March 9, 2016

Greetings from the Office of Parent Services!
March means spring is coming. Also upon us is spring recess for UMass Amherst students. As we welcome spring and plan for the second half of the semester, we want to share some tips for your student’s spring break itinerary, and remind you of Fall 2016 course registration, and housing selection (on and off campus). We also encourage you and your student to plan ahead for final exams and move out.

Spring Break Plans
Spring recess begins March 12. While some students plan to use the time off to travel, others will be working, going home to help the family, visiting friends, or participating in volunteer or service projects. Whatever their plans, remind them to exercise good judgment, especially if they are traveling. Here are some important safety measures to help with the adventure:

- Confirm travel itinerary including hotel, plane, and rental car reservations a few days in advance.
- When traveling abroad, remember to keep passports secure.
- Keep in mind that being in another country means students are bound by their laws.
- Always bring an insurance card and possibly change cell phone plan to include international calls.
- Keep important telephone numbers handy at all times. Use caution with credit cards and be aware of identity theft.
- Make extended family members aware of your student’s plans, and caution family members that Spring Break is a time to watch out for phishing scams in email.
- Remember false identification cards, including fake driver’s licenses, are illegal and especially subject to review and sanctions during spring break.
- Have an honest conversation with your student about alcohol (if applicable). Recommend that they learn about the alcohol laws of their destination and encourage responsibility and moderation.
- Advise your student to travel with others, stay together, and always use the buddy system.
- Remind your student to remain aware of their surroundings. Emphasize safety on balconies, being careful about sun exposure and dehydration, locking hotel room doors, and not swimming/climbing alone.

We hope they travel safely and return with many wonderful memories and photos.

For students staying in Amherst, support services including University Health Services (UHS), the Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH) and the Center for Women and Community (CWC) will be available 24/7 throughout Spring Break. Other offices such as the W.E.B. Du Bois Library and Campus Recreation will have limited hours of operation. The Dining Commons, with the exception of Hampshire, will be closed from March 12-18. Please check each office’s website for a calendar of scheduled spring break hours.

Fall 2016 Course Registration and Advising
Spring semester will end before you know it, and your student’s planning for the fall semester should already be underway. Course Registration for Fall 2016 begins April 4. It’s what we call priority registration—the early registration period for currently enrolled students. Here are a few pointers for a
speedy and productive registration process:

- Students should meet with their academic advisor to prepare for registration and to be sure they are on track with requirements. They can view their advisor’s information in SPIRE. It includes location of Advising Centers as well as a link to their college website. They can also review the course catalog and see their enrollment appointment in their SPIRE account.
- In addition, students should check SPIRE to make sure there are no holds on their accounts. In the event there is a hold, they should contact the corresponding office ASAP to clear it up and avoid unnecessary issues with course registration.
- Many students take summer courses to catch up on requirements or gain an advantage and perhaps finish their degree early. While this is strongly encouraged and additional financial aid is often available, students should consider the additional costs associated with summer courses before registering.
- Students are encouraged to declare a major by the end of their third semester on campus. If your student is ready to declare a major or wishes to change majors, study abroad, or do an internship for academic credits, they should discuss their decision with their current advisor. Some majors are open to current students, while others have restrictions or application processes that students must fulfill before they can declare the major. Your student's advisor can help determine which steps to take.

More information can be found on the Office of the University Registrar’s [site](#).

**Fall 2016 Apartment and Room Selection**

Residential Life has posted the Fall 2016 Room Selection bulletin on the housing [website](#). The information explains important steps students need to take to participate in the room selection process for next fall. Please review the Fall 2016 Room Selection Bulletin closely and encourage your student to do the same.

**Off-Campus Living**

Is your student ready to make the move off campus? Here are the Off Campus Student Center’s top tips for you and your student for a smooth transition:

- **Get Certified**: The Living Off Campus Certification is free, online, and often required by landlords. Visit [Off Campus Student Services](#) to get started.
- **Don’t Get Scammed**: Skip Craigslist and start your rental search at [UMOCS.org](#) for university-vetted rental properties and useful resources.
- **Check Your Finances**: Monthly rent + Utilities + Cable/internet + Security deposit—it adds up! Do not be surprised by the upfront costs.
- **Choose Wisely**: Great friends are not always the best housemates. Students can post and view roommate profiles on UMOCS.org if they are looking for compatible housemates.
- **Leases are Legally Binding**: The UMass Amherst Student Legal Services Office will review leases for free! Have your student make an appointment today.
- **Renting is a Family Affair**: Parents/families typically co-sign leases and are ultimately financially responsible, so start talking with your student about the process now.

If you want to learn more in person, the [Off Campus Student Center](#) is located in 314 Student Union Building and can provide students and families with more information on the off campus housing process.

**May Move-Out**

It’s not too soon to start thinking about May Move-Out! Please encourage your student to bring home all items they will not need for the end of the semester when they come home for spring break. We want your student’s move-out to be as simple and stress free as possible. Beginning March 30, visit our [Move-out website](#) for tips and checklists, as well as information on traffic patterns and loading zones for each residence hall.
Financial Aid Update
Financial Aid Services sends notifications to students’ university email. These notices may be related to required information to complete the financial aid application process and/or when the student’s financial aid award should be viewed in SPIRE. Remind your student to check their university email account for notices from Financial Aid Services. They should also check their To Do List in SPIRE. This is where they will see if any information is needed to process their request for financial aid.

Financial aid award emails for Fall 2016 will begin in late June and continue as students become eligible. Visit the Financial Aid Services website for additional information.

Fall 2015 Dean's List
The Fall 2015 Dean’s List is now available. Congratulations to everyone whose student made the list! For more information on how to find the Dean’s List in your local paper, visit the News and Information Office.

Commencement 2016
If your student is planning to graduate in May, now is the time to make sure they’re making the proper preparations and that you’re ready to attend the ceremonies on May 6-7. Commencement 2016 information is available online.

March Poll Question
Since your student enrolled at UMass, on what topic(s)/issue(s) have you personally contacted the university? Participate in the poll and view last month’s results here.

Important dates
- **March 11:** Residence halls close for spring break at 6 p.m.
- **March 20:** Residence halls reopen at 10 a.m.
- **March 21:** Classes resume
- **March 21:** Last day to request an appointment for on-campus housing
- **March 23:** Summer Camps Job Fair, 1 to 4 p.m., Goodell Building 5th Floor
- **April 4:** Registration begins for Fall 2016

Helpful links
Dean’s List Fall 2015
Financial Aid Services
Off Campus Student Services
Office of the Registrar
Residential Life

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact the Office of Parent Services, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. We’re more than happy to assist you.

In case of a campus emergency, always follow the university’s main web page at www.umass.edu. The website will display a distinctly colored stripe at the top containing pertinent status updates and information related to ongoing emergencies.

Sincerely,
Jeanne Horrigan, Director
Office of Parent Services

*Treating Our Parents as Partners*