Greetings from the Office of Parent Services

As spring approaches, we hope your student takes some time to go outside and enjoy the bright sun, warmer air, and beautiful green grass around UMass and the Pioneer Valley. As they welcome spring and plan for the second half of the semester, we want to share some tips for your student’s spring break itinerary, as well as remind you of Fall 2017 course registration and housing selection (on and off campus). We also encourage you and your student to plan ahead for move out in May.

Spring Break Plans

Residence halls close at 10 a.m. on Sat. March 11 for spring recess. While some students plan to use the time off to travel and have fun, others will be working, going home to help the family, visiting friends, or participating in volunteer or service projects. Whatever their plans, this is the time to have an open conversation with your student about alcohol and safety, especially if they are traveling. It’s also a great time to discuss expectations for responsible decision-making and planning. Here are some important tips for the adventure:

- Your student should have already planned for their trip if they are traveling. Now is the time to share and confirm travel itinerary, including hotel, plane, and rental car reservations, with a family member.
- Encourage them to plan a budget and stick to it.
- When traveling abroad, remind your student to keep their passport secure and check with the U.S. Department of State for current travel warnings and updates.
- Keep in mind that being in another country means students are bound by the local and country laws as well as the University Code of Student Conduct.
- Encourage them to always bring an insurance card, possibly change their cell phone plan to include international calls, and keep important telephone numbers handy at all times. They should use caution with credit cards and be aware of identity theft.
- Remember false identification cards, including fake driver’s licenses, are illegal and especially subject to review and sanctions during spring break.
- Discuss your expectations regarding alcohol consumption. Recommend that they learn about the alcohol laws of their destination, be aware of what they are drinking, do not use alcohol with other intoxicants, and drink responsibly and in moderation, including refusing drinks and rides from strangers.
- Stress that they should think twice about what they post on social media.
- Advise them to travel with others, stay together, always use the buddy system, and always have a charged cell phone at their disposal.
- Remind them 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, the W.E.B. Du Bois Library and Campus Recreation Center will have limited hours of operation. The Dining Commons, with the exception of Hampshire, will be closed from March 11-18. In addition, support services including University Health Services (UHS), the Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH) and the Center for Women and Community will be on call 24/7 throughout Spring Break. Please check each office’s website for a calendar of scheduled spring break hours.
Staying Well – Tips from University Health Services

Throughout the country, influenza or “flu” season is peaking. On our campus, we have seen students with a variety of infectious illnesses, including the flu, stomach bugs, the mumps, and the common cold. Please encourage your student to review flu fighting suggestions from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as their mumps fact sheet. Students who feel sick should call a UHS Triage Advice Nurse, who is available 24/7, at (413) 577-5229.

Fall 2017 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 2017 begins April 3. 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 or get ahead on requirements and perhaps finish their degree early. While 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 credit, 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 website.

On- and Off-Campus Housing Updates

Fall 2017 On-Campus Room Selection

Residential Life has posted the Fall 2017 Room Selection bulletin on their website. The information explains important steps students need to take to participate in the room selection process for next fall. Please review the Fall 2017 Room Selection Bulletin closely and encourage your student to do the same.

Off-Campus Living

If your student wants to start the search for a rental listing, point them towards the Off Campus Student Life website. Students can create a profile, look for a listing, look for a roommate, or even post their own listing. Here are some tips from past students for a smooth transition:

- “Make sure your student can afford to rent.” Monthly rent + utilities + cable/internet + security deposit – it adds up! Do not be surprised by the upfront costs.
- “Ask the experts.” The Off Campus Assistants are always here for your student and they know best because they’ve been through the moving process themselves! Check out their OffCampusLife blog.
- “Avoid frenemies.” Great friends are not always the best housemates.
- “Take advantage of free legal advice.” 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.
Students can learn more by visiting the Off Campus Student Center (314 Student Union). Off Campus Assistants can provide them with information on the off-campus housing process as they already serve those who commute or live in the greater Amherst community. The Center also offers a place to study, gather, enjoy events, and learn more about university resources and services.

May Move-Out
It’s not too soon to start thinking about May Move-Out! Encourage your student to bring home all items they will not need for the end of the semester if they plan to come home for spring break. We want your student’s Move-Out to be as simple and stress free as possible. On 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 2017 will begin in late June and continue as students become eligible. Visit the Financial Aid Services website for additional information.

Fall 2016 Dean’s List
The Fall 2016 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 2017 Updates
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. Commencement information is available on the Commencement 2017 website.

Senior Portraits
Senior and professional portrait opportunities are available through Ultimate Exposures®. Ultimate Exposures® will be on campus to take cap and gown photos as well as professional photos (check the website for dates). Although Walk-ins are welcome, encourage your student to visit the website to schedule their appointment.

Graduating Veterans
The Student Veterans Resource Center is distributing complimentary stoles to all veterans who are eligible to graduate. Students who have already reserved their stoles can pick them up at the Resource Center in 19 Dickinson Hall. Students who are interested in receiving a stole, but have not yet reserved one, should call the Resource Center at 413-545-0939.

Commencement Day – Friday, May 12
Rain or shine, the Undergraduate Commencement ceremony for the Class of 2017 will take place May 12 at 4:30 p.m. in McGuirk Alumni Stadium. Stadium gates open at 2:00 p.m.

Parking
On-campus parking is free on Commencement Day. Shuttle buses will take guests to the ceremony from campus lots. Please allow plenty of travel time to reach campus, park, and arrive at the stadium. Guests should plan to arrive on campus by 2:30 p.m., as seating at McGuirk Stadium is unreserved.

March Poll Question
What was the greatest challenge your student overcame during their college transition? Participate in the poll and view previous poll results here.

Important dates
March 8: Last day to drop a class with a record of “W” and to select the pass/fail option
March 11: Residence halls close for spring break at 10 a.m.
March 19: Residence halls reopen at 10 a.m.
March 20: Classes resume
March 20: Last day to request an appointment for on-campus housing
April 3: Registration begins for Fall 2017

Helpful links
Dean's List Fall 2016
Financial Aid Services
Off Campus Student Services
Office of the Registrar
Residential Life

We encourage you to explore our websites and become familiar with campus resources, to better direct your student to the appropriate office or department as they continue learning to handle their own problems and concerns.

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

In case of a campus emergency, always follow the main UMass web page at www.umass.edu. The site will display a distinctlycolored stripe at the top containing pertinent status updates and information related to ongoing emergencies.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Horrigan, Director
Office of Parent Services
Knowlton Hall
691 North Pleasant Street OFC
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Amherst, Massachusetts 01003-9399

Email: umassparents@umass.edu • Phone: (413) 577-4444 • Fax: (413) 545-9631
Office of Parent Services website • UMass Amherst Parents on Facebook
• UMass Amherst Family to Family blog and Facebook group
Treating Our Parents as Partners