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THE FIRST BIG STEP IN LETTING GO

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Move-in day at the University of Scranton is Aug. 25, and it's bound to be a tough day for Tara Iodice.

"I'm nervous, very nervous," she said.

But it's not Mrs. Iodice who will be moving into a residence hall or meeting her roommate for the first time. It will be her daughter, Amanda.

"I'm going to miss her, of course," Mrs. Iodice, of West Caldwell, N.J., said. "I'll have to transition."

At the University of Scranton this week, Mrs. Iodice and dozens of other nervous parents listened to speakers, learned about the city and prepared to let their children go. It was all part of freshman orientation.

There were many activities for students, too, like meeting new friends and taking placement tests. But at schools like the University of Scranton and Marywood University, the orientation is as much for the parents as it is for the students.

"We can't underestimate the transition that parents go through as well," said Vincent Carilli, Ph.D., Scranton's vice president for student affairs. "This is an emotional time for some ... a traumatic time for others."

At a session on transitions, Dr. Carilli spoke to more than 200 parents on how it's important to take a step back and let their children become independent.

"We're going to give them training wheels, but we're not going to let them touch the ground," Dr. Carilli said.

Parents nodded in agreement. At some points, they wiped tears from their eyes.

It's perfectly normal for parents to feel anxious about their children starting college, said Demy Kamboukos, Ph.D., a director of research within the New York University Child Study Center.

"Even if parents are happy their kids are moving on, there will be a level of sadness," she said.

Marywood's freshman orientation is this weekend. Ninety to 95 percent of incoming freshmen attend orientation, and most bring their families along, said Julia Kolcharno, director of student activities and leadership development.

During a parent panel, which is made up of mothers and fathers who have children already enrolled at Marywood, everything from bringing a car to campus to homesickness is discussed, Ms. Kolcharno said.

A session on social-networking Web sites Facebook and MySpace will also be offered to parents.

At the University of Scranton, Kevin Snyder, of Palmyra, took a break between sessions and looked out a window to see if he could see his son, Ryan.

Mr. Snyder admitted he'd miss his son, but it was time for him to go to college.

"He needs to get out of our house," he said. "He's not learning anything there anymore."

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