Greetings from the Office of Parent Services!

It's only been a few weeks since the New Year started. While it's cold outside, things are heating up on campus. We wish your student much success in their academic endeavors. This issue includes updates on the university's inclement weather policy, 1098-T forms, flu shots, upcoming career-boosting opportunities for your student, and more.

Inclement weather policy
The university's emergency team tracks weather events that may affect campus, and is in communication with agencies such as the National Weather Service and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency. This team meets prior to the inclement weather's arrival to plan the university's response and any potential campus closure.

For a potential early morning closure or delayed opening, lead team members take part in a 4 a.m. conference call to review weather and travel conditions. If the decision is made to close campus, the announcement will be made by 6 a.m. via:

- The emergency closing hotline, (413) 545-3630;
- The UMass Amherst homepage, the university's emergency closing webpage, and social media;
- UMass Amherst alerts (sent to campus e-mail addresses and through text messages to subscribers); and
- Local TV and radio stations.

Refer to the emergency closing webpage for details on services affected by inclement weather closings or delays.

Taxes and the 1098-T
As tax season is upon us, be sure your student has access to tax forms and assistance. To assist students and parents in filing their taxes for 2015, the university issues form 1098-T. This contains important information related to tuition and other qualifying educational expenses students were billed for in the 2015 tax year. Statements are available to students online through SPIRE, in the Finances section. Students who do not request online access to their 1098-T forms will have forms mailed to their permanent addresses this week. For more information on these important documents, visit the Bursar's information page.

The Isenberg School of Management also offers a Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program to help domestic and international students prepare their state and federal taxes. For more information, visit the VITA website.

Career-boosting opportunities
Career Services offers two large career fairs and a networking night in February to assist students in their job search. Students of all levels and majors are welcome to meet recruiters searching to fill both full-time job and internship positions.
• The **Diversity Career Fair** will be held Tuesday, Feb. 23, 1 to 5 p.m. in the Student Union ballroom. Some 55 organizations are expected to participate.

• Many of these organizations attend an interactive **Networking Night** that same evening, beginning at 7 p.m. on the 11th floor of the Campus Center. The event provides more in-depth conversation and mentorship opportunities.

• The **Career Blast** will be held Wednesday, Feb. 24, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Campus Center auditorium. It's the largest career fair in Western Massachusetts, with approximately 135 organizations and close to 1,300 student participants. Students should dress as for an interview and bring a professional, up-to-date resume to these events.

• Career Services offers walk-in peer appointments every weekday, 1 to 4 p.m. in Goodell 511; no appointment is necessary. Any student in need of resume or cover letter assistance is welcome to stop in for one of these 15 minute sessions.

**Adding emergency contacts in SPIRE**
All students are encouraged to enter an emergency contact on their SPIRE account if they haven't already done so. Your student can easily do this by logging into SPIRE, going to the main menu, selecting My Personal Information and then Emergency Contacts. Students who already entered an emergency contact should check back once a semester to make sure it's up to date.

**Flu vaccine**
The flu season has already hit people hard this year. Students can take necessary precautions against flu by getting vaccinated. The CDC recommends flu vaccination for everyone six months old and older. If your student hasn't been immunized yet, it's not too late. **Flu shots** are available to UMass Amherst students through University Health Services (UHS) and other healthcare providers. To set up an appointment at UHS, your student should call (413) 577-5101. They should always bring a copy of their insurance card when they receive healthcare. The [UHS website](https://www.umass.edu/health/docs) has more information about staying healthy throughout the semester and beyond.

**Health and safety**
At UMass we take students' health and well-being very seriously, and want to partner with you to help ensure their safety. Please have a conversation with your student about high-risk behaviors. As a parent or family member, you play an important role in influencing your student's choices around alcohol and other drugs, and identifying warning signs. Check in with your student once in a while to see how they're doing, and be sure they're aware of the health-related resources available on campus. Encourage responsibility and moderation if students choose to drink; if you suspect excessive use, encourage them to seek help early. Addressing the issue of alcohol use early can help them perform better in school and be more successful upon graduation. This [guide](https://www.umass.edu/health/docs) has more information and ways to help start the conversation. Learn about campus resources at the [Center for Health Promotion](https://www.umass.edu/health/docs) and [Center for Counseling and Psychological Health](https://www.umass.edu/health/docs) websites.

**Commencement Weekend updates**

• **Senior portraits**
GradImages will be on campus to take cap and gown photos February 9-11 and March 8-10, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., in Campus Center room 803. There’s no sitting fee, no need to pre-register, and no obligation to purchase. Participating seniors receive a coupon for a free 5x7" photo.

• **2016 student commencement speaker: call for submissions**
Graduating seniors are invited to submit a proposal for consideration as the student commencement speaker. All graduating seniors are eligible. The deadline is Tuesday, Feb 2, by 4:30 p.m. For more information on submission guidelines, students should visit the UMass Commencement [website](https://www.umass.edu/health/docs).
Personalized graduation announcements from Print Services
UMass Amherst Print Services offers graduation announcements personalized with the graduate's name, degree, and major, presented in either standard or customized texts. Many styles are available. For information, prices, and to order, graduating seniors should visit Print Services.

February poll
February's poll question is: How often do you communicate with your college student? Participate in the poll and view last month's results here.

Connect with OPS
Are you new to the UMass Amherst family? Please visit our website for the January 6 parent e-newsletter, our timely topic, e-postcards, vendor discount program, and other helpful tips. We also have two social media sites just for parents/family members:

- UMass Amherst Parents for weekly tips: www.facebook.com/UMassAmherstParents; and
- UMass Amherst Family to Family, for opportunities to network with other parents and share ideas and advice: www.facebook.com/groups/1511631422486897.

Important dates
- **February 1:** Last day to add/drop classes
- **February 2:** 2015 student commencement speaker proposal submissions due
- **February 8:** Last day to complete MyStudentBody (new students only)
- **February 15:** Presidents' Day (no classes)
- **February 16:** Monday class schedule followed
- **February 23:** Diversity Career Fair, 1 to 5 p.m., Student Union ballroom
- **February 23:** Networking Night, 7 to 9 p.m., Campus Center, 11th floor
- **February 24:** Career Blast 2016, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Campus Center, lower level
- **March 1:** Fall semester education abroad application deadline

Helpful links
- Tax information
- Career Services
- Commencement Weekend
- Emergency closing
- University Health Services

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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We're interested in your opinion! Take our monthly one-question survey.