

Office of Parent Services



October 29, 2015

Greetings from the Office of Parent Services!

The weather is turning chilly, and spring course registration, Thanksgiving break, and eventually final exams are quickly approaching. This email is full of important steps students need to take before the semester ends.

Halloween safety

Earlier this week your student received an email from Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Campus Life Enku Gelaye, with important information about Halloween observances. The message includes information on the many fun activities happening throughout the week; outlines adjustments to the guest policy in effect October 30-November 1; reminds students living off campus to be mindful of families in their neighborhoods; and shares guidelines for safe, respectful costumes. Please take a moment to [read the message](#) and reinforce the importance of safe celebrations when you communicate with them.

Emergency campus safety programs reminder

At UMass Amherst, we take your student's safety seriously. Different offices work together to ensure the welfare of the entire campus community, as explained in this recent [article](#) outlining resources to help students, faculty, and staff in case of an emergency. Have a conversation with your student about campus emergency safety programs and encourage them to subscribe to the [emergency text message service](#). It's important that students know how to prepare for emergencies and how to protect themselves if one should occur.

Preparing for spring registration

Registration for spring classes begins November 12. Students can see their specific registration period or enrollment appointment on SPIRE. An enrollment appointment is the date a student can actually sign up for classes. To get ready for spring registration, encourage your student to meet with their advisor before their enrollment appointment and make sure all holds are cleared. They should come prepared for their meeting with the advisor by mapping out a tentative schedule and generating a list of questions. Remind them that advisors and staff in their school and college are here to assist them with any questions or concerns they may have.

Note: It's extremely important that students take care of their to-dos and holds before registration begins. Failure to do so can impede registration. On the Hold Item page in SPIRE, your student can find the reason for each hold (e.g. parking ticket, library books, advising, etc.), which office placed the hold, steps to take to have it removed, and who to contact for more information. To-do items do not have associated restrictions, but can become holds if they're not completed.

Financial Aid Services reminder

Remind your student to check their SPIRE to-do list and submit any outstanding documents to Financial Aid Services as soon as possible. Outstanding financial aid to-do Items will impact students' ability to receive financial aid or keep aid already awarded. Your student should contact [Financial Aid Services](#), (413) 545-0801, with any questions or concerns.

Staying healthy

As the temperature starts to drop and the days get shorter and darker, it can be challenging for some students to get out of bed and make it to classes. Encourage your student to stay active by joining an intramural sports team, or taking a group fitness class. [Campus Recreation](#) also offers personal fitness programs, nutrition advising, and much more. Students should establish a routine for their daily lives, eat well, and avoid all-nighters. An ample amount of sleep at night and routine exercise can produce long-term health benefits.

Care packages and Residential Life Student Services

November is a busy and sometimes stressful month for students. Sending them a care package around this time can help them get through the last few weeks of their semester. Homemade favorites, gift cards to restaurants, and similar items can go a long way. For more care package options, visit UMass Dining's "[Gifts from Home](#)" page.

If you're planning to send a care package, or any other package to your student, remember that Residential Service Desks can only accept packages under 40 lbs. For more information on sending and receiving mail, check out the [Residential Life Desk Services](#) website.

Thanksgiving and winter break

Thanksgiving break and winter break are right around the corner! It's not too early to plan departure and travel arrangements with your student. Residence halls close for Thanksgiving on Wednesday, Nov. 25 at 6 p.m. and re-open Sunday, Nov. 29 at 9 a.m. Residential Service Desks open at noon for students who lose their key over the break. For winter break, residence halls close Saturday, Dec. 19 at noon and re-open Sunday, Jan. 17 at 9 a.m.

All students must vacate the residence halls by the published closing time. Those who do not will be charged a \$150 improper check-out fee, no matter how long they've overstayed. Students in need of on-campus housing over break should contact Residential Life Student Services (413) 545-2100. For more information, review the Residential Life [closing website](#).

Hosting Thanksgiving dinner

Would you like to host an international student for Thanksgiving Dinner on Thursday, Nov. 26? The International Programs Office connects UMass Amherst international students with community members willing to open their homes for guests to enjoy their family's Thanksgiving traditions. Far from home, these students really appreciate a taste of American home life during the Thanksgiving holiday, creating memories that last a lifetime. Contact International Student Advisor [Richard Yam](#) if you would like to host our international students for a Thanksgiving dinner; remember to include the maximum number of students you can host. We appreciate your consideration and hospitality!

Transportation for the holidays

During Thanksgiving break, demand for public transportation to and from the university increases. Encourage your student to make travel reservations early, and to arrive at the departing location 30 minutes to one hour (depending on mode of transportation) prior to their scheduled departure time. Peter Pan Bus Lines provides College Express service to New York and Boston from UMass Amherst. Amtrak rail service is also available from Northampton. UMass Transit, operated by the Pioneer Valley Authority, offers free transportation from Amherst to Northampton with a valid UMass Amherst student ID. For more information, visit the Office of Parent Service [transportation page](#).

Spring room change

Students will be receiving information about spring online room selection soon! On Friday, Oct. 30, you and your student can review [spring room change processes](#); you'll also find helpful tips in the spring room selection bulletin. Visit [Residential Life](#) for more details.

Important dates

- **November 1:** Daylight Saving Time ends
- **November 2-6:** Mock interview week with employers at Career Services, Goodell, room 511
- **November 11:** Veterans Day (No classes)
- **November 12:** Spring registration begins
- **November 18:** Non-profit Internship and Career Fair, 3-7 p.m. Commonwealth Honors College Events Hall
- **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

Helpful links

[Emergency Campus Safety Programs](#)

[Office of the Registrar](#)

[Spring Room Selection Bulletin](#)

[Visiting Amherst - Planes, Trains and Buses](#)

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

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