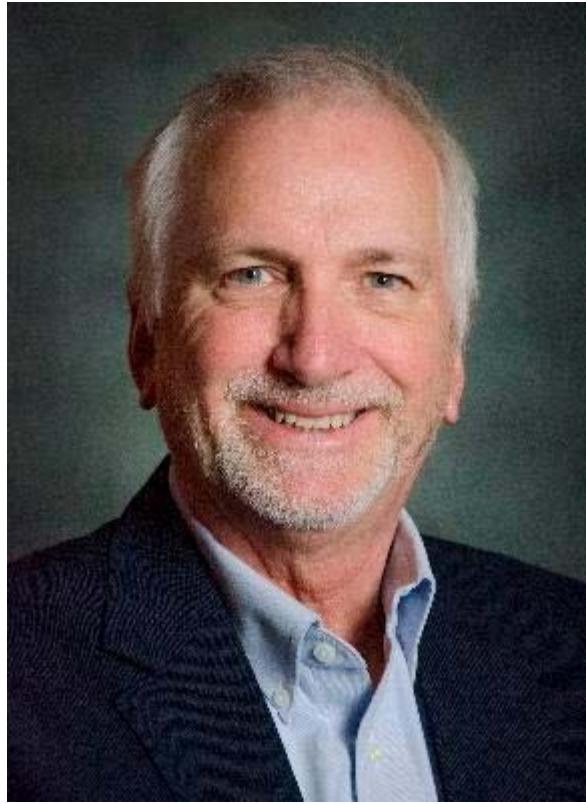


That child you sent to Alfred is coming home as a young adult

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Norm Pollard

You've anxiously awaited the semester break because your son or daughter, who has been in Alfred since August with only short breaks, will finally be home for FOUR WHOLE WEEKS, maybe more.

If you're the parent of a first-year student, and this is the first child you have sent away to school, gird yourselves, advises Dr. Norm Pollard, dean of students at Alfred University. You may find that the child you sent away comes back as a young adult.

"Your student is evolving into an adult," which is what you want, but that may mean you need to "negotiate your relationship so that it grows with your child," Pollard advises.

"Typically the areas of conflict are about things like curfew, money, and 'helping out,' either around the house or by getting a job to help pay for school expenses."

Attempting to impose a curfew, especially if it is the same one he or she had in high school, is likely to be met with "When I was at Alfred, I could stay out all night..."

And the rules should not be the same, Pollard emphasizes. "Think about who you want your child to be when he or she is ready to graduate from Alfred. You want them to be fully functioning adults, and that means being able to make good decisions and take responsibility for their own actions."

If you need your child to help out with chores around the house or contributing to his or her educational expenses you need to be honest, said Pollard. "You need to be able to say to your child, 'We need your help here' or 'We need you to contribute. We are making sacrifices for your benefit, that allow you to go to school.' You need to say to your child 'You need to go to work, or help out, or be a part of this.'

In addition to talking about expectations, you should also talk to your child about his or her successes and problems at school, Pollard said. If your child is struggling, emotionally, with roommate issues, with academics, you need to find out. “When you are discussing concerns or problems, please encourage your child to talk to us, to take advantage of the resources we offer through Alfred University to help them.”

Pollard advises parents to remember that Alfred University is “much different” from high school, academically and socially.” Sometimes, he said, they may “have difficulty navigating” and need some help.

Students will find that at Alfred, “they will need to work harder,” and may sometimes need to ask for help. The best things parents can do when they see their student floundering and struggling is not to step in and try to fix things for them, but to support them. “Tell them they don&t have to be perfect, and that you will love them even if they mess up, that your love is not conditional and doesn&t depend on success.”

But he also points out that even negative experiences are something the students learn from. “Let them benefit from their mistakes. Let them figure out how to pick themselves up and strategize how to succeed.”