November 18, 2015

Greetings from the Office of Parent Services!
The end of the fall semester is near, and Thanksgiving is a week away! We hope your student is staying abreast of what's happening on campus, attending classes regularly, and completing final projects to end the semester well.

November's busy pace is likely adding stress to your student's life. In this issue, you'll find helpful tips on helping your student tackle end-of-semester assignments, plus information on the spring online room selection process, important dates and deadlines, and much more.

Committed to a caring community
Recently, there have been student protests on college campuses around the nation on issues of race, inclusion, and social justice. Our students and members of the campus administration are in conversation and are finding ways to build a caring and just community. Chancellor Subbaswamy created a series of listening sessions to hear directly from students. The first session took place last Friday and more sessions are planned for the future. Learn more about the university's Diversity Strategic Plan.

End-of-semester projects and other assignments
Many campus resources are available to help students succeed. Encourage your student to seek help now if they're experiencing academic difficulties. If other adjustment concerns seem significant, encourage them to contact the Center for Counseling and Psychological Health. It's important that they continue to attend and participate in class, and make good use of their time and professors' office hours. Class attendance and participation have a direct impact on academic performance. For extra academic assistance, the Learning Resource Center (LRC) provides free tutoring and supplemental instruction.

Stress management
To help students destress before finals, Peer Health Educators from the Center for Health Promotion are hosting another PAWS therapy dog session Wednesday, Dec. 9; your student can find more information on Campus Pulse. Encourage them to attend this and other social, educational, and cultural events on campus if they're feeling overwhelmed - taking a break is a good way to cultivate the mind and manage tension.

Final exams
Final exams are December 14-19. Students should view the complete exam schedule ahead of time; it's also posted on their SPIRE account. If students have an examination conflict (three or more exams in one day, and/or two exams on the same day at the same time) they should go to the Registrar's Office, 213 Whitmore, for help resolving the conflict.

Home expectations during breaks
Many students will return home soon for Thanksgiving and winter breaks. They've learned a lot about themselves and about making decisions on their own. This newfound independence might be challenging for the whole family. With a little planning and communication, the holidays can continue to be enjoyable for everyone. Expect and acknowledge that your student may have changed a bit, and
be prepared for the transition by setting home expectations in advance and keeping the lines of communication open.

**Spring online room selection underway**
While the majority of students remain in the same room for spring semester, students interested in changing rooms can request an appointment for spring online room selection in SPIRE now through December 6. Students who request an appointment must check out of their current room by removing their belongings and turning in their key to the Residential Service Desk by noon on December 19. Students who do not check out will have their appointments cancelled. If your student plans to participate in online room selection, encourage them to start taking items home over Thanksgiving break to reduce the load they'll need to move in December.

**Get ready for winter**
It's not too early to prepare for winter weather! We encourage all student drivers to stock their cars with a winter storm kit, including a shovel, a small bag of sand or cat litter, and a sturdy scraper. Thanksgiving break is a good time to collect these items - encourage them not to wait until the last minute, since essential items like shovels can sell out fast!

**Alcohol and substance use**
Parents and families continue to have significant influence on students, even after they leave for college. Your opinion and guidance can help your student make responsible decisions when it comes to alcohol and substance use. Some tips for the conversation:

- Be clear with them about your beliefs around alcohol. If you don't discuss it, they may think you believe it's OK for them to drink.
- Ask your student directly about their thoughts on alcohol, and be open to the responses.
- If they plan to drink, share harm reduction strategies with them, like keeping track of how many drinks they have, alternating alcohol with water, eating while drinking, and not driving under the influence.

In addition to these important conversations, you can review MyStudentBody's online Parents and Family Module to get a sense of the challenges students face and how you can stay involved and provide helpful guidance. Go to the website, click "Register here," create an account, and enter the school code: umassaparent.

**November polling question**
Each month, we conduct an anonymous, one-question online poll about UMass parent and family experiences, and share the results the following month. Please take a moment to answer this month's question: *What are the top three things you hope your student will do while at UMass?* Your responses are used to help us plan programs and services, and we appreciate your feedback.

**Important dates**
- **November 25:** Residence halls close for Thanksgiving break at 6 p.m.
- **November 29:** Residence halls re-open at 9 a.m.
- **November 30:** Classes resume
- **December 15:** Last day of mail and package delivery for fall semester
- **December 14-19:** Final exams
- **December 19:** Residence halls close at noon

**Links to other UMass Amherst websites**
- Learning Resource Center
- UMass Parent Association Advisory Council
As always, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact the Office of Parent Services. Our office is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. We're more than happy to assist you.

Sincerely,
Jeanne Horrigan, Director
Office of Parent Services

Treating Our Parents as Partners

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