideas and opinions;
I will demonstrate concern for others, their feelings and their need for conditions which support their work and development.

Allegiance to these ideals requires each Carolinian to refrain from and discourage behaviors which threaten the freedom and respect every individual deserves.

Living by the Carolinian Creed

The Carolinian Creed emphasizes integrity, acceptance, respect, leadership and compassion. All members of the Carolina community strive to live the tenets of the Carolinian Creed to help create an environment that values openness and civility.

The Carolinian Creed was adopted by the university in 1990. The creed’s creation took a unique approach to solving issues of intolerance on a college campus. Instead of limiting a student’s rights through the creation of more rules, it set an example for all to follow.

As your student engages in the university community, our hope is that he or she will take advantage of the many opportunities to be inclusive and open to new ideas, people and opinions. Students have the opportunity to engage with the Carolinian Creed through:

• New Student Orientation
• University 101
• New Student Convocation
• First Night Carolina
• Carolina/Clemson Blood Drive
• Homecoming
• Creed and Diversity Week

In addition to these events, it is important to live these values daily. Everyday actions like inviting someone new to lunch, saying “thank you” to staff around campus or being open to a different culture are great ways students share our values. Building a foundation of inclusivity where students can engage in a vibrant and diverse environment is a critical component of success both in college and beyond.

Parents and family members are a valuable piece of the Carolina community, and we ask for your assistance in upholding the tenets of the Carolinian Creed. Together, we can make the University of South Carolina a healthy, supportive community where students can learn and thrive.
Starting the conversation

College is a time of new experiences, new friendships and memories that will last a lifetime. Students enter an environment that is often their first experience living outside the home, and they face many situations requiring good decision-making skills. Sometimes, students don’t think about the possible consequences before making decisions about high-risk behaviors, and parents can help educate them.

Before your student leaves home to begin his or her college experience at the University of South Carolina, we encourage you to have conversations about the risks and consequences of engaging in high-risk behavior. Some parents say that their students do not need a pre-college conversation like this because they are already educated about drugs and alcohol, but college brings new pressure and freedom that warrant a new series of conversations. Be prepared to establish an ongoing conversation rather than give a one-time speech. The first discussion is likely to be the toughest to initiate. Use this as a guide to help start your conversations.

Mid-Summer

• Ask your student what he or she expects college to be like. Where do those expectations come from (i.e. TV, music, movies, friends)?
• After attending orientation, discuss with your student how his or her expectations match up with the reality that was presented at orientation. Were there any differences?
• Use these questions to help ease into a conversation about responsible decision-making:
  1. How will you take charge of your health while at college? (Remind your student that health includes sleep, nutrition, physical activity, sexual behaviors, etc.)
  2. How do you plan to meet people in college? Will you join student organizations? Will you take advantage of meeting people in your classes and/or on your hall?
  3. How do you plan to balance your schoolwork with other activities? How will you set boundaries?

Conversation tips

• Avoid contradictions between your words and your actions.
• Assess and review your own feelings about alcohol and other drug use.
• Talk to parents of other college students who have learned by experience.
• Find “teachable moments” in television programs, books or newspapers that deal with substance use in college settings.
• Speak calmly and openly. You do not need to exaggerate. The facts speak for themselves.
• Listen actively and try to understand your student’s point of view.
• Allow your student to express his or her fears and concerns without interrupting or lecturing.
Continuing the conversation

End of Summer

- Explain your expectations, as well as laws and campus policies that pertain to high-risk behaviors like underage drinking, drug use, sexual assault and more. For more information about the University of South Carolina’s policies, please visit www.sa.sc.edu/carolinacommunity.

- Ask your student what new information he or she has learned from the AlcoholEdu® and Haven™ online courses. How will that information be helpful in college?

- Ask your student what concerns he or she has about college. Listen openly and thoughtfully to your student’s concerns and questions. He or she may feel the need to “fit in” and needs your understanding and support.

- Help your student brainstorm ways to avoid or escape from potentially irresponsible situations. Give him or her permission to use parental disapproval as an excuse to avoid a peer-influenced situation that could lead to trouble.

- Talk about ways your student might handle different situations, which solution works best and why. Use anecdotes or work through situations like the ones below that your student may encounter in college.

What would you do?

- A classmate offers to make you a fake ID for a low price, and he tells you to come by his room. Several other people you know have fake IDs. What do you do? What consequences come along with taking him up on the offer?

- You join a student organization and are really excited about making new friends. A week or so in, older members start asking you to run errands and do other odd things like buy them meals or drive them to class. What do you do? What consequences come with doing nothing?

- You have a huge test tomorrow. Your roommate says a group is going out to a party and you should come. What do you do? What could go wrong?
The University of South Carolina actively educates students about the consequences of engaging in high-risk behaviors. The Office of Substance Abuse Prevention and Education (SAPE) works to educate students so they can make informed and responsible decisions about substance-related behavior and other student wellness issues. Through collaboration with other service areas and departments on campus, SAPE provides programs, services and resources that help students recognize that their decisions affect not only themselves but also the greater university and Columbia communities.

Encourage your student to get involved with these programs and services offered by the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention and Education.

**Gameday Programs**
SAPE partners with several student organizations to provide gameday programming that encourages low-risk behaviors at tailgates. Students can find out more through campus-wide emails and communications.

**Good Choice Challenge**
All students are encouraged to participate in fun, alcohol-free activities on and around our campus. SAPE provides a list of suggested activities for students to enjoy, and students can win prizes by sharing photos or videos of themselves on social media. Activities include eating at local restaurants, exercising and exploring Columbia. Further information about the Good Choice Challenge can be found on the opposite page.

For more information about the Office of Substance Abuse Prevention and Education, visit www.sa.sc.edu/sape. Also, follow SAPE on Twitter at @UofSCGoodChoice and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SAPEatUSC.

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**South Carolina laws on underage drinking**

The State of South Carolina has serious penalties for violating the minimum drinking age. A person under age 21 who is caught possessing, consuming, purchasing or attempting to purchase alcohol can be fined up to $465 or serve 30 days in jail for the first offense and could have his or her driver’s license suspended. Using a fake ID, whether it belongs to another person or is an altered ID, is illegal, and violating this law could incur fines up to $465 or 30 days in jail.

Adults who transfer or give alcoholic beverages to people under age 21 can be punished with fines or jail time. If an intoxicated underage drinker injures himself or others as a result of consuming the alcohol provided by an adult, the adult may face legal action in South Carolina.

In addition to fines, court costs and legal fees, Carolina students who violate the state’s alcohol or drug policies may lose their state-funded scholarships, such as the LIFE Scholarship.

*Source: S.C. Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services*
Challenging students to make good choices at UofSC

Students at UofSC engage in many fun, healthy and low-risk activities both on and off campus. The SAPE website highlights many free and low-cost “good choices” for students to try out during their time at Carolina. Students can follow @UofSCGoodChoice on Twitter for upcoming events and things to do.

Students should pick up a calendar of events from Carolina Productions each semester so they don’t miss out on any of the free events hosted on campus! Events include regular weekend movies, open mic nights, celebrity visits, poetry nights and much more.

Students also can find a list of weekend activities through sc.edu/students.

Tailgates and watch parties are held regularly in the Russell House on gamedays, where students can enjoy food and earn giveaways while supporting their fellow Gamecocks in a safe environment.

Each week at USC holds exciting opportunities to try something new and meet great people along the way. If your student is having a hard time finding his or her fit at USC, encourage him or her to stop by the Leadership and Service Center to meet with a leadership coach about ways to get involved, whether it is through service, a student organization, a leadership development program or one of the hundreds of ways to get involved. There is an opportunity for every student to enjoy!

Good choice options

Students have many options for activities that are good, responsible choices, including:

- Bowl with a group of friends
- Spend a day at the Riverbanks Zoo
- Catch up on Netflix
- Picnic on the Horseshoe
- Watch a movie in the Russell House Theater
- Run or walk at the Riverwalk
- Volunteer at an animal shelter

To see a full list of good choice ideas, visit www.sa.sc.edu/sape.
Making healthy choices

As students leave high school and enter college at the University of South Carolina, they are most likely excited about this important time in their lives (and may have some feelings of anxiety about what lies ahead). Students also face some challenges and transitions associated with the first year of college. One of the challenges that all students will encounter at some point during their time in college is the decision to participate in or associate with high-risk behaviors.

What are high-risk behaviors?

Some examples of high-risk behaviors are:
- drinking alcohol under the age of 21
- chugging alcohol, participating in drinking games or drinking shots
- drinking alcohol with the purpose of getting drunk
- driving after drinking alcohol or riding in a car with someone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- not knowing what you are drinking or leaving your drink unattended
- mixing alcohol with medications, energy drinks or other illegal drugs
- misusing prescription drugs

Talking with your student about making healthy decisions and staying away from high-risk behaviors is an important conversation to have before he or she leaves home. Parents play a key role in influencing the behavior of their students.

How can parents encourage low-risk behaviors and healthy choices?

Remind your student:
- that it is illegal to consume alcohol if you are under age 21.
- to think of the consequences, both academic and legal, that can result from choosing to drink alcohol.

Encourage your student to:
- choose fun, alternative activities that do not involve alcohol.
- make a realistic, safe plan before going out for the night.
- know before going out how he or she will get home safely.
- eat a meal before drinking.
- drink no more than one drink per hour and no more than three drinks per day.
- always know how much alcohol is in his or her drink.

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Source: University of South Carolina Office of Substance Abuse Prevention and Education (AlcoholEdu® data 2014-2015)
The University of South Carolina is pleased to offer AlcoholEdu® and Haven™ as part of our commitment to fostering a safe and healthy community. AlcoholEdu® is an online alcohol education assessment that measures students’ perceptions about alcohol use and abuse prior to arriving on campus and after several weeks on campus. Haven™ is an online sexual assault prevention and training module that presents realistic and interactive skill-building scenarios. All new undergraduate (freshman, transfer or change-of-campus) students under the age of 23 are required to complete AlcoholEdu® and Haven™.

How do students take AlcoholEdu® and Haven™?

Students should log in to Self Service Carolina and click on the AlcoholEdu® and Haven™ box under the student tab. Satisfaction of the AlcoholEdu® requirement is also contingent upon scoring 80% or higher on Part 1 as well as completing Part 2 of the course. There is no concept of pass/fail in Haven™. Completion of Haven™ is contingent on completing both Part 1 and Part 2 of the course. Failure to successfully complete both Parts 1 and 2 for each course before the deadlines will result in a hold being placed on the student’s registration for their second-semester classes.

For parents

Parents are encouraged to join our comprehensive prevention efforts and assist us in fostering a safe and healthy community. Taking the AlcoholEdu® and Haven™ courses with your student is a great way to encourage more discussion about realistic and interactive skill-building techniques with your student before school begins. Visit www.sa.sc.edu/sape/parents to get started.

AlcoholEdu® & Haven™ deadlines

**Students entering in Fall 2015**

**Students entering in Spring 2016**
- Part 2: April 17, 2016
Marijuana is the most widely-used illicit drug among college students. The subject of marijuana can be difficult to talk about due to mixed messages conveyed by the passage of medical marijuana and calls for legalization around the country. However, parents can strongly influence students’ attitudes and behaviors related to use through regular open, honest and informed conversations. When engaging in these discussions, keep the following points and research findings in mind to assist in encouraging students to make sound and safe decisions regarding marijuana use.

- Marijuana is illegal in South Carolina and therefore against USC’s Code of Conduct. Students possessing marijuana while attending USC will face legal consequences as well as university fines, sanctions and possible suspension.
- Marijuana has negative effects on attention, motivation, memory and learning that can persist even after the drug’s immediate effects wear off — especially in regular users.
- Smoking marijuana has been linked to respiratory problems. Research shows that smoking just one marijuana joint has the same impact on an individual’s large lung airways as smoking 16 tobacco cigarettes.
- Marijuana is unsafe if you are behind the wheel. Marijuana compromises judgment and affects many other skills required for safe driving: alertness, concentration, coordination and reaction time. Marijuana is the most commonly identified illegal drug in fatal accidents.
- Marijuana can be addictive. Repeated marijuana use can lead to addiction — which means that people often cannot stop when they want to, even though it undermines many aspects of their lives.

While other illicit drug use on campus remains lower than marijuana usage, asking questions and keeping channels of communication open can help parents to identify signs and symptoms of drug abuse and direct students to the appropriate resources both on and off campus.

**Sources:** CORE Institute, National Institute on Drug Abuse
Prescription drug use & abuse

More and more students are entering college familiar with and using prescription drugs. It is important to monitor the number of prescriptions your son or daughter has filled and talk to him or her about the dangers of taking or sharing prescription drugs without proper consent and monitoring from a doctor.

What is prescription drug abuse?

Prescription drug abuse is taking a medication that was prescribed for you or another person in a manner, dosage or for reasons other than what was prescribed.

What are some commonly abused prescription drugs?

- Opioids (OxyContin®, Vicodin®), which are usually prescribed to treat pain
- Central nervous system depressants (Xanax®, Valium®), which are used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders
- Stimulants (Ritalin®, Adderall®, Vyvanse®), which are most often prescribed to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

What could happen as a result of abusing prescription drugs?

When taking medication, people may experience side effects, and some of those side effects can be very serious. Before doctors prescribe medication to a patient, they consider the specific reason for the medication, the prescribed dosage and possible side effects. Many people who abuse drugs do not take into consideration what could happen to them as a result of using the medication in a way that was not prescribed by a doctor, and the possibilities of becoming addicted or experiencing symptoms of withdrawal are not monitored. They focus on the feeling of getting high, relieving pain or helping them stay alert, and they disregard the damage it could do to their body.

What are the dangers of mixing prescription drugs with alcohol?

When mixing alcohol with prescription drugs, the results can be unpredictable, dangerous and sometimes fatal. Each person’s body reacts differently to the combination of alcohol and prescription drugs, and the reaction can vary depending on the type and quantity of medication and alcohol ingested, the time frame involved and the person’s tolerance to both the drug and to alcohol. Talk with your student about the dangers of mixing medication with alcohol, and encourage him or her to speak with a health care professional before taking any combination of medications or alcohol.

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse
Bystander Accountability

Encourage your student to look out for others by being an active bystander — someone who sees a negative situation or event and intervenes in some way to prevent harm. These negative situations include sexual and physical violence on campus; discriminatory, destructive and illegal behavior; and situations involving relationship violence and stalking.

Student Health Services Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention & Prevention (SAVIP) offers Stand Up Carolina, a bystander accountability program that teaches signs to look for, ways to step in and resources to help. For more information, visit www.sa.sc.edu/shs/savip/stand-up.

Depression and Anxiety

As students transition to college, they may become homesick or feel they’re not connecting. While some adjustment to college is normal, if a student experiences a significant change in functioning or behavior and/or is not acting like himself or herself, it is important to use the campus resources and get help. Symptoms of depression include sad or empty feelings, irritability, changes in appetite and sleep patterns, fatigue and suicidal thoughts. Symptoms of anxiety include excessive worry, muscle tension, trouble sleeping, difficulty concentrating and restlessness. Students are eligible for Student Health Services Counseling & Psychiatry services including 10 individual counseling sessions per academic year, access to group therapy and medication management. If you think your student is struggling with depression, anxiety or stress, encourage him or her to make an appointment by calling 803-777-5223. If you are concerned about your student and want to talk with a counselor, please call. For more information, visit www.sa.sc.edu/shs/cp.

Hazing

Hazing is against the law. The University of South Carolina strongly believes in a vibrant learning environment where all students learn, grow and develop to their fullest potential in a safe atmosphere. As such, Carolina strongly prohibits any actions, including hazing, that detract from this environment. No organization or its current, prospective or new members may participate in the activity of hazing. Hazing is defined as any activity undertaken by a
group or organization in which members or prospective or uninitiated members are subjected to activities that harass, intimidate, physically exhaust, impart pain, cause undue mental fatigue or mental distress, emotional distress or engage in any conduct that presents a threat to health and safety. Hazing includes personal servitude, which can be defined as running errands, cleaning or being required to do unnecessary tasks for other organization members. It is not a defense to the charge of hazing if individuals willingly participate in hazing activities, gave consent to the conduct or assumed the risk of the activity. Students who witness alleged hazing are urged to report it immediately by calling the Hazing Hotline at 803-777-5800.

Healthy Relationships

Talking about healthy relationships and personal safety is an important conversation to have with your student. Student Health Services Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention & Prevention (SAVIP) provides 24/7 advocacy, education and outreach about self-esteem, bystander accountability, sexual assault, interpersonal violence, harassment and hate crimes. Students in need of an advocate should contact USCPD at 911 (in the event of an emergency) or 803-777-4215 (USCPD dispatch). Police will connect your student with the advocate any time, day or night, on any day of the week. SAVIP staff can be reached at 803-777-8248. For more information, visit www.sa.sc.edu/shs/savip.

Suicide Prevention

Parents and families are essential in preventing suicide. Counseling & Psychiatry encourages parents to recognize the warning signs and refer any student who is showing signs or talking about suicide to counseling. If you are concerned that your son or daughter may be suicidal, call Counseling & Psychiatry and ask to speak with a counselor as soon as possible. If it is an emergency, call 911. For more information, call Healthy Carolina at 803-777-1650 or visit www.sa.sc.edu/shs/cp/prevention. Parents also can complete a non-emergency report with the Behavioral Intervention Team at www.sc.edu/bit.
The Carolina Community Coalition is a campus- and community-wide collaboration that performs ongoing assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of prevention strategies to contribute to the overall reduction of high-risk substance use and its consequences. The partnership is composed of university faculty, staff and students, along with representatives from local law enforcement agencies, the South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services, Columbia merchants and business owners and concerned citizens.

All parents are invited to participate as members of the Coalition. For more information about this initiative, visit www.sa.sc.edu/coalition.

Physical activity and a healthy diet are key elements in managing stress and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Talk with your student about these topics and encourage him or her to explore the opportunities to stay healthy.

Campus Recreation

Campus Recreation offers students many options for exercise at the Strom Thurmond Wellness and Fitness Center and the Solomon Blatt Physical Education Center. These facilities feature open recreation areas for basketball, volleyball, badminton, racquetball, handball and squash, as well as group exercise classes. “The Strom” is equipped with an indoor climbing wall, two pools and state-of-the-art exercise equipment. Campus Recreation also offers outdoor recreation activities, a bike shop, personal training and intramural and club sports teams. For more information, please visit campusrec.sc.edu.

Student Health Services

Supporting a vision of a healthy Carolina community, Student Health Services provides a patient-centered holistic approach to health care, including addressing behaviors, risks and prevention to support students’ academic success through health care, wellness programs, policies and encouraging environmental changes. Incorporating Student Health Services’ award-winning best practices, students can access general medical care, women’s care, sports medicine, physical therapy, counseling and psychiatric services, radiology and laboratory services, a pharmacy, wellness services and sexual assault and violence intervention and prevention programs. Using the Patient Centered Medical Home Model, providers work together and with other health staff to provide comprehensive care for students. Visit www.sa.sc.edu/shs for more information.

USC is a tobacco-free campus. The university offers many resources to help the Carolina community manage tobacco use and to help individuals quit when they are ready. For more information, visit www.sc.edu/tobaccofreeusc.
Talking Points
a parent guide to discussing responsible decision-making 2015-2016

Talking Points is mailed each summer to the parents of incoming first-year and transfer students to provide information and encourage discussion between parents and their students about responsible decision-making in college.

Office of Parents Programs
Office of Substance Abuse Prevention & Education
Department of Student Life
Division of Student Affairs & Academic Support
University of South Carolina
1400 Greene Street
Russell House University Union, Suite 115
Columbia, SC 29208

Resources

Office of Parents Programs
1-800-868-6752 • www.sa.sc.edu/parents
scparents@sc.edu

@UofSCParents

University of South Carolina Parents Programs

Office of Substance Abuse Prevention and Education
803-777-3933 • www.sa.sc.edu/sape

@UofSCGoodChoice

SAPE at USC

Behavioral Intervention Team
www.sc.edu/bit

Law Enforcement and Safety
803-777-4215 • www.les.sc.edu
Emergency: 911 or download the Rave Guardian app

@USCPD

@CarolinaAlert

Law Enforcement and Safety

University of South Carolina Division of Law Enforcement and Safety

Additional university policies
Drug and alcohol policy:
www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf626.pdf

Hazing policy:
www.sc.edu/policies/ppm/staf305.pdf

Student Health Services
803-777-3175 • www.sa.sc.edu/shs
Counseling & Psychiatry appointments:
803-777-5223

@UofSCSHS

University of South Carolina Student Health Services
Office of Parents Programs
Office of Substance Abuse Prevention and Education
Department of Student Life
Division of Student Affairs and Academic Support

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