Greetings from the Office of Parent Services!
February is one of the busiest months of the year for UMass students. We hope your students are staying engaged and taking advantage of the many resources available to them! We have lots of information to share with you, including the FAFSA priority deadline, domestic exchange program, fall semester room selection, Commencement updates, and more.

FAFSA deadline approaching
Students interested in receiving financial aid must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) each academic year. The 2017-2018 FAFSA should be submitted this month to meet the March 1 priority deadline and ensure Financial Aid Services can generate a preliminary award package. The FAFSA will use your 2015 tax information, so you can use the IRS data retrieval tool to update the FAFSA with your tax information. For more information, students can visit the Financial Aid website; go to the main office, 243 Whitmore, during regular business hours; or stop by the satellite office in the Center for Multicultural Advancement and Student Success (CMASS), 105 Wilder Hall, Thursdays, 2:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Recruitment season is here
This month brings many applications/deadlines for summer opportunities, including internships, service learning, outdoor programming, study abroad, and more. Talk with your student about their interests, encourage them to explore offerings through Career Services, academic departments and other avenues, and support them in identifying ways to accomplish their goals.

From Exploratory Track to a major
Sophomore year is an empowering time for students, bringing growth and a renewed focus on academics. It’s also a time when Exploratory Track students begin concentrating on a course of study. Sophomores who haven’t yet identified a plan should:

- Schedule an appointment with an academic advisor, and talk to faculty members and teaching assistants from various departments to discuss opportunities. Advisors are trained to ask questions that help students visualize and choose an academic area of focus.

- Familiarize themselves with the many UMass schools, colleges, and departments. More than 90 majors, 60 minors, and 40 certificate programs are available. They should attend some of the numerous information sessions and events offered throughout the academic year to learn more.

- Connect with classmates who have similar interests. Students often discover their passion by interacting with others through study groups, student organizations, service learning projects, and similar opportunities. Encourage them to get involved and stay open to new discoveries.

While it’s up to your student to declare a major, offering your guidance and support through regular conversations about their goals, courses, and experiences goes a long way.

Stress relief dogs are back!
Each semester, the Center for Health Promotion’s Peer Health Educators welcome certified therapy dogs to campus to help ease midterm stress. In addition, an acupuncturist from University Health Services (UHS) will be offering free acupuncture. Encourage your student to come check out this event at the Student Union Ballroom and the W.E.B. Du Bois library on Monday, February 27, 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. It’s an easy and healthy way to relax, have fun, and connect with other students.
To families of new students living in residence halls
All new students living on campus recently received an email regarding residence hall fire safety. Please take a moment to read the message and discuss with your student the importance of following these fire safety guidelines.

Coming soon: Fall 2017 room selection
Students and families will receive information about Fall 2017 room selection within the next week. Please review the materials and the Residential Life website, and speak with your student about their housing plans for the upcoming academic year.

March 3-5 residential guest policy
In accordance with Residential Life policy, as it relates to special circumstances involving concern for student safety and security, the residence hall guest policy will be adjusted the first weekend of March. Beginning 8 p.m. Thursday, March 2 and continuing through 11 p.m. Sunday, March 5, no non-UMass guests will be permitted to visit the residence halls. UMass Amherst residential students may have up to four guests who are UMass students with current UCards. For weekend policy updates and information about special events, visit the Student Life Safety site.

Residence hall spring break schedule
All undergraduate residence halls except break housing, North Apartments, and Lincoln Apartments will close Saturday, March 11 at 10 a.m. and reopen Sunday, March 19 at 10 a.m. Students and families should make departure and return plans accordingly. Those who do not vacate their residence hall by closing time will be assessed a $150 unauthorized occupancy fee. Students who require on-campus housing over break should email Residential Life Student Services at living@umass.edu.

Spring Housing Fair
Off Campus Student Life is hosting the Spring Housing Fair on March 7, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m., in the Campus Center Concourse. Representatives from local complexes will be present to answer all of your student's questions! Visit the new Off Campus Student Life website and encourage your student to familiarize themselves with the site as housing season is quickly approaching!

Domestic exchange information sessions
Studying away at one of over 170 public colleges and universities through the National Student Exchange Consortium provides educational enhancements beyond the UMass classroom. This unique program allows students to experience the vast cultural and environmental diversity of the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam or the U.S. Virgin Islands for a semester or year. Tuition and fees are generally not more than what students currently pay, financial aid applies, and all credits transfer. Domestic exchange information sessions are held Wednesdays at 4:45 p.m., and Thursdays and Fridays at 2:30 p.m. in 613 Goodell. Attendees receive an application and all the information necessary to apply; the application deadline for the upcoming academic year is March 1.

NSSE for first-year and senior students
Encourage your first-year or senior student to complete the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) by Tuesday, March 7. It's a chance for them to share opinions of their UMass experience and become eligible to win one of more than 175 prizes. The survey link is in an email they received on Feb. 13. For more information, contact NSSE@umass.edu.

Commencement updates
Commencement Weekend includes a variety of events for graduating seniors and their families to celebrate accomplishments and provide one last memory of their time at UMass. Undergraduate Commencement takes place Friday, May 12, 4:30 p.m., at McGuirk Stadium. School and college ceremonies are Saturday, May 13. All parents, families, and friends are invited to attend Commencement Weekend. Tickets are not required for graduates or guests, and there is no limit on the number of guests a graduate may bring; however, guest seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis.
**Residence Hall lodging:** Staying on campus is the best way to be close to Commencement activities. Single or double occupancy accommodations in the Southwest Residential Area offer casual comfort at affordable rates. Nearby parking is free, and linens and towels are provided. A few rooms are available for guests with disabilities; be sure to complete a reservation early and indicate any special accommodation needs. Online reservations will be accepted until 5 p.m. EST on Friday, April 7, or until space fills.

Visit the Commencement website for details on school and college ceremonies, on-campus dining, shuttle and parking information, Hotel UMass and other places to stay, and more.

For questions related to degree requirements or other graduation-related academic matters, call the Office of the University Registrar, (413) 545-0555, or email reggrad@registrar.umass.edu.

**Save the date for Family Weekend 2017**
Family Weekend 2017 will be held Friday, October 13-15. This is the weekend when families from all class years come to campus to connect with their students, UMass, and the Town of Amherst. Events are open to all family members of UMass students.

**Important dates**
- **February 20:** Presidents’ Day *(no classes)*
- **February 27:** Paws program, 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., *Student Union Ballroom and the W.E.B. Du Bois library*
- **March 1:** Domestic exchange and 2017 study abroad application deadline
- **March 1:** FAFSA priority deadline
- **March 8:** Mid-semester date *(last day to drop with “W” and select “P/F”)*
- **March 11:** Residence halls close for spring break at 10 a.m.
- **March 19:** Residence halls reopen at 10 a.m.

**Helpful links**
- Career Services
- Commencement
- Domestic Exchange programs
- FAFSA
- 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](http://www.umass.edu). The site will display a distinctly colored stripe at the top containing pertinent status updates and information related to ongoing emergencies.

Sincerely,
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Treating Our Parents as Partners