

College Transition

Understanding Your Student's Process

Honeymoon

Acceptance/
Integration

Initial
Adjustment

Cultural
Shock

Mental
Isolation

The W-Curve by Zeller and Mosier (1993)

Adapted from: Journal of College and University Student Housing, Volume 23, No. 2, 1993. Culture Shock and The First-Year Experience by William J. Zeller and Robert Mosier & http://www.d.umn.edu/fye/freshmen/transiton/development/w_curve.htm

Honeymoon

Honeymoon phase

- Honeymoon starts prior to student arriving on campus
- Every new phase of beginning college life seems exciting
- There are nerves regarding the unknown but general feeling is positive anticipation
- Majority of students will feel this way based on new friendships, friendliness of campus, and new found independence
- Honeymoon time frame varies but on average it is over in the first 6 weeks**

Honeymoon



**Cultural
Shock**

Cultural Shock

- Newness is beginning to wear off
- Students realize that no one in the new environment REALLY knows them
- Adapting to many new social/environmental changes: Roommate differences, sharing a room/bathroom, eating in the Café, interacting with people from different backgrounds
- Adjusting to new academic expectations: Class structure, time management, studying
- Routine tasks are not as easy. i.e. Haircuts or medical appointments.
- Some work hard to keep roots at home and head home often on weekends which delays the process of integration
- Can be a time of personal conflict and anxiety based on overall transition
- **Middle of first semester**

Honeymoon

Cultural
Shock

**Initial
Adjustment**

Initial Adjustment

- Fall into a routine and gain confidence
- Things begin to feel more "normal"
- General sense of well being although conflicts and challenges still come and go
- **Generally in November**

Honeymoon



Cultural Shock



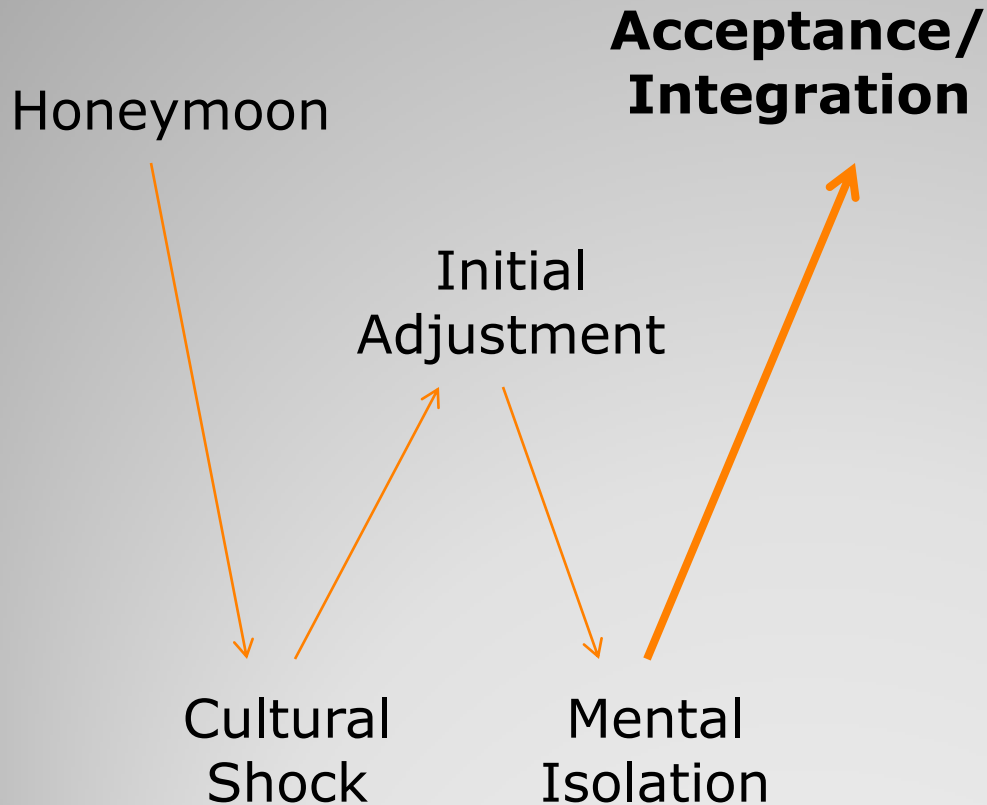
Initial Adjustment



Mental Isolation

Mental Isolation

- Relapse into a sense of isolation generally after the student goes home for an extended break
- Second culture shock as new environment is still not as comfortable as home used to be, and home is now not as familiar as it once was
- Friends at home may change or they may feel less comfortable with old friends
- People at home don't "know" them now because they have been growing
- Sense of not totally belonging in either place
- Possible disillusionment over discrepancy between what they expected and reality of college life
- May question whether or not to return
- Questions about major or academic ability may come to surface when grades are received
- Christmas break**



Acceptance, Integration, and Connectedness

- As students gain across campus connections they begin to have a more balanced view of the university
- Integration of good experiences with challenges
- Vanguard feels like “home” and the student has adapted to this new environment
- Second semester and beyond**

- Openly talk about the transitions your family is experiencing.
- Acknowledge the joys and losses within this transition.
- Encourage your student to get involved early and often.
- Be clear and honest with expectations.
- Partner but do not rescue.
- Take time to educate yourself about the college experience and Vanguard as a whole.
- Get involved with parent projects and stay connected.
 - Attend Family Weekend, February 25-27, 2011 and other events on campus.



How You Can Help