Greetings from UMass Amherst Office of Parent Services (OPS)!
Thanksgiving is only a few days away! Although some of you may have seen your student for Family Weekend, this may be the first time they will be back home since leaving for school. Compared with the month-long semester break, Thanksgiving recess is short and can feel hectic or rushed. In this issue, you’ll find useful tips on helping your student tackle end-of-semester assignments, the first visit home, projects while on break, and much more.

Re-entry into family life after being away at college
When your student arrives home for break, you may notice that they have become more independent and perhaps more opinionated. As they grow, students find their voice and express their views in ways that can sometimes be challenging and require extra patience. For perspective on navigating difficult interactions with your student over break, we recommend this blog post by Melissa Goldman, UMass Amherst alum, current parent of a sophomore, and UMAPA Advisory Council chair.
If your student will stay on campus, encourage them to take part in any activities available for students who remain here. They can use their residential meal plan at the Harvest Market, 8 a.m. – 9 p.m. over the Thanksgiving break. Additionally, Dining Services will host a Thanksgiving dinner at the Blue Wall, November 22, 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.

Academic support
UMass offers many resources to help students succeed. Encourage your student to seek help now if they’re experiencing academic difficulties; waiting for finals week is much too late. The Student Success website can direct them to resources, and they can take advantage of the Learning Resource Center (LRC), which provides free tutoring and supplemental instruction.

Refining study habits and time management
Final project and exams come quickly after Thanksgiving. It can be daunting for students to think about school work over break, but the more your student gets done, the easier their last few weeks will be.

- Encourage them to assess their study habits and modify as necessary.
- Remind them to continue to prioritize studying, attend class, and submit assignments and projects on time when they return from break. If they’re pressed for time, they should go over big-picture concepts instead of trying to study every detail at once.
- They should talk to their professors, instructors, and teaching assistants ahead of time if they’re going to be late with assignments and to get advice on how to prepare for big project and finals.
- Encourage them to review their syllabi for important deadlines and to make sure they haven’t overlooked anything.

Final exams
Final exams begin Friday, December 14 and end Thursday, December 20. Students should view the complete exam schedule ahead of time; it’s also posted on their SPIRE account. If students have an exam 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.
Get ready for winter
It’s never too early to prepare for winter weather, especially because essential items can sell out quickly when there is a storm in the forecast. Student drivers should take time during Thanksgiving break to stock their cars with a winter storm kit, including a shovel, a small bag of sand or cat litter, and a sturdy scraper.

Spring online room selection has begun
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 until Monday, December 3. Room Selection will take place December 6 – December 12. Students who select a new assignment must check out of their current room by removing their belongings and returning their key to the Residential Service Desk by December 21 at 10 a.m. Students who do not check out properly will be reassigned to their fall space.

For more information about assignment change options, please visit the Residential Life website.

Stress relief and relaxation
Remind your student to make a plan before exams to reduce stress and increase productivity. Encourage them to sleep, relax, stretch, eat well, exercise, listen to their favorite music, and give their brain time to process information. Students should break study blocks into shorter periods (one or two hours) to help reduce stress and better recall material. In addition, advise them to set reasonable short and long-term goals, and reward themselves when they meet them.

Students can participate in meditation and yoga classes through the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life and Campus Recreation to help de-stress throughout the academic year. Before finals, peer health educators from the Center for Health Promotion host Paws therapy dog sessions. The next one is Wednesday, December 5. Students can also consult with peer wellness coaches in the Center for Health Promotion for more help in dealing with stress or visit the Center for Counseling and Psychological Health website for other stress relief techniques and apps.

Email communication to students
While we communicate with you every few weeks during the academic year, students regularly receive messages from the university through their UMass email address. The student e-newsletter (from Student Affairs and Campus Life) is sent every week during the academic year and highlights events happening in the area. Students also receive messages from their school/college, Student Affairs departments, and their academic advisor, among others. We highlight topics of importance here in hopes that you will talk to your student about them to reinforce the message.

UMAPA Advisory Council adds new members
The UMAPA Advisory Council has added 11 new members to its roster for the 2018-2020 academic years. The Council accepts applications year-round, with decisions made during the fall and spring semesters. Applications for the spring semester are due January 31. Visit the UMAPA Advisory Council’s website for more information about the group and its members and officers.

The season of giving
There’s no better time than now for all of us to pause and reflect on our good fortune and be grateful for the people in our lives. In the spirit of giving, consider donating a few dollars to the Foster Care Student Success fund. Your donation will help support UMass Amherst students who have experienced Foster Care with break housing, professional development, graduation regalia, and more. Your generosity will greatly enrich their college experience!

Important dates
November 17: Residence halls close for Thanksgiving break at 10 a.m.
November 25: Residence halls re-open at 10 a.m.
November 26: Classes resume
December 12: Last day of classes
December 14 – 20: Final exams
December 21: Snow day for exams
December 21: Residence halls close at 10 a.m.

Links to UMass Amherst websites
Disability Services
Learning Commons
Math Tutoring
Writing Center
As always, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact the Office of Parent Services, 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
Knowlton Hall
691 North Pleasant Street OFC
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Amherst, Massachusetts 01003-9399

In case of a campus emergency, always follow the university's main web page at www.umass.edu. The website will display a distinctly colored stripe at the top containing pertinent status updates and information related to ongoing emergencies.

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

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