Reminder that the greatest things you can send with your child to college aren't ones you can purchase (think life skills, confidence, redefining "failure".) However, I, too, love a checklist, so here's one for you.

This is based on my experience as a student, professor, and mother of two college students. Your list may differ depending upon your specific institution.

Recommended:

- Mattress topper
- Bedding and pillows (check mattress size, usually XL for first year)
- Towels and bath cloths
- Shower shoes (not mandatory, but communal showers - yuck)
- Shower tote (also not mandatory, but makes life a little easier)
- Toiletries
- Flashlight and batteries
- 10 ft phone charger (my eldest said this was second only to a mattress topper in her must-have list)
- Rain coat or umbrella (trust me, your child will say they don't need this and then call you at some point to say thank you)
- Hamper or laundry bag (consider distance to laundry room and decide what would be best for transport)
- Laundry detergent (be respectful of your roommate and skip the synthetic fragrances. Pods are AWFUL in those machines, so go with liquid or sheets)
- Small first aid kit (our family chooses natural options, so pack whatever you use for the most common issues)
- Local honey, especially if your child is attending school in a different area of the country. (This is for allergies and will work better than any OTC with side effects or an air purifier. They can just take a spoonful each day, or add to coffee/hot tea.)
- School supplies/laptop (might sound silly, but the right pen can make a world of difference in academic attitude on some days)
- Medical and financial POA (here are the ones we used)
- Kleenex

Optional, but helpful:

- Iron and portable ironing board (yep, maybe even for boys. Our son attends a school that requires a coat and tie, so he needs one. Also, I was one of the only ones in college with an iron, and in hindsight, I could have made bank charging people to use it. Just kidding … sort of)
- Fridge/microwave (good idea to coordinate with roommate)
- Something to eat off of and to eat with (and if they need to be washed, dish soap and sponges)
- Clothes hangers
- Under bed storage
- Command hooks (check with college as some don't allow those)
- Bike/bike lock/skateboard - yes, skateboard. Our eldest went to a coastal school where it was easy to zip around on one of those and take it into class with her. Our middle is going to school in the mountains and taking a bike. Did you know some schools let you register your bike with university police, just as you would a car?)
- Basic cleaning supplies (reminder, skip the synthetic fragrance)

Personal touch, but not needed (to help both momma's heart and child):
I purchased cards at the dollar store, wrote encouraging notes inside, and labeled each one with a time to open. I threw cash or a gift card in a couple of them. Ideas for themes are first day of class, first day of Rush, before an exam, if you miss your dog, need a pick me up, for an early morning class, first football game … really, the sky's the limit! Tailor it to your child - after all, you know them best!

Another really wonderful thing my mother used to do for me (and I only managed once for our eldest) is a small something to open every day between going back to school after Thanksgiving and the last day of exams. It can be REALLY hard to be back in the comfort at home for 5-6 days, with the nostalgia of holiday traditions, and then have to head back to school with exams looming. My mom would get small things, some practical, some funny, wrap them in colorful tissue paper, slap a number on the outside for the order she wanted them opened, and send them back to school with me. Decades later, I remember how comforting those touches of home were and how they helped boost my spirits. Think things like fuzzy socks, hot chocolate packets, beef jerky, napkins with funny sayings, holiday toilet paper - get creative!

Don't let this list cripple you in your decision-making. It's meant to help, not cause stress. Also, we live in a time when you can have something delivered to your student in 2 days, and sometimes overnight. It's okay if you forget something. Take a deep breath, you've got this!