



Office of Parent Services
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Amherst, Massachusetts 01003

October 27, 2009

Greetings from UMass Amherst

Amherst is enjoying typical New England weather this fall-every day is different. We swing from cold frosty temps to lovely days of 60+ degrees. This email contains information on a variety of topics including spring registration, career services, and more.

Adjusting to Campus Life

While students have settled into their academic routines for the semester, many are still transitioning to life on campus (especially the social life). Some students are hesitant to get involved outside the classroom early in the semester for fear of overloading their schedules. Others are shy and have a harder time meeting new people. Sophomores, junior and seniors also go through transitions when friends and roommates are studying abroad, taking internships, or moving off campus.

To help students get to know others in their halls, we recommend attending events sponsored by their Resident Assistants (RAs) or House Councils. These social, educational, and cultural activities offer students a chance to connect with their neighbors as well as the staff in their building/cluster. For those looking to meet people from across campus, a variety of student clubs and organizations are still seeking new members and can be found promoting their groups on the Campus Center concourse each day. If your student wants to get more involved but is having trouble finding a group that feels right, suggest contacting the Center for Student Development (<http://www.umass.edu/csd>) on the 4th floor of the Student Union.

There are many offices on campus dedicated to helping students who need assistance. A great list of resources is available on the Current Students page (<http://www.umass.edu/umhome/current.php>). For students who are feeling lonely, anxious, or depressed, Mental Health Services (413-545-2337) and Counseling and Assessment Services (413-545-0333) can both help. Mental Health Services has a wonderful parent's page at <http://www.umass.edu/uhs/mentalhealth/parentfaqs> that may answer some of your initial questions about their office.

Exploring UMass

With the stress of midterms subsiding, this is a great time for students to explore something new on campus. Whether your student is still transitioning to life at UMass Amherst or is a savvy senior, all students can use a break from their room. Encourage your student to step outside their comfort zone and try something they've yet to do.

Student energy and attendance are high at hockey and football games. If your student has become a Minuteman fan suggest spreading some spirit to swimming, field hockey, or soccer. Does your son or daughter love the arts? Suggest a visit to a gallery on campus, viewing a Late Night Movie in the Student Union on Fridays, laughing at a student comedy show, or attending a performance at the Fine Arts Center. If your student is a purist who wants to focus on academics this semester, recommend attending a guest lecture or joining a club/organization housed within your student's academic department. Whatever your student's interests, there is always something new to do or see on campus. Talk with your student about taking advantage of the range of experiences offered at UMass Amherst.

Missing Classes Due to the Flu

In order to maintain a healthy campus during this challenging flu season, we are urging students to take care of themselves and to protect other members of the campus community by staying home if they are sick.

Parents and students may be concerned about how missing classes may affect students' ability to keep up with course requirements. The provost has advised all faculty members to modify their attendance policies to help students who are unable to attend class due to illness. The provost has also informed faculty members that they should not require students to provide a note from a health care provider explaining absence from class or confirming recovery. Students should, however, let instructors know why they are missing class.

Faculty members and department chairs will be available to help students get back on track with their academic work once they are well, fever-free, and have returned to classes.

Internships and Co-ops

The best way for students to explore careers and build experience in their field is to participate in internships and co-ops while they are in college. Through internships and co-ops students can learn new skills, test academic theories, and explore professional goals while making valuable contributions to the workplace and to their community. Please encourage your student to start exploring these options early in order to secure the best opportunities for themselves.

For more on internships, download this letter

(http://www.umass.edu/careers/uploads/basicContentWidget/14750/director_letter.pdf) from Jeff Silver, the director of Career Services, and visit the Career Services website at <http://www.umass.edu/careers>.

Alumni Association and Student Alumni Association - Upcoming Programs

The UMass Amherst Alumni Association and Student Alumni Association (SAA) have some great programs and opportunities for UMass Amherst students in the coming weeks. Check out our full schedule of Campus to Career programs, where students have a chance to hear from alumni about career-related topics, like credit security and networking skills. Space is filling up for the third annual Scholarship Information Night on November 17. Students can find out more about available scholarships through the Alumni Association and UMass Amherst. For more information, visit <http://www.umassalumni.com/students>.

Preparing for Spring Registration

Holds

Registration for Spring 2010 begins in mid-November. Your student will be able to see his or her specific registration period or enrollment appointment on SPIRE. Holds can be placed on a student's record by various offices on campus, such as the Library or the Bursar, for one of many reasons, like an overdue library fee or outstanding tuition. Holds may restrict the ability to register for classes, request transcripts, or access other services such as dining or housing, so resolving them quickly is in your student's best interest. On the Hold Item page in SPIRE, your student can find the rationale for the Hold, contact information for the office that placed the Hold on the record, and a list of steps to take to clear it.

To Dos

Separate from holds are "To Do" items. These are tasks that your student needs to complete. To Do items don't have associated restrictions, although if not accomplished, an open To Do item can become a Hold. In preparation for spring registration, ask your student to complete any To Dos and clear up any Holds on his or her SPIRE account.

Holiday Notices

The holidays are fast approaching! The Thanksgiving break will begin on Wednesday, November 25 after the last class, and residence halls will close at 6:00 p.m. Please make sure your student has planned accordingly. The halls will re-open at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, November 29.

Students who reside in nine-month residence halls (Brett, Lewis, Prince, Cashin, and North) will have the choice to stay in their rooms/apartments during Thanksgiving, winter session, and spring breaks.

Winter Term Classes

Due to the shortened winter break, winter term classes will begin immediately after the fall semester ends, not after the holidays as in the past.

Students can now choose from two learning options during winter session:

1. Online classes: December 21 - January 15
2. On campus classes: January 4 - January 15

The current list of winter term classes includes more than 80 choices, including many that fulfill General Education requirements. In just a few weeks, students can earn credit to help them get ahead, catch up, improve their GPA, or lighten their load in spring term.

Registration for winter classes begins October 26.

You will find more information at <http://www.umasslearn.net> or on SPIRE.

Important Dates

October 28 - Majors Fair

November 11 - Veteran's Day

November 12 - Registration for Spring 2010 begins

November 25 - Thanksgiving break begins after last class

Links to Other UMass Amherst Websites

Final exams - www.umass.edu/registrar/gen_info/final_exams.htm

Registrar's Office - www.umass.edu/registrar

Undergraduate Advising - www.ualc.umass.edu/advising

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact the Office of Parent Services. Our office is open Monday - Friday from 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. We are more than happy to assist you.

Sincerely,

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Treating Our Parents as Partners