To this day, I remember the very first lesson I learned at Marquette. It’s a pretty simple lesson, but it’s a good one. College is not high school. Although this seems like an obvious fact, you may be surprised how long it takes most students to realize this. I was certainly surprised how long it took me.

Although this was my very first real lesson I learned at Marquette, I didn’t learn it until my sophomore year – the year I finally got my GPA above a 3.0. Flash back to my senior year of high school. Here I was, a top-of-his-class student who graduated with Highest Honors and passed seven AP tests, all while being involved in every theatre performance my high school put on. And now, just a few months later, I was an under-confident sitting-in-the-back-of-his-class student who could barely pass any of my engineering tests, all while staying up way too late starting homework that was due the next morning. I had no idea where it all went wrong.

At the end of my freshman year I tried too look back on it all to see where I might have been slacking. I used my high school experiences as a reference to help me. Completed homework on time? Check. Studied and did homework for about 2 or 3 hours a day? Check. Attended all of my classes? Definitely check. I felt hopeless. I started thinking that maybe I wasn’t cut out for engineering. I would have to tell all of my friends and family that I wasn’t good enough for my dream job. Maybe I just wasn’t smart enough. But that’s when it hit me. Looking back at the checklist I made, I realized the problem wasn’t that I didn’t try hard enough, or that I was lazy. The problem was that I was trying to solve college problems with high school solutions. Now, I had absolutely no clue how to solve college problems with college solutions, or even where to begin in finding out how to treat college like college, but that didn’t matter. The first and most crucial step I needed to take in making my academic transition into college was exactly just that – I needed a transition. So, I mixed things up, experimented with different studying methods, changed how I scheduled my free time and work time, and thought critically about how much I could be involved in different types of activities. In high school I studied by myself for every test I took. Now I don’t study for one of my engineering tests unless I have at least five or six of my friends studying with me. I’m already halfway done with college and I’m still discovering things about my day-to-day schedule that I can change to make myself a better student.
I’m sure some of you wish that you could give your student a step-by-step explanation on how to succeed in college, but unfortunately, you can’t. Every student needs to make their transition in their own way, and no two journeys are going to be similar.

The wonderful thing that I’ve experienced about Marquette in my two years so far is that how it is so challenging academically, yet so supportive at the same time. Your student will be rewarded for attempting new studying methods and taking risks and trying something new. Professors and teaching assistants are here for students to help them figure out how to properly study and really learn the material. Nearly 2,000 incoming freshmen are here for your students to go through this crazy journey with them. Marquette offers countless resources for students to help them succeed. Professors and teaching assistants have scheduled office hours where students can receive one-on-one help if they need that kind of interaction. Students can also enroll in tutoring for specific classes and receive assistance from other students hired by the university to help them in their classes. It’s not going to be an easy experience, but it’s not going to be one your student faces alone.

One time, when I was talking to an older engineering friend of mine about how difficult of a time transitioning I’ve been having, he told me this simple phrase: “There is a time and place for everything, and it’s called college.” The time to try something new is in college; the time to fail is in college; the time to develop into the best version of yourself is in college. And I couldn’t think of a better place for all of this than at Marquette.