

# Introduction to Higher Education

The goal of this session is to help students begin thinking about their purpose in being in college. We know that most traditional aged college students rarely give intentional thought to this decision. To begin, ask students if they chose to come to college. (Most will say yes.) Then, ask them what their other options were (e.g. working full-time, entering the military, just hanging out). We are not focusing on the decision to come to Mercer (many will have considered other institutions), but their decision to go to college. A small number will have seriously considered another alternative.

## Discussion Points

The value of college. Why am I here?

- To learn new information
- To get a good job when I graduate
- To learn more about myself
- To make new friends
- Because my mom and dad encouraged me
- I am smart and college is where I belong
- To play a sport
- Get away from home
- To get a degree
- To make more money
- To make a difference in the world
- To expand my world

Why did I choose Mercer?

- Good reputation
- Legacy (relative came here)
- Friends were coming
- Particular area of study
- Close to home
- Pretty campus
- It just felt right

What do I hope to accomplish?

- Graduate/get a degree
- Make good grades
- Meet new people
- Make lifelong friends
- Meet my mate/life partner
- Have a good time
- Acceptance to graduate/professional school

What am I most fearful of/worried about?

- Fitting in
- Doing well
- Living with a roommate
- Getting lost
- Looking like a freshman
- Being away from home
- Separation from significant others

### **Possible activities**

Ask students to identify five goals for their first semester in college. What do they hope to accomplish. How will they go about achieving these goals? Have them create a plan of objectives to achieve those objectives.

Introduce students to a liberal education within the context of a comprehensive university. Have them think about the less tangible benefits of a Mercer education.

Now that we are settling into the semester, encourage students to identify some of first steps of the semester. Writing them down will make them more real. Their steps might include getting involved in campus activities, becoming more familiar with Macon, familiarizing themselves with campus resources, getting to know their professors, developing a stronger relationship with room/suite mates, etc.

At this moment, how do the students define success? How do they take charge of their success? Have them create an action plan for success. What has been their previous experience with success? What tools or actions have contributed to their success? How do they apply these to their college experience?

End on an affirmative note. Empower them. Have them leave the room with a “can do” attitude. Be creative. Think of something you can give them (a quote, a poem, a rock, etc.) or they can do to feel charged about beginning their college experience.