Calendar for the First Term of a First-Year Student

This first-year student timeline helps one to take a closer look at what first-year students are facing and the issues they must confront at different stages:

**SEPTEMBER**

**Concerns:**
- Saying goodbye to family and friends and homesickness
- Campus familiarization, initial adjustment to campus environments
- Value crisis! Students are confronted with questions of conscience and must decide how to react to value conflict areas such as alcohol, drugs, race, religion, sexuality, difference, and social experiences/expectations
- Time management or lack thereof!
- Anxiety about roommates, professors, classes, etc.
- Long distance boyfriends/girlfriends
- Testing new freedoms; Experimenting with alcohol, drugs, sexual relationships, etc.
- Nervousness about making friends and fitting in

**Suggestions On What Might Be Helpful:**
- Discussions on how to separate from family and friends
- Campus tours and talks
- Time management seminar
- Money budgeting programs
- Values exploration exercises
- Social activities where students can get to know each other and establish a friendships
- Alcohol/drug/sexual assault education programs

**OCTOBER**

**Concerns:**
- Freshmen begin to realize life at college is not what they thought it would be, or what their parents/high school counselors/TV shows/movies lead them to believe it would be.
- Student might question: “Do I fit in here?”
- Midterms! Test anxiety about expectations of testing in college
- Consequences of decision-making experienced
- Being sick alone for the first time – no one is there to take the students temperature or make them soup!
- Relationships from friends at home/ significant others at home might begin to suffer due to separation

**Suggestions On What Might Be Helpful:**
- Mid-term preparation seminars and study techniques handouts
- Stress management discussions and workshops.
  - Attend a yoga class together or participate in relaxation exercises
- Check-in with students either one on one (email is great for this!) or as a class
- Explain and/or tour resources available to students such as the Recreation and Wellness Center, Math Help Sessions, ATTIC, Career and Counseling Center, etc.
Concerns:
- Academic pressure is beginning to mount due to earlier procrastination.
- Anxiety increases, students think “I should be adjusted to college by now. Why am I not?”
- Students have given up on attempts to make friends.
  - They feel everyone has found friends by now, could feel isolated if they haven’t
- Changing weather. Lots of cold, cloudy days!
- Restless for vacation / break from school
- Nervous about going back home for the first time.
  - How will my parents treat me? What will have happened to high school friends?
- New boyfriend/girlfriend
- Stress about looking ahead to next term
- More or less roommate stress.
  - They know each other better now and don’t feel the need to “stay nice”
- Some feelings of discouragement related to academics: “I don’t understand! I got A’s and B’s in high school!”

Suggestions On What Might Be Helpful:
- More discussion on time management. Students now see why they need it!
- Tutoring options explored
- Suggest a visit to their academic advisor
- Checking with older students who live on campus:
  - What was it like the first time you went home?
  - What was your first set of finals like in college?
  - Advice and tips?
- Community building exercises in the classroom to try and foster friendships
- Make students aware of SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder)
- Workshops on developing healthy relationships

Concerns:
- Finals week approaches. And by the way, what exactly does “Dead Week” mean?
- Extracurricular time strain with seasonal parties and end of semester get-togethers
- Pre-holiday depression for some especially those who have family concerns or for those who aren’t able to go home
- Financial strain due to buying holiday gifts, a plane ticket home, etc.
- Realization that they have made it through the first term! Joy!
- Wonder if their major is right for them or panic about not yet having a major

Suggestions On What Might Be Helpful:
- More test preparation/study technique and test anxiety information
- Class discussion on what dead week means and what finals weeks is like
- Career exploration programs or make a visit to the Career and Counseling Center
- Celebrate! Have a social event/party to enjoy the accomplishments of the term
- Study breaks