Living with a Roommate

Most students who attend Williams and live in a residence hall will be living with a roommate. The first set of room assignments will be mailed out in June for those students who have paid their housing deposit. This information gives your student their room assignment and, if they have a roommate, will list contact information for the roommate.

Many new students will be rooming with someone new to them. Some of these roommates will become fast friends. Others may share the room, but keep to themselves. Some, however, will find living with a roommate challenging.

Sharing a room in college can be an adjustment, especially if your student has always had a space of their own. You know your student well and might be able to guess some issues that could cause friction with a new roommate. Be pro-active and discuss some anticipated areas of conflict like the ones below prior to your student moving into the residence hall:

- Cleanliness of the room. WBC has room check every Wednesday.
- Sharing things. This can mean everything from food to clothes to technology.
- Quiet times versus when it is okay to have friends visit or have the TV/music blaring.

If roommate problems do arise, here are some helpful ways to advise your student:

- Find out what the real problem is. Ask for specifics. What did or did not happen to cause the problem? Ask for examples of the situation to get a good picture of what is happening.
- Does the roommate realize that there is a problem? Are your student’s expectations reasonable? Is there room for compromise? Can your student adapt to the situation or is it totally unacceptable?
- Communication is the key. Practice role-playing a possible conversation to help your student get comfortable discussing the problem.
- Ask your student to listen. Hear the other person’s feelings about the situation without interrupting.
- Encourage your student not to use social media to discuss the problem with the roommate, but face to face. Also, encourage your student not to discuss the situation with anyone other than the roommate and appropriate WBC staff. Sometimes students discuss roommate problems with their friends to gain support. This only makes the situation worse.
- Do not contact the roommate or the roommate’s family by phone, email or Facebook. More gets done when your student handles the situation personally.

If your student has tried to work it out on his own and he isn’t getting any satisfaction, suggest the following WBC staff to talk with:

1) The Resident Advisor: The RA has been trained to handle roommate problems and can offer an objective view of the situation.
2) The Residence Hall Directors: Both the men’s and women’s residence halls have directors. Students will meet these directors at Move-in.

A positive experience with a roommate can make college exciting now and develop friendships for a lifetime!