THE SEASON OF HOPE

Reflections from Parents

IF YOUTH IS THE SEASON OF HOPE, IT IS OFTEN SO ONLY IN THE SENSE THAT OUR ELDERS ARE HOPEFUL ABOUT US.

—GEORGE ELIOT

EMORY

OXFORD
COLLEGE
FOREWORD

The first day of college orientation is always exciting and memorable. Even though it is a celebratory rite of passage, it also can be a time of powerful emotions and uncertainty. Parents of young adults leaving home for college often are so occupied with the details of planning, packing, and preparing that they fail to consider how this new arrangement will alter their parenting role. During their children's elementary, middle, and high school years, most parents have been intimately involved in their children's lives, serving as advocates, sounding boards, conflict resolvers, and limit setters. Following considerable trial and error, parents might feel that after getting the hang of it all, the rules of the game seem to be changing.

For parents of Oxford College students, the result of all this dedication, effort, and focus is a high school graduate who has achieved an impressive academic record as well as a remarkable list of high school activities and community service. And then the reality of college life begins to sink in! Your son or daughter will be faced with some wonderful, but challenging, new opportunities such as sharing a small room with an unfamiliar person, making new friends and establishing social networks, regulating their own alarm clock, making important choices about classes and clubs, and navigating the daily decisions that come with life at Oxford—all without you on site for daily guidance and direction.

So, how do parents of college students continue to demonstrate their unwavering love, provide necessary mentoring, and continue to be appropriately involved in their lives, yet grant their sons and daughters the freedom to make their own decisions and deal with the consequences of their choices? How should a college parent provide guidance and support in proper balance with the right measure of trust and freedom?

The encouraging news is that you are not alone. Oxford’s Campus Life staff have many years of experience advising and mentoring college students. We genuinely care about our students and do our very best to help them learn, grow, and thrive.

Another source of support for you are parents of recent Oxford students—the true experts in navigating these new waters. The Season of Hope is a compilation of excerpts from diaries, journals, and letters generously contributed by parents of first-year Oxford students who felt that their insights and experiences could be helpful to you. We hope that you will find this booklet useful as you embark upon this exciting journey with your student at Oxford College.

Joe Moon, EdD
Dean of Campus Life
The senior year of high school—especially the summer before college—is often a period when college-bound students press for more independence.

TO THE PARENTS OF NEW OXFORD STUDENTS

My husband and I sat there in the church pew where you may be sitting now. I remembered thinking to myself, if I read one more story about sad good-byes, I'll burst into tears. Now I write this from the perspective of a mother of an Oxford freshman during the Christmas holidays. We all agree (my daughter included) that this first semester has flown by. I can bring up the picture in my mind of saying good-bye to her like it was yesterday.

The fact that we fell in love with the campus at first sight made it somewhat more bearable. My husband and I attended a commuter college. We never experienced dorm life and told our daughter we were envious of all that lay ahead for her. We continue to be impressed by the caring administrators and faculty we have come in contact with. While our daughter was convinced that a large school was where she needed to be, she now feels that the smaller, intimate atmosphere of Oxford has been ideal for the transition from home and high school to "away" and college.

That summer after Casey’s high school senior year was a tricky one for us. It was clear that the "child" was ready to go. She'd miss curfew by about twenty to thirty minutes, and I know she didn't want to hear my voice calling out from the darkness of our bedroom, "Casey, you're late." So during that summer, there were times when I would think, "I can't wait for her to go." Then as August rapidly approached, I thought, "How will I live without this girl here?" She had plans all along to drive home two weeks after school started, so that helped the good-bye somewhat. But her dad suffered two distinct "sad attacks" on our drive back to Florida. I just patted him on the shoulder as we made our way south.

So to catch you up to date, on her visits home, she is 95 percent delightful—glad to be home, actually wants to spend time with us, and even gets along much better with her little brother! Who knew?

Academically, she had a very successful first semester. She worked very hard for that GPA and is very proud of herself. After this long holiday break, she will be ready to go back to Oxford to her friends (too many to count; she calls them "fif's”—friends for life) and to the challenge of her second-semester classes, and we will be ready for her to go. She is happy, and we are happy for her.
END OF FRESHMAN YEAR / BEGINNING OF SUMMER

Well, we all survived freshman year and, more than that, we’ve all thrived. Our daughter was ready to come home—sad to be saying good-bye to her buddies but clearly anxious to sleep in her own bed at home, eat Mom’s cooking, and reconnect with her friends on the homefront. Amazing the amount of “stuff” that came back with her—much more than she left with!

My husband and I have talked about how we might feel at that moment of leave-taking this next year. We will certainly miss her terribly, but we don’t see ourselves experiencing the intense “sad attacks” of the previous year. If we were asked once, we were asked a hundred times, “How does she like it up at school?” No hesitation or groping for that answer. “She loves it.” And we love it for her.

Best of Luck!

Jan Emmer
Orlando, Florida

BEWARE OF ALL ENTERPRISES
THAT REQUIRE NEW CLOTHES.
—HENRY DAVID THOREAU
TO MEGHAN

AUGUST: I was not prepared for my worse feeling of loss, which hit me two days before you left for college. I went through a real mourning period, feeling weepy and crying at the slightest thing. I relived our nineteen years together and irrationally regretted my encouragement of your independence. Intellectually I’m proud you’re able to make your way as an independent young woman; the role of a parent is to prepare their child to make their own way.

I’m looking forward to my new freedom to again pursue my own personal interests and pick up the independence given up willingly nineteen years ago to make you the center of my life. And I know our relationship will continue because it has been based more on mutual self-respect and less on a strictly parent-child relationship. Nevertheless, I had to go through this sense of loss first, and it has been very painful.

Must be human nature never to enjoy what you have. When I think of the times when I yearned for one hour of uninterrupted reading time—now to have an hour of your childhood back would be such a gift. Although many people talked about how hard it would be when you went away to school, I never really felt it would.

I’ve shared experiences with other parents experiencing the same separation, and it’s interesting that they experienced a similar feeling as I of missing you when you were younger. I saw so little of you this past year—mainly I experience the anxiety of waiting to hear your key in the door and relief that you’d made it home safely. But now what I miss are the earlier, dependent years when I was so important to you.

SEPTEMBER: You’ve been gone four weeks, but I’m not used to your not being here. Miss talking to you—make notes of the things I want to tell you, but when we talk you have so much to say I don’t get to tell you everything.

I thought the initial euphoria you were feeling would pass, but it makes me feel so helpless to hear you say, as you did yesterday, that you were feeling a bit down; wish you weren’t so far so you could come home for a weekend.

After talking with you, you sound so mature—your acknowledging the difficulty of studying in the fishbowl atmosphere of campus life and the need to develop self-discipline.

Getting used to these mixed feelings—glad you’re adjusting so well and feeling at home at school, and hurt that you aren’t just a little unhappy and homesick.
October: Parent's day at Oxford was great. Enjoyed meeting some of your friends, classmates and teachers.

November (diary): Mixed feelings when Meghan asked if she could bring her boyfriend home for Thanksgiving. Would like to get to know him, but would like to have some time alone with her. She's abandoned engineering and now has decided it's a BA in sociology and then a law degree.

December (diary): It's strange how one adjusts without really focusing on it. Almost nineteen years I've lived with Meghan, and now I'm here living alone. . . . it has been a passing of an era. Our relationship is still there because it is based on a genuine love and caring, but the mundane realities of life have changed so drastically never to be the same.

January (diary): I feel much more appreciated now that Meghan's at school. She calls to discuss her schoolwork and how to deal with her social life. She wanted to change roommates and didn't know how to tell her roommate. In some ways I feel closer since our conversations are more significant.

March: It seems such a short time ago that you needed me for everything and now you are so close to being a totally autonomous being. I'm proud I was able, despite all the ups and downs, to give you the self-confidence to be your own person.

Carol Colloton
Chevy Chase, Maryland
It is amazing how quickly most students adjust to college life while parents seem to be always a step behind in the process! The first time the new student refers to their residence hall as "home" is both a wonderful and a poignant moment.

AMIE’S FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE

It has been a week and a half since we brought Amie to Oxford for orientation week. . . . as the day got closer and closer, more remarks not only from my wife but my youngest daughter started to bring reality home. Comments like, "I am sure going to miss her" and "Why does she have to go?" and "She’ll be so far away from us" on a daily basis made me think about saying bye and it may be difficult, more difficult than I had previously anticipated. And it was.

Moving in was all right. And meeting her roommate was wonderful. Aruna’s parents are just super people. We were all excited all day . . . but I knew that five o’clock was coming. Then it was here and I hugged her and cried and hugged again. Then as she turned and walked slowly then into a run towards the steps of her dorm, I saw eighteen years of something that has been always with her. That run. Amie runs like she’s catching butterflies. She did it when she was young and while playing field hockey in high school. Instead of running aggressively, she runs like she’s saying, “Look at me, I’m free.” I don’t ever remember feeling so soft, so vulnerable. I wanted to go in after her and stay some more. I wanted to talk some more but I couldn’t do that.

When the administrators spoke to us, they said one thing that will stay with me. They said that “you have done a good job for eighteen years taking care of your son or daughter; now it’s our turn. Hand them over, and we’ll take good care of them.” I pray that you do. I believe you will.

We’re in the 5th week, and she’s called and is still very “up” and excited about the school and her activities. When she calls, she asks about us and the dog and her room, and we smile to each other.

OCTOBER: We just brought Amie to the airport to go back to Oxford after spending an unexpected four-day weekend with us. She had her first semester break, and all of the students were heading somewhere. I felt bad for her and didn’t want her to be alone and also knew that we could not make it for parents’ weekend.

It was really a good feeling for my wife and I because she really just wanted to be with her family and no one else. She didn’t want to call up her old high school friends, or go to any place special. She just was content being with us and her sister and just loving the dog.

But even after only seven weeks, I could sense a feeling of independence and the desire for a little more responsibility. To me it was a wonderful thing to observe. She was very excited and happy about her new student friends, and it made me think of how
wonderful an education can be if it's handled correctly. She talked and talked about her subjects and professors and that really made me feel good.

All I know was that the second time was easier than the first. We said good-bye and hugged and kissed but with smiles not tears. I guess we'll all change over the next four years. Changes for the better. Although I thought my daughter was wonderful before.

She flew back for Thanksgiving. She looked all stressed out and tired from studying and staying up. I think she has already grasped the idea that the education is for her and it will be what she makes of it. We are there for support and love, and I think that's just where it's supposed to be.

I can feel the transition taking place. Not that she's physically changed, but her thoughts are and will be more and more on college, college life, her new friends. It's good, but it's a sad feeling for me and I'm sure for my wife.

She lay under the tree today and seemed very much at peace with herself. I overheard her talking on the phone, and it sure sounds like she is very proud of her school and is already talking of going back for the next semester.

Darwin Marcoux
Arnold, Maryland
Although emails and text messages are convenient, an old-fashioned letter from parent to child like the one below can become a touchstone and a keepsake for the student. This parent makes a point of communicating her love, her pride, and her trust.

I'M HOME, AND YOU'RE NOT

Dear Kate,

I'm home, and you're not. The car seemed very empty coming back from Covington (especially without your laundry detergent, which must have weighed forty pounds minimum). But I know you're having a great time and getting to know a lot of neat people.

At the Parents' Orientation I heard some advice I thought was sound: (1) Write a lot more often than you call and; (2) Let your student be as autonomous as possible. You know I'm here for you any time, any way you need me; I also feel completely confident in your ability to make the very most of this great new period of growth and integration of so many kinds of experiences—intellectual, social, emotional, and sexual. I'm excited for you and looking forward to the next phase of our relationship and friendship.

Years ago in Connecticut I watched you walk to the bus stop one autumn morning in your first Brownie uniform; you were attending your first Brownie meeting, my dear young college woman! And I remember feeling then very much as I do now—that "time" had become "Time" and the quotidian had given way to the monumental, complete with freeze-frames and strains from the Nibelungenlieder—in short, LIFE writ large! Sometime in the next week (time with a small t), I'll find the letter I wrote you after I watched you walk away that morning, and I'll send it to you. I just hope it's as rich in feeling and evocation as I remember. I can this moment see you as you were then, about three feet tall, with two pony tails and a bookbag, marching bravely down Gordon Street to a wide new world of campfires, songs with rounds, and merit badges. You were my beautiful baby girl—and you still are!

I love you so much!

Your mother and friend,

Billie Brown
Atlanta, Georgia
Returning home from college move-in day can be an emotional experience—not only for parents but also for siblings and even pets! Sometimes it requires some restraint to be honest and say “we miss you” but also to give the clear message that the world will keep turning and the routine (normal) life of your family will continue.

LEAVING HOME—
AND BEING LEFT BEHIND

The Time Is Near!
The years of planning for this are coming to an end. The ACTs, SATs, and AP classes, college mail, college visits far and wide, scholarship inquiries. Finally, May 1 and The Decision. Is it the right decision? Only time will tell. Then, the last summer—the attempt to make it a special one, overshadowed by a certain anxiety on everyone’s part about what the fall will bring. Jitters about the roommate, which dorm to request, what to take, what to leave, the academic challenge (will it be too hard, too easy, just right?), which courses to take, which professors to seek, which activities to pursue. What will it be like for us to be separated after eighteen years together?

As the time gets closer, we begin comparing the stacks of stuff we’ve bought with the cubic feet of space inside the van, Andrea’s room starts looking empty, and I have a huge lump in my throat that comes and goes over the next two weeks. I don’t think I can do this!

Move-in Day and the Trip Home
Leaving the house, her dog, and her fifteen-year-old sister Kristin, who couldn’t go with us, brings Andrea’s first tears. It’s an eleven-hour trip to Oxford. We stay at a motel in Covingon and try to spot other new freshmen. Want to make contact, but want to savor the last evening with Andrea. Others seem the same, and we eye each other with interest, all in a somber mood, all anticipating the big day ahead.

Move-in day alleviates many of our concerns. We like her roommate and her RA! By the end of the day Andrea seems to know what she needs to do is get ready for us to leave. First tears from her father! The trip home was hard. I read an “empty nest” book plus The Seasons of Hope. It was great to connect with other Oxford parents at that time!

Andrea sounded good when she called us the day we got home from Oxford. We were relieved and actually kind of glad “the big event” was over. We emailed, and I learned instant messaging. I began to feel we were having too much contact. I didn’t want to be a part of her everyday life, and she didn’t want to be a part of mine. It was time for both of us to move on, and we knew it. So we established a routine of Friday afternoon phone calls with few emails in between. However, September 11 brought some extra-long calls.

After we returned, the house seemed strange. We had to make ourselves come to the table for a meal—what’s the point, Andrea’s not here. We had a family picture made for the church directory. We told the photographer we wouldn’t be buying any, we were just half a family! We felt like we were betraying Andrea, I guess.
I flew down to see Andrea the end of September. I knew I would need to see her by then, and she couldn’t come home. It was great timing. She was really glad to see me and get away from campus for a couple of days. She wasn’t used to all that togetherness they have in the dorm! But by Sunday afternoon we were both ready to get back to our lives.

**Peace at Last**

We’ve finally adjusted to the fact that the center of Andrea’s life is at Oxford now. She has less contact with her high school friends and really misses her Oxford friends when she’s home. She’s had some great experiences there—Fall Retreat, a cappella group, homecoming at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta, and the 5K running club that she and her roommate started in the spring. She is going to be a resident assistant next year. She feels strongly that at Oxford you get into the mindset that you can make a difference.

Having a child leave for college is a traumatic experience. But when you see all the good that comes from it, it’s hard to feel too traumatized. It just takes a little time for that realization to quell the feelings of emptiness that each child inevitably leaves behind when they go.

Carolyn Glenn
West Plains, Missouri

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**These are thy glorious works, parents of good.**

—John Milton
LEARNING TO GROW

AUGUST: Tiffany moved into her dorm room today. It all began on such a pleasant note this morning when we loaded both cars and left for the drive to Oxford. I knew that it would be a difficult situation leaving our only child at school today, but I did not even know the half of it!

Upon arriving at the school, we were very disappointed when we went up to her dorm room. We quickly discovered that Tiffany and her roommate had absolutely nothing in common with each other. Actually, the only thing that they did share was their petite body size. Her roommate informed us that she was a strict vegetarian and did not eat anything in the cafeteria. I was very disappointed when her roommate told us that she would not be spending much time with Tiffany, because she stayed pretty busy.

Before we knew it, it was time for all parents to leave the campus. Tiffany and I both began to cry as we hugged each other goodbye. Tiffany told me then that she just could not stay. Even though I wanted to put her and her clothes in the car and drive off, I knew that I could not do so.

At about 10:00 p.m., the phone rang. Tiffany was on the other end crying softly. She told me that she could not stay and that she hated it there at school. She was in the room by herself as her roommate had left for a weekend trip out of town. I told her that if she
did come home, she would be giving up a tremendous opportunity. I did not tell her that she could not come home, but I did tell her to think it over carefully.

We called the pay phone in the dormitory later that day. The young girl who answered the phone told us that Tiffany and a couple of other girls had gone to the cafeteria to eat lunch. I breathed a sigh of relief to hear that she had already met some friends. Giving me a big grin, my husband said, "I told you so."

Tiffany called tonight. She is still homesick. We miss her too. The house is so quiet. Jim and I just sit and stare at each other. When Tiffany was a small child, we used to dream about all of the great things that we were going to do once our daughter grew up. Now she is grown, and all we want is for her to be a little girl again. I hope it gets better soon.

**September:** Tiffany called from school tonight. She is having doubts about her ability to conquer six classes. I told her to do the best she could. I also mentioned that if worst came to worst, she could always attend classes at the local junior college. She told me that she would just try harder. That's exactly what I wanted to hear.

**November:** Thank goodness things are much better with Tiffany now. She and her roommate are getting along much better now. Even though it has been a rough couple of months, one good thing has come out of this experience. My daughter has learned that life will not always be smooth, but a person can adapt to most all situations. She also learned that some things cannot be changed; however, some things can be changed.

**December:** Finals are over at school, and Tiffany is home for the Christmas holidays. She has really matured since the beginning of school. She has turned into quite a responsible young lady. I can tell that she is used to having her freedom and not used to anyone telling her what her curfew hours are. She actually told me that she misses her roommate and wonders what she is doing right now. God does answer prayer!

**April:** Tiffany called to say that she is staying at school for the weekend. While her dad and I would enjoy having her at home for the weekend, we also enjoy just the two of us too. The house does not seem empty anymore. We have made a major change in our lifestyle, and we have survived.

**May:** We took the camera with us to make some last snapshots. Tiffany's roommate is graduating this year, and we wanted some pictures to remember her by.

Denice Cleveland
Thomaston, Georgia
TO MY FELLOW
FIRST-YEAR EMORY PARENTS

If you were anything like me as a mother, I spent a lot of “quality time” with my children. As my experience with my first-year student/daughter at Oxford taught me, it was hard for me to let her go. At first, I said that I was going to be hard on her and let her really get a taste of making decisions on her own. But then, I realized that I had always been there for her. So, why desert her now, because she’s eighteen? I was the type of parent who stressed the importance of good grades all through her school years. I was concentrating on scholarship funds to help her further her education. I set high goals for my daughter. So in saying this, I realized that I had to let her down easy.

During her freshman year, she encountered myriad problems. My assistance consisted only of hearing what the problem was and then hearing how she would handle the problem. I would THEN give my advice or opinion. Rather than pushing her away and saying “you handle that, you’re on your own now,” I listened to her, as I would have in her earlier years. They still need us, as parents, to guide them and help them to make the right choices, even in college.

I remember her very first problem at Oxford. When she first told me of the problem, I immediately said, “you handle that the best way that you know how. You make your own decision regarding that problem.” Listen to your first-year student, continue to talk to them and assist them with any problems that may arise while at college. What we’re really doing is building a better and maturer relationship with our “babies.” You’ll be glad (as I was) to get telephone calls or emails from your child asking your opinions on something that they’ve decided to do or not do.

Well, it’s almost the end of my daughter’s freshman year. Boy, did it fly by! She’s done real well too, I might add. She’s a member of several organizations at Oxford and is enjoying college life a lot. She also took my advice and opened up to her professors. I convinced her to go to this one professor and talk about her grades, and now she sees that professors are there for her and to help in any way that they can. She received her first “D” from this professor, and it alarmed her. We talked, and then she made an appointment to meet with the professor. After their conversation, she called me and told me that I was right, the professor was a nice person after all. He even gave her some helpful ways to study the material. On her next test, she made a “B”!

Toni Miller
Decatur, Georgia
This is an apt observation: "I find that he is growing, and I like to take in his measure." This father comments on his anxiety mixed with hopefulness, which many parents feel as they watch their children mature and grow.

REFLECTION

Last week my older son was home for spring break. I had not seen him in eight weeks, although we were in continual contact by email. He arrived hirsute and happy. And also, I think, exhausted. Over the week or so before the break, he had not slept much. When he was in town, he rested and consumed more than my other two teenagers combined. The house acquired a pleasant sense of disorder as his things lay scattered about.

I find that he is growing, and I like to take in his measure. I had to work during the week that he was home. He helped out a great deal shopping, ferrying his sister and brother here and there. The last two days of his break required my presence in Boston. I left him in charge of his siblings. We had planned this arrangement for months, and it came off splendidly. I prepared a roast and stocked up on fruit and chipmunk snacks. My older son is a stranger in the land of the kitchen, but he did manage to cook macaroni and cheese.

My older son has special talent as an artist, although that is not his vocation. While he was home, he designed a mascot for my office—a friendly little owl. He also helped me design a sundial monument in memory of his mother. We talked about the legend that will grace it: "Auch ich war in Arkadien geboren" ("I was born in Arcadia/paradise"). He thought that it was a bit obscure, although I persuaded him that a double entendre gave it value. He has recovered well from his mother's death, as have the other children. But for me, the tears still come on when I imagine how proud she would be to see them all.

In six weeks he will be home for the summer. He is planning for his time at Emory and beyond. He wants to take a course at the local university and also work a bit at the place he worked last summer. Late in May he and I will travel to Argentina, where I have a conference. We will spend a few days in the Andes looking at the recent and spectacular dinosaur excavations (from the time that he was little he has been fascinated with paleontology).

I find that I worry about the future. Will I remain strong enough to be both mother and father to my children? Will I have to sell my house to send the younger children to college? I do not worry about my son at Oxford. Whatever happens later, Oxford will have given him the right level of stimulation and support. Its setting is a fine mixture of bucolic tranquility and, by virtue of the Emory connection, urban sophistication. I have no doubt that other parents see things in a similar light.

Tom Sriver
Lafayette, Louisiana
August 23
I attended the seminar on how to be the parent of a college student. I found it extremely interesting and for the first time got a large lump in my throat at the realization that this was all really happening. I kept coming in and out of focus as each storyteller related his/her personal life story as a parent of an Oxford student. I flashed back to the birth of my precious baby girl, remembering her black hair in a stubborn spike and how hard that ob/gyn spanked her little buttocks. (I wanted to sock it to him, but he was my professor in medical school!) Then I remembered the rambunctious toddler, making a dead run for the tub and diving in head first in her Winnie the Pooh pajamas!

August 29
We were highly recommended during our parent session not to call every day. I withheld from calling the next day, but to my utmost pleasure Lina called the subsequent three days to get my advice with her schedule and to tell me of all her diverse experiences.

March 18
This past week my daughter came home for spring break. Lina left her high school boyfriend at the end of two months on campus. It did not interfere in her grades whatsoever. They have a somewhat friendly relationship. She really seems to have matured a lot. Although it was hard living in this house and not seeing her on a day-to-day basis, seeing her so happy and doing well has made it all worthwhile. My relationship with her has solidified, and I look forward to hearing from her, which occurs less and less with time. She is still not sure what profession she wishes to go into, but I am not pushing her to decide. I tell her that she needs to pick something that is stimulating for her, where she can grow as a person. I know in my heart she will make the right decision on her own, and I am here to help her every inch of the way. I truly feel that Oxford was the best choice for my daughter, one where a sturdy foundation could be formed that will lead her eventually to success.

June 20
Lina is back home with three times the amount of goods she started out with! She decided to go into business. So, I gave her my blessing and told her the important thing was that she was happy in whatever career choice she made. She has registered to go to summer school at Emory and is looking forward to it. I cannot be prouder.
P.S. When she came home from school, she asked what her curfew was. I asked her, “What was your curfew as school?” She looked perplexed and told me she did not have one. What a surprised look on her face when I told her that she was an adult and I trusted she would come home at a decent time. She has been great and has not abused this privilege.

Ludmila Nieves
St. Marys, Georgia

AND THE DAY CAME WHEN THE RISK TO REMAIN TIGHT IN A BUD WAS MORE PAINFUL THAN THE RISK IT TOOK TO BLOSSOM.

—anaïs nin
The big day finally arrived. The cars were packed the night before, and we were there, on the line with all the other freshman cars, to enter the gates of Oxford. How exciting! It doesn’t take very long to begin to see what sets Oxford apart from other colleges, even other prestigious schools. The standards are exceptionally high, but there is a nurturing support system in place along the way that is quite the opposite of “spoon feeding.” All the student has to do is seek it out. There are student study groups and plenty of office hours from professors. Oxford professors are a unique bunch, and they make the students feel very welcome and comfortable on a very adult level.

The workload was really the greatest adjustment to make. We all preach at our students that they have no idea how much work college will be, and until they arrive and have a taste for themselves, they can have no concept. It didn’t take long for her to repeat that old adage that “high school sure doesn’t prepare you for college.”

What do we see eight months later? We see a young adult who, last fall, after having completed an EMT program while in high school, was going to be a doctor without question. She has discovered she doesn’t really know what she wants to do, which is about where she probably should be at this point. In her sophomore year she will be taking a variety of courses, and with the guidance of the Oxford faculty, we have no doubt she will be ready to choose the correct path when she enters the Emory campus. The resources on the Oxford campus are outstanding, and we cannot tell you enough how strongly we feel that Stephanie made the right choice with Oxford.

One more note, parents, do not hesitate to call anyone at Oxford if you have a concern, a thought, an opinion, or just a question. We have found, since the day our daughter moved on campus that everyone, without fail, is helpful and willing to listen to us.

Here’s to the beginning of a wonderful experience for your student and you.

Jackie and Ray Martin
Duluth, Georgia
One of the joys and pains of parenthood is hearing, “let me do it,” whether the action required is tying shoes, driving a car, or packing for college. Parenting requires a constant blend of support and challenge—embracing them and also letting go.

ADJUSTING TO THE TRANSITION

Three weeks before his departure, Jarrod began to pack up his room and whatever was needed for his transition to the Oxford College campus. At times I would sit in his room and offer to help. He would say, “Dad, I really need to do this alone. Thanks for offering.”

On August 19th, Jarrod’s maternal grandparents would come to our home for dinner. The only grandchild they had known intimately from infancy through adulthood was leaving for college. In their generation, this was a historical event to see a grandson headed to meet his educational goals. I could sense their grief. His grandfather was his mentor from the time Jarrod could talk. The relationship he had with his grandmother was as intimate. They, too, were losing a friend, who was growing up.

After dinner, we packed his truck for departure to the campus. The night went quicker than I wanted. No one slept much. Reality was occurring.

We departed early on August 20th for the campus. There was heavy rain. We arrived and parked in the back of the Haygood dormitory. A few minutes later, a former high school friend, who had been accepted by Oxford, parked in the same lot. Jarrod and this old friend hugged each other. He now knew one person on campus.

Through the rest of the semester, he would call around 5:00 p.m. during the week. One day I asked him why he did this. He said, “This is the time of the day I miss you. I just need to hear Mom’s and your voice before I go to dinner.”

In December, he came home for the holidays. By then, his sleeping patterns were fully reversed. He had become nocturnal. Even though his parents experienced nocturnal living in their earlier years, we were having to adapt to his night hours of being awake. When he prepared to return for the winter semester, the tears were present as he drove out of the driveway to return “home.”

Jarrod began to pack and bring boxes home in late April. On May 6th, he returned home for the summer. The lifelong grieving process of when children leave home will surface again in August, when Jarrod returns for his sophomore year. As long as we support him emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually, we as a team will work through the quietness of our home again. For now, the phones are ringing throughout the day as his Oxford friends and other college friends call to say hello; come to visit; and schedule a meeting at the local Starbucks.

Charles Ody Williams
Atlanta, Georgia
We all can understand the parallel between children leaving home for college and young birds leaving their nest and taking wing. This father draws from his military experience and describes the deployment of an X-15 for the same effect.

IMPRESSIONS

We were among the lucky ones. I recall that memorable move-in day when the old pickup truck labored onto campus with enough stuff in it to last two years, let alone one semester. Frustration? Yes. Parents (especially fathers) always come up short when it comes to understanding just how much stuff it takes to get one daughter through one semester of college, let alone an entire year.

"Are you ready for this?" That thought was in my mind as we brought our daughter to Oxford. One side of a parent's mind says "it's okay," the child will make it just fine. The other side cries, "How can they get along without Mom and Dad around?" Letting go is a weird sensation. Those first few evenings at home without the pitter-patter of eighteen-year-old feet in the house is sooooo nice. Then, the reality of the change hits you. You want your child to strike out on their own and do well at school, but why can't you go along for the ride? Independence, freedom, space, wings: which one fits, and does it describe the child or the parent?

It seems as if worry and concern have been waiting in the wings to fill the space left by your child's departure. There is concern for their physical well-being. Will they get enough sleep? Will they eat right? Will they wash their clothes? How will they keep their rooms? You may be in for a big dose of reality, Mom and Dad. Do you really expect those things to change overnight or even over a semester?

There is a lot to do at Oxford. You almost need a telephone directory just for the campus organizations in which your child could participate. It's difficult, but parents do have to accept (at least in part) that the time has arrived for the child to be even more responsible for their choices in using time well. This transition is not easy for either side to make.

You will worry about the grades they might make. You attempt to at least partially comfort yourself by saying, "It's their ball game. If they make it, fine; if they miss the academic grade, it's theirs to deal with." You have these thoughts knowing that you are going to feel badly for them if they don't make it. When they don't, and you know they are capable, it hurts a bit. When they slip a little and come back around the second semester with flying colors, it makes you feel great.

A few decades ago, the Air Force's X-15 was the hottest thing in high-altitude, high-speed rocket-test aircraft. It was carried aloft tucked under the wing of a giant B-52 bomber to an optimum altitude. To initiate the actual flight test, the X15 was unhooked, sometimes dropping hundreds of feet before its engine was ignited, propelling it to 100,000 feet or more.
So it seems to be with that freshman son or daughter. We've carried them under our wing for so long. When we let go by letting them off at Oxford, we wonder how far they might drop before they really take off. How high will they go? How fast will the ride be? How close can we watch them? Do we need to be there as they rise and move away?

They have taken off on a flight just as risky as the first tricycle ride or the first time out alone on a date. Yes, I was worried, concerned, skeptical, happy, doubtful, proud, tense, hopeful. Still am. Probably always will be. Children are children whether young or old, at home or away.

It could be that a part of you will stay right here on campus with your child. If that's the case, the experience could be special for everyone concerned. Oxford College leaves you with that kind of feeling.

Jonathan S. Adams
Griffin, Georgia

WE HAD THE EXPERIENCE BUT
MISSED THE MEANING.

—T. S. ELIOT
This is an excerpt of a much longer email exchange among mother, son, and brother. In this interchange, humor is used effectively to convey genuine feelings of separation and yet there is an implicit and reassuring message of confidence that "it will be ok; we will be fine."

FIRSTBORNSON@OXFORD.EDU

Date: August
To: firstbornson@oxford.edu
From: youngslimandbeautifulmom@yourhome.com
SUBJECT: FIRST MEAL WITHOUT YOU
Dad, Annoying Younger Brother, and I ate at the M. grill on the way home. Gotta say the meal was rather silent, but it didn’t cost us so much.
Miss you already. Love, Mom

To: youngslimandbeautifulmom@yourhome.com
From: firstbornson@oxford.edu
SUBJECT: I WANNA COME HOME
When you and Dad and Annoying Younger Brother dropped me off at school last week it just didn’t really occur to me that I had to stay here all year. How could you leave me?
Love, Your First-Born Son

Date: October
To: youngslimandbeautifulmom@yourhome.com
From: firstbornson@oxford.edu
SUBJECT: STILL HOMESICK
It’s raining here and my room is cold. If I can get a B in my classes I’ll be satisfied. I’m not sure I understand what my sociology teacher is talking about but neither does anyone else in my class so I’m not worried. Please send me letters. I get so depressed when I look in the little mail box and it is empty. Call you tonight.
Love, Your First-Born Son

To: firstbornson@oxford.edu
From: youngslimandbeautifulmom@yourhome.com
SUBJECT: DEAR STILL HOMESICK
Your Dad and I figured out that it cost about $100 a day for you to be at Oxford. Wanna change places? You can do my job (it doesn’t require math skills) and I’ll take your classes for you, eat in the dining hall, and never clean my room. Think anyone would notice? Besides, your dad has turned your room into his second home/office.
Love, Mom
Date: December
To: firstbornson@oxford.edu
From: annoyingyoungerbrother@yourhome.com
SUBJECT: HOW IS COLLEGE?
I’m making all A’s this semester and mom says if I make 95 and above she’ll buy me a
Segway, the video game of my choice and cook all my favorite food. You know, she really
loves me the best! By the way, how are your grades? Study hard. See you next week.
Love, Annoying Younger Brother

To: annoyingyoungerbrother@yourhome.com
From: firstbornson@oxford.edu
SUBJECT: DORK!
In the first place, don’t you know that college is way harder than high school and I was
here first. Anyway, if you’re still speaking to the parents, thank them for helping me with
choosing my courses for next semester. I guess I’ll be going back! I met this girl. See you
in four days.
Love, First-Born Son

Date: May
To: youngslimandbeautifulmom@yourhome.com
From: firstbornson@oxford.edu
SUBJECT: I DID IT!
It’s almost over! I did it! I passed all my classes with As and Bs. Learned lots of stuff. Lost
twenty pounds, made a ton of friends, and I can hit a tennis ball like a pro. You guys have
really been there for me. Can’t wait to see you! Can mom drive up and help me to pack
up my room?
Love, Your First-Born Son

To: firstbornson@oxford.edu
From: youngslimandbeautifulmom@yourhome.com
SUBJECT: PACKING UP!
 Didn’t realize that everything wouldn’t fit in your car! Glad you have a nice roommate for
next year. I can’t believe how fast the year went by. We are so proud to be your parents.
See you tomorrow!
P.S. Annoying Younger Brother says he ordered fifty pizzas to be delivered to your dorm.
Is this true?

Barbara Weiss
Statesboro, Georgia
To: Julie,

I miss you a lot lot lot! Are you having fun up there? I love you very very much! I can't wait to see you! I went fishing and a man gave us two fish! I learned how to throw the casting net and I learned how to use a fishing pole! I went skating it was very fun! When we got home my face was pink!

From: Emily,

Emily Nelson
Mobile, Alabama

THE JOY OF LIFE IS VARIETY; THE TENDEREST LOVE REQUIRES TO BE RENEWED BY INTERVALS OF ABSENCE.

—SAMUEL JOHNSON