Finding a Place at Manchester: Getting the Most from the College Experience
Glenn Sharfman, Vice President and Dean for Academic Affairs

As the spring rush has given way to the summer calm, let me share a few reflections on the importance of schools like Manchester.

A couple of weeks ago I had the good fortune of attending our Alumni Days where past classes congregate on campus to share their stories with their erstwhile classmates. Often parents and students become centered on earning a degree which will allow entry into the work or graduate school world. It is easy in today’s society of consumerism to tend to want the quickest and least expensive way to achieve the goal. What struck me about listening to conversations of past Manchester graduates was they spoke less about the curriculum and more about the relationships.

It was fascinating to listen to them talk about friendships, extracurricular activities, a trip away and even some of the struggles they had while on campus involving personal relationships, athletics, as well as in classes. They seem to intimate that it was the total experience of the four years that made their lives richer.

I told incoming parents and students this past week during an advising and registration day that it is "normal" for students to struggle at college in some ways. Finding one’s place at Manchester sometimes comes immediately with little friction for some students, but for others it occurs only after grappling with some aspect of college—whether it be academic, athletic, music or social.

One of the facets of Manchester that was true both years ago from the perspective of the alums and today for our present students is that we are an institution that cares. (You can read stories from some of our current students at www.manchester.edu/myplace.)

We care about our students’ success in the classroom, on the musical stage or an athletic field, and about their ability to become individuals who make a difference in whatever field they choose. Our faculty and staff understand that college is a complete experience, and that every student is different in what they bring us. We are all dedicated to graduating students of ability and conviction, and we realize that the change of students from their first year to their fourth is often astounding. It is this change that creates the excitement and passion for us to do what we do.

As parents, you can help by encouraging your students to explore, to wonder and wander, and to embrace change, understanding that young adults don’t suddenly appear, but that the transition is gradual. Summer is often a time when students consider the balance between their experiences and their goals. Please support them and urge them to become involved.
Helping Students with Financial Lessons
Dave McFadden, Executive Vice President

I have two kids who are college-aged. My daughter graduated last year and my son will be a senior at Manchester next year. Both are learning important life lessons about finances. For example, my son went to a baseball game and applied for a credit card because he wanted the t-shirt they were giving away. He was surprised when he was approved and surprised by the annual fee they charged him before he ever signed the card. My wife and I haven’t been surprised by the dozens of credit offers now arriving in our mailbox with his name on them.

At a recent advising and registration day for incoming students at Manchester, parents asked for and shared advice about helping students manage their finances. Here are two good suggestions from the session:

● Have students access their money using an ATM drawing from a savings account rather than use a debit card. One parent, a banker, said that when a debit card is overdrawn by even a few pennies, it can generate a $25 or larger fee. A few small purchases in a row can end up costing a student upwards of $100.

● Encourage students to set aside a fixed amount of money for incidental spending during each semester and talk with them about the importance of budgeting. If they run out before the semester ends—especially if the money came from you—they will learn an important lesson without much chance of serious consequences.

A third suggestion comes from President Jo Young Switzer whose kids graduated from college several years ago. She and her husband, Dave, gave each a book called Get a Financial Life: Personal Finance in Your Twenties and Thirties by Beth Kobliner.

The book is chock full of great advice about everything from budgeting to car loans to credit cards. It even has a chapter called “Crib Notes: A ‘Cheat Sheet’ for Time-Pressed Readers” which will appeal to most college students. The best thing about the advice, says President Switzer, is that it doesn’t come from parents.

I remember our daughter once living on $20 for about five weeks at the end of a spring semester. She had three good meals a day in the College Union, a roof over her head, and lots of free things to do on campus, so it was a relatively painless lesson about the connection between keeping a campus job and having spending money. All the same, my wife and I ordered a copy of Get a Financial Life for both our kids. They’ve got a lot to learn.
Over the past few years Manchester College and Chartwells have partnered to enhance the dining experience for students on campus. The collaboration resulted in a new state of the art dining facility and an award-winning dining program*. Even with all the planning and new technology that went into the facility, the greatest concern was how students would acclimate to the new environment.

Since opening the facility this past March, the department of student affairs and dining services has been diligent in collecting student feedback. The feedback was analyzed and an action plan was designed and communicated in the student newspaper. The following is a list of changes made in response to that feedback:

**Comment:** The food lines are too long especially during peak hours.  
**Response:** To help facilitate flow we purchased stanchions to direct students to various food stations avoiding one long line that snakes thru the café. This “scatter” or “food court” style of dining results in several smaller lines as opposed to one long line.

**Comment:** The drinks are in a bad location and cause a bottleneck in the servery.  
**Answer:** Construction is currently underway on a new drink counter located in the dining room complete with Coke, Pepsi and water stations.

**Question:** Why doesn’t my meal plan work in the Oaks?  
**Answer:** Meal plans allow students to dine in two different ways. One way is to use meal bocks or “swipes” to access the all-you-care-to-eat café. The second way is to use al la Carte dollars or “flex dollars” to purchase retail goods at the Oaks.

**Comment:** The tray return is not working efficiently. We have to wait in lines to return our trays.  
**Answer:** Dining services collaborated with the project contractor to make modifications to the tray return. The solution was to change the direction of the tray return resulting in a more efficient system to remove and clean dirty dishes.

**Question:** Could there be a better utilization of the TVs in the servery?  
**Answer:** Cable will be installed as soon as it is ready in the College Union as a whole.

**Question:** Could menus be displayed in a location that allows us to see them before we enter the dinning room?  
**Answer:** Menu boards were posted at the bottom of the steps inside the front door.

**Question:** Could the Mongolian Grill be used more?  
**Answer:** Starting in the fall semester, the Mongolian Grill will be available for lunch, Monday through Friday, and dinner, Monday through Thursday.

As you can see we continue to adjust. All improvements are on schedule to be completed before the start of the upcoming academic year. Please direct any questions or concerns to Chris Yeadon at 260-982-5289 or ceyeadon@manchester.edu.

* Chartwells Pulse on Dining program was recently awarded “2007 Best Concept” by Food Management magazine.*

Questions? Feedback? E-mail familyconnections@manchester.edu.  
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