In just a few short weeks, your son or daughter will be attending New Student Week at Carleton College. The week is designed to introduce incoming students to life at Carleton, assist with transitional issues, and complete their class registration.

Beginning college can be both an exciting and stressful transition for students and their families. Research shows that college students typically experience different phases of anxiety during their college years. Below are some transitional issues that you and/or your son or daughter may experience as you prepare for this time. In hopes that it may make this period a little less stressful, we encourage you to take time to discuss or just familiarize yourself with what are often common adjustments in this initial cycle of college life:

- During the first few weeks of school, feeling homesick or lonely for family and friends is quite common. Students may question whether they have made the right choice of school, and anxiety about roommates, classes and professors may be prevalent. Concerns about fitting in, grades, and the desire to test new limits and boundaries may be part of their thought processes.

- Calling home and checking in may not be a top priority and parents may find this lack of communication difficult. Life is challenging for both of you. It may help to keep in mind the goal of supporting and encouraging your son’s or daughter’s development as an autonomous, independent and mature adult.

- One thing that often helps lessen the anxiety and make it a little easier for both of you is “checking-in” with your son or daughter without “checking up.” A care package from home, a phone call, email, or a note, can help keep you close and let them know that you care.

- As illustrated in the diagram, any transition is bound to be marked by ups and downs. Your son or daughter will experience the excitement of the honeymoon period (A) which will likely be followed by a rough spot as the novelty wears off (B). Over time, students settle into a comfortable period of adjustment (C), but this is again followed by another low point (D) before students truly feel integrated and ‘at home’ (E) in their new environment. This process often repeats over the course of the year.

- Keep in mind that life at home will be changing, also. Remember to keep your student informed of the changes; s/he will still want to be included in big decisions. This will help to alleviate some of the challenges of readjustment during extended trips home. As your son or daughter moves back and forth between home and the ‘home away from home’, the cycle of adjustment will continue in each environment, to varying degrees.