



NEWS RELEASE

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Iowa College Aid Encourages College Freshmen to Take Advantage of Campus Resources *Local schools share advice on how freshmen can have a successful first year*

Des Moines, IA., October 17, 2014 – With the fall semester nearing the halfway point, the Iowa College Student Aid Commission (Iowa College Aid), along with Iowa colleges and universities, is offering college freshmen advice and practical tips to ensure they stay on track for a successful first year. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, between one-sixth and one-fourth of all first-year students enrolled full-time at four-year colleges or universities in Iowa fail to re-enroll the following year. Common issues faced by college freshman include: time management, budgeting, getting involved on campus and academic success.

Students should make an effort to get to know school staff and not be afraid to reach out and make first contact. Professors, academic advisors and career counselors are all there to help students. By making an appointment or stopping by during office hours, not only can freshmen get essential questions answered, but they can begin building relationships that will benefit them beyond just their time at college.

“Do not be afraid to stop by a professor’s office and visit,” advised Sara Heizer, Coe College Admission Counselor. “This is how you get to know them and it often opens the door for other opportunities. When it comes time to apply to graduate school or for your first job you’ll be so thankful you got to know your professors because they can speak about you both personally and academically.”

College is also a large financial investment that shouldn’t be taken lightly by students. Understanding the financial aid process and putting a budget into place are essential for college freshmen. The Clarke University Financial Aid Office offers students these additional tips:

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- Don't take on credit card debt – It gets ugly quickly.
- Understand that figuring out financial aid is not just your parents' responsibility. You need to know what is going on.
- Don't take out a bunch of loans to "live on"- pay your school bill with your financial aid, but get a job to pay for your lifestyle choices.
- Loans and grants have limits, make sure you know what yours are before deciding to pursue additional years of education.

Experts also advise students to prepare for the transition from high school to college-level coursework. Many college students can expect two hours of work outside of class for every hour of class. Students should plan their schedules accordingly and prepare to increase their efforts in academics.

“The rigor of the coursework and the amount of time required for success is greatly increased as you transition into college, and it is easy to fall behind quickly if you simply maintain the same level of time and effort that got you through high school,” explained Ryan Schisler Senior Admission Counselor and Transfer Coordinator from Coe College. “If you can get ahead early on in those first few weeks, you are more likely to develop solid study habits that will last throughout your four years and lead to academic success.”

“We encourage all Iowa students to utilize as many resources as possible to enrich their college careers and to increase their likelihood of graduating on-time,” explained Karen Misjak, executive director of Iowa College Aid. “Iowa colleges and universities offer a great variety of beneficial services to their students, and our agency is here to assist students as well with free college and career planning tools. All college students should be aware of what their schools offer, from tutoring to résumé help, and take advantage of these services.”

Iowa College Aid provides free resources to help Iowa students and families plan, prepare and pay for college. For more information about free college and career planning resources, please visit www.IowaCollegeAid.gov or contact Iowa College Aid at 877-272-4456.

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About the Iowa College Student Aid Commission

Iowa College Aid provides college access, financial literacy, and outreach services to Iowa's students and families as they prepare, plan and pay for college. Iowa College Aid also administers state scholarship, grant, work study, and loan forgiveness programs totaling over \$64.0 million annually, conducts research and distributes higher education data, and offers Iowans assistance in obtaining student financial aid and college-related information. Iowa College Aid is the administrator of the Federal GEAR UP Grant, a multi-year state-wide grant which is being used to provide early awareness programming and outreach initiatives to thousands of Iowa's students and families. More information is available at www.IowaCollegeAid.gov.