

**The “Crossroads” of Your Life --  
A Message from Your Commonwealth’s Attorney,  
C. Phillips “Phil” Ferguson**



“Graduating from high school and going on to college is one of the most exciting times in your life. Along with the excitement, however, come important choices and decisions – some which may affect you for the rest of your life.

This brochure is geared to help you make informed decisions about the choices that will be available to you to help you start this exciting new journey on the right path, and to assure you of a bright and shining future!”



**Preparing for College Life:  
Four Must-Have Skills**

Graduating seniors should know how to:

- ✓ Think analytically
- ✓ Solve problems
- ✓ Form opinions
- ✓ Conduct research



According to a major survey, colleges want curious students who’ve developed good habits of the mind. Specifically, students who can:

- Accept criticism (and adjust their behavior accordingly)
- Cope with frustrating and ambiguous learning tasks
- Brave possible failure
- Express themselves clearly and convincingly
- Discern the credibility of various sources of information
- Draw inferences and reach independent conclusions

May is here and Graduation is upon us.

Now is the time to:

- Choose a college (if you haven’t already done so) and notify them of your intention to enroll. Let the other colleges know your decision.
- Send in necessary tuition deposits, your student housing forms and any other required paperwork to your chosen college.
- Thank everyone who helped you apply, letting them know your final decision.
- Take a bow. It wasn’t easy, but you did it!

All students should remember that a lot can happen between now and August. Just because you’ve confirmed your admission to college doesn’t mean the school year is over yet. Most colleges will review your final high school transcript and peek at your spring grades, so stay focused and finish strong!

Preparing for the challenges of college life:

- Get yourself a calendar and write everything down. Pay particular attention to the dates of your quizzes, tests, papers, and projects, as well as athletic practice and game times, performance rehearsals and productions, community service responsibilities, and any other commitments. Your schedule is jam packed, but, don’t worry – you should still be able to carve out some time to have some fun! Proper time management is one of the biggest roadblocks for college students.
- Schedule your own appointments. Once you get to college you will have to manage your own obligations. Instead of having mom make the calls to the dentist, doctor and pharmacy, start making those arrangements for yourself. In college you’ll have many more appointments to track while also managing a busy social and academic life.
- Put yourself on a budget. Whether you work part-time or receive an allowance, establish a definite amount of spending money each week and stick to it. Figure out your priorities each week and map out how you will spend or save your money.



**Set Goals**

Many new students’ attitude about college is that it is only vaguely part of their long-term plans. To many, it’s simply the thing you’re supposed to do next after completing high school. Clearly, it makes sense to take control of your education and your life. Do not passively sit back and just expect everything to work out. The responsibility for acquiring the education you seek rests ultimately with no one but you. In order to make things work, you need a plan, or a “road map”, not only to succeed academically, but to get the most out of your entire college experience. People who set goals, commit their goals to writing, and refer back periodically are many more times more likely to actually do whatever they want to do. When you’re driving, you can turn left, turn right, speed up, slam on the brakes, stop for lunch, and on and on. But what keeps you from winding up at random locations all the time? The answer is that

you got into your car with a clear idea of where you wanted to go. You knew at the beginning. Life is the same way. If you know at the beginning where you want to go, you’ll probably get there. If you don’t, you probably won’t. *In short, goals are what keep your brain making decisions with an emphasis on where you want to go, not this minute, but in the long run.*

**Are Goals Enough?**

Goals by themselves are not enough. In fact, a goal, without a plan for how you intend to reach the goal, is little more than wishful thinking. *The goal is the “what”. The plan is the “how”.*

**Is That All?**

*No – that’s not all.* It’s really just the beginning. The people who rise to the heights of whatever career or passion they choose will all tell you that college was just the beginning of their education – the “ground rules”, or the “warm up” – with the real thing starting when they got out and had to apply all those things that they learned. If college is training you for the real world, then setting goals now is training for setting goals in the real world. By doing it, you will get good at it. And if you’re good at setting goals by the time you’re out of college, you’ll be unstoppable!

**Living Arrangements**

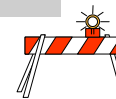
Leases and Rental Contracts are legally binding documents. Make sure you are totally aware of your responsibilities before entering into any agreement. Consider the following important questions:

**Dorm and Apartment Rentals: Questions to Ask Before You Sign on the Dotted Line**

- How much of the Security Deposit will I get back at the end of my occupancy?
- Do I need to put money down to hold a unit?
- How long are the leases? Can I get a 10 month lease?
- My roommate took off at semester. Is it okay to just pay my half of the rent?
- What utilities are paid?
- Are your apartments furnished?
- Should we pay our rent in one check, or should we each send a check?
- How many people can live in a unit?
- What will my heat and electric bill be?

**Pitfalls to Avoid Along the Way**

Now that we’ve talked about preparing for this journey, let’s talk about some “roadblocks” or dangers to avoid along the way to keep you from veering off your path.



**Illegal Drugs & Alcohol**

Substance and alcohol abuse is an increasingly urgent problem across the nation’s college campuses. The unnecessary negative consequences speak volumes to the importance of addressing this issue. Alcohol remains the favored substance of abuse on college campuses by far, but the abuse of illegal and prescription drugs has increased dramatically since the mid-1990’s, according to a study released by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University. Either way – they can both be the “end of the road” for students.



**Virginia’s Alcohol Laws**

The Commonwealth of Virginia defines the legal limit for driving while intoxicated at a BAC (blood alcohol content) of .08 percent for those 21 years of age or older and .02 percent for those under 21 years of age. If convicted, violators of the above can face fines, lose driving privileges and/or face various jail times according to prior convictions and the BAC measured at the time. Convictions of three or more DUI’s will result in a Class 6 felony – punishable by a term of imprisonment not less than one year nor more than five years, and a fine of not more than \$2,500, either or both.

*It is illegal for any person under the age of 21, to purchase, possess, or attempt to purchase or possess any alcoholic beverage.* Upon conviction, you may face up to 12 months in jail and/or be fined not more than \$2,500. The court shall order a fine of at least \$500 or a minimum of 50 hours of community service and your driver’s license is suspended for a *mandatory minimum of not less than 6 months or up to 1 year.*

**Laying Down the Law for Teens**

- All states have enacted zero-tolerance laws for alcohol consumption for individuals under the age of 21, and makes driving under the influence of any amount of alcohol a serious criminal offense for drivers under the age of 21.
- No one may use an altered or fake ID such as driver’s license, birth certificate or student identification card to establish a false identity or false age to purchase an alcoholic beverage.
- Violators of the above are guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor and, upon conviction, face a fine of up to \$2,500 and/or a year in jail and/or fifty hours of community service, and mandatory loss of their driver’s license for not less than 6 months or up to a year.

### More Information on Fake ID's

It may seem fun to have a fake ID until you get caught with it. As stated, severe penalties apply to the possession, manufacture, use or sale of an altered/false driver's license and military or university identification.

It is also illegal to loan your driver's license or identification card to another person. In fact, there are more serious consequences for loaning your license or identification card to someone else. If you are carrying a fake ID or have someone else's identification and are involved in an accident, your medical attention could be delayed. In case of death or serious injury, the police could notify the wrong family because they don't know your true identity.

### Sexual Assaults on Campus

The term *sexual assault* encompasses a wide range of behaviors from unwanted touching to rape. Definitions of rape and sexual assault vary, with each state having its own legal definitions. Sexual assault does not affect victims only physically but also may leave lasting psychological and emotional scars. Moreover, assaults affect the entire campus, not just individual students. Sexual violence compromises the integrity of the safe, welcoming environment campuses are supposed to provide, impinging on the academic and social success of all students.

According to a recent survey, in 9 out of 10 cases the victims of assaults on campus knew their perpetrators, and a large percentage of attacks took place during a date or at the victim's residence. Alcohol is a frequently cited situational contributor to sexual violence. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's recent report on college drinking estimated that more than 70,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 experience alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape each year in the United States.

While alcohol and other drug use may be present in violent incidents, it does not justify or excuse assault. Intoxication by the victim can decrease her ability to resist assault effectively. This is especially true if a victim becomes unconscious after drinking. Having sex with a person who is too drunk to give consent is illegal, and is considered rape.

While the extent of campus sexual assault is alarming, recent research also finds that most college men are not coercive, do not want to victimize others, and are willing to be part of the solution to sexual assault.

**"Convicted Midshipman Facing Prison, Navy Dismissal":** Consider a recent case where a Naval

Academy midshipman convicted of sexually assaulting a fellow student is facing two years in prison and dismissal from the Navy. In addition, he'll have to register as a Sex Offender and will likely have to repay the \$140,000 cost of his education at the Annapolis military school.

### Rape-Facilitating Drugs

While alcohol is by far the most commonly used rape-facilitating drug, Rohypnol and GHB are also well known for their incapacitating effects. The effects of Rohypnol are felt within 15-30 minutes after use and may persist for many hours. Extremely dangerous when mixed with alcohol, possible adverse effects including low blood pressure, difficulty breathing, coma and even death are possible. Victims given this drug are often uncertain whether they were even assaulted.

Keep an eye on your beverage at all times while out at a club or party to make certain that no one tries to put drugs in your drink. If you go out to a club or restaurant, go with a buddy or group of friends you can trust. Make sure you leave with your friends, and don't go home with anyone you do not know and trust.

### Sexual Harassment

As with rape and sexual assault, legal definitions of sexual harassment vary from state to state, as do campus policies addressing this problem. Sexual harassment, like sexual assault, can involve many types of behavior, including unwanted displays of sexually explicit material, suggestive looks or gestures, sexual teasing or comments, exposure, and deliberate touching or physical closeness. A common characteristic of offenders is a tendency to underestimate the impact of their harassment.

### Unlawful Filming

*Keep this in mind when attending your next party...* In this day of camera phones, MySpace, Facebook and other digital technologies, it is important to remember that any unlawful filming, videotaping, photographing or creating any still image record by any means whatsoever of any non-consenting person if that person is nude, clad in undergarments or in a state of undress so as to expose the genitals, pubic area, buttocks or female breast is a Class 1 misdemeanor. A violation involving a non-consenting person under the age of 18 shall be punishable as a Class 6 felony.

### Prevention & Safety Tips

- *Respect your body, respect your health, respect your beliefs and your boundaries.*

- Educate yourself about the realities of sexual assault. Knowledge can be a powerful tool in abuse prevention.
- Learn self-defense. Many colleges offer self-defense classes and some even provide physical education credit.
- Believe in your right to make choices and decisions about your body and to have those decisions respected.
- Trust your instincts. Pay attention and listen to your "inner voice" that tells you when something is wrong or feels unsafe.
- Communicate physical and sexual boundaries clearly and assertively. Your body belongs to you. You never lose the right to say "no" and can withdraw your consent in a sexual situation at any time.
- Remember that alcohol or drug use can increase the risk of sexual violence and can affect judgment, impair someone's flight or fight response and impede clear communication.
- Know that sexual assault is never the victim's fault regardless of the situation they were in.

### Support Systems



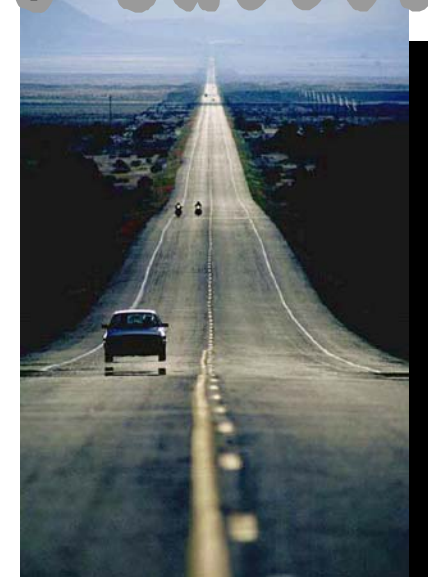
While this is an exciting time, it can also be a little frightening or intimidating. Don't forget that you have a "support system" – whether it's family, friends, school counselors, perhaps your church – to help you out in challenging times. Remember the *strong foundation* that has been provided for you when faced with making difficult choices and decisions, and don't be afraid to ask for help and sometimes directions along your journey!

### Looking Back...Looking Ahead

*"I hope I've provided you with some "tools" to help you along this journey and to keep you from getting "off track". As you begin this exciting new challenge and look back on this time in your life, remember that you learn from every success, and more from every failure when you let it guide you, not discourage you. We all have dreams of what we want to achieve in our future. Success comes only with hard work and sacrifice – a willingness to encounter our failures and to learn from them, and a desire to overcome obstacles and create opportunities. You are the leaders and the "map makers" of a world made smaller each day through technology, the designers of innovative approaches, and the dreamers of a brighter future. You all have the opportunity to make a difference! Your journey awaits you. Embrace it. This is a journey you'll never forget. It will be challenging as well as rewarding, but the best adventures always are."* - C. Phillips "Phil" Ferguson, Your Commonwealth's Attorney



# The Road to Success



## Important Information for Graduation Bound Seniors

Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney  
Mills E. Godwin, Jr. Courts Building  
150 North Main Street  
Suffolk, Virginia 23434-4552

Visit our Websites:  
[Hwww.suffolk.va.us/cwatty/](http://www.suffolk.va.us/cwatty/)  
[Hwww.suffolk.va.us/cwatty/vwsp/H](http://www.suffolk.va.us/cwatty/vwsp/H)

757/514-4365