

March 17, 2021

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**Greetings from UMass Amherst Office of Parent Services (OPS)!**

It may seem that there is plenty of time left in the semester, so there may not be a great urgency from students to get work done. However, from now until the end of the semester, each week will get busier with classes, activities, and plans for graduation, summer work, and internships. As students welcome spring and plan for the second half of the semester, we want to share some updates on May graduation, fall 2021 course registration and housing, and much more.

**COVID Green Checkmark**

By now you may have heard of the [UMass Amherst COVID Green Checkmark](#). The university is utilizing the Green Checkmark to help safeguard the campus community. Students, faculty, and staff that need to be on campus are asked to use the app to complete a daily health check and show proof of compliance with testing. Please continue to remind your student to stay diligent and follow our COVID protocols and other university guidelines put in place to keep them safe and healthy.

**May 2021 Graduation Update**

May 14 is fast approaching and many of you are eager to hear the university's plans for graduation for the Class of 2021. UMass Amherst's highest priority continues to be the safety of our students, faculty, and staff. Please check the [Commencement website](#) regularly in the coming weeks for additional information about 2021 celebrations. The Commencement office recently sent a communication to eligible graduates about ordering their caps and gowns. Orders placed by April 1 will be shipped in time for May 14. A celebration for the Class of 2020 is also still in the planning stages.

**Fall 2021 Course Registration and Advising**

Fall 2021 Priority Course Registration—the early registration period for currently enrolled students—begins April 5. For a speedy and productive registration process, students should:

- Meet with their academic advisor to prepare for registration and to be sure they are on track with requirements. They can view their advisor's information, course catalog, and see their enrollment appointment on their SPIRE account when they become available.
- Take care of SPIRE holds. If there is a hold, they should contact the corresponding office ASAP to clear it up and avoid unnecessary issues with course registration.
- Declare a major by the end of their third semester as a UMass student. If your student is ready to declare a major, wishes to change majors, or plans to do an internship for academic credit, they should discuss their decision with their current advisor. Some majors are open to current students, while others have restrictions or application processes that students must complete before they can declare the major. Your student's advisor can help determine what steps to take.

You'll find more information about registration and the Fall 2021 Academic Calendar on the [University Registrar's website](#). First day of classes is September 1.

**Fall 2021 Housing Selection**

Plans for Fall Online Room Selection are currently under review. Information regarding assignment processes and timelines will be shared with students as soon as they are approved. Residential Life will be hosting a series of live presentations about room selection with Q&A sessions for students. Dates and times for these presentations will be provided when online room selection information is shared.

**Reporting Maintenance Concerns in Residence Halls**

If your student tells you about a maintenance concern in their residence hall, please encourage them to submit an [iService Request](#) online. Please note: these requests must be submitted from the network on campus. The [iService system](#) sends the request directly to the appropriate facilities staff and allows your student to track its progress.

**Virtual Off-Campus Housing Fair**

For students considering living off campus next fall, [Off Campus Student Life](#) is an invaluable resource. In addition, students can research off-campus living options in a virtual platform, March 24, 12 noon – 2 pm. [Registration is required](#).

**Financial Aid Update**

Financial Aid Services sends notifications to students' university email. These email notifications may include requests for information required to complete the financial aid application process and/or notifications that the student's financial aid award is ready to view. Please remind your student to check their university email account and their To Do List in SPIRE for notices and information requests from Financial Aid Services.

Financial aid award emails for Fall 2021 will begin going out in early June. Visit the [Financial Aid Services website](#) for additional information.

**Immunization Record Deadline**

In an effort to keep our community protected from vaccine preventable illnesses, University Health Services is asking for your support in ensuring that students have received the required vaccines. If your student began their studies in either fall 2020 or spring 2021 and are currently on campus or were scheduled to attend classes on campus prior to the pandemic posture changes, please remind them to upload their immunization

records to the [patient portal](#) no later than March 31. Failure to submit immunization information prior to the aforementioned date may put them at risk for a hold on their account that will prevent them from registering for, adding, or dropping classes for future semesters. Direct questions related to immunization compliance to the New Student Immunization Program Office via phone (413) 577-5275 or email [nsip@uhs.umass.edu](mailto:nsip@uhs.umass.edu).

**Talking to Your Student About Wellness**

In addition to providing immunization records, encourage your student to engage in wellness programs and opportunities. Having a wellness plan and mind-set can greatly enhance their academic and personal success. As a family member, you can contribute to their effort by reviewing and referring them to [resources](#), keeping the line of communication open, and genuinely listening when they open up. Be willing to discuss a variety of topics such as sleep and stress, alcohol and other drugs use, anxiety, relationships, academics, finance, and more. Having these discussions can help you understand how your student is doing and open the opportunity to provide guidance. Please refer to the [Center for Counseling and Psychological Health](#), [Center for Health Promotion](#), and [Campus Recreation](#) for more information about activities and events available to support your student's wellness on and off campus.

**Online Registration for Initial Consultation is Now Available**

The Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH) will begin offering [online registration for Initial Consultations with a CCPH therapist](#). During these initial appointments, students may work with a therapist to clarify the problem bringing them in, begin to determine goals for treatment, and develop a plan for the most helpful approach. Students may register via the patient portal for University Health Services and CCPH; registration for Workshops and Let's Talk appointments can also be done online.

**Summer Plans**

Now's the time for your student to plan for summer. Will they move back home, do an internship, take classes, study abroad, work part- or full-time, and/or volunteer? Discuss options and encourage them to make and finalize plans. Refer them to the [International Programs Office](#) or encourage them to connect with [Career Development and Professional Connections](#).

**The Value of Internships**

Internships are an important complement to academic learning. During these COVID times, many of the internships posted on our UMass job board Handshake have been converted to remote opportunities by employers. Student interns working virtually with supervision can still gain valuable experience safely, which is vital to their overall success, and may also earn credits toward graduation. Other reasons your student should consider an internship, whether it's remote or in person as precautions lift, include:

- It's a great resume and self-confidence builder and may lead directly to a job offer. Some employers use internship experience to screen future hires.
- An internship gives students an opportunity to research and test different careers and fields and learn about the workforce in general.
- It helps students develop job search skills, such as writing a cover letter and resume, completing an application, and interviewing.
- Students gain valuable practical experience with a particular job and with the workforce in general.
- It gives students an opportunity to network and make important contacts that will come in handy after graduation.
- Students learn important lessons about themselves, including their strengths and weaknesses and the type of work environment in which they do or do not thrive.

If your student is looking for summer housing for internships and co-ops in the greater Boston Area, the [Mount Ida campus](#) is a great option. Please encourage your student to make a remote appointment with a career advisor if they need help.

**Computing Meets the Challenge**

The Fall 2020 issue of Significant Bits, the biannual newsletter from the UMass Amherst College of Information and Computer Sciences (CICS), is now available for [viewing online](#). Featuring research, community efforts, and alumni news, the latest issue brings into focus how CICS is meeting the challenges of our day—including racial justice, COVID-19, and the equitable and safe use of artificial intelligence.

**Message from the Dean of Libraries**

Signs of spring are beginning to slowly appear on campus, though we've still got a little while before the snow is fully gone. Along with warmer weather (and a decrease in COVID-19 cases on campus), the Libraries are preparing to implement our plans for student access in keeping with the guidelines from Environmental Health & Safety and University Health. All of the necessary details will be available on the [Libraries' website](#), and any changes to our protocols will be posted there. [Read more!](#)

**Conversation starters for you and your student**

Sometimes it can be hard for students to open up about how they are doing, and as a family member, we know you want to know. Here are some additional questions to continue your meaningful conversation for a deeper relationship with your student.

- What are your professors' virtual office hours? When was the last time you popped in?
- What is the best thing that happened to you this week?
- What is the most interesting thing you've learned in a class recently?
- What student group/organization meetings have you attended recently?
- What has worked well in the past that you can apply to your online classes?
- What are the biggest stressors in your life right now? How are you managing them?

**March Poll Question**

How much influence do you believe, as a parent/family member, you should have on your student's career choice? Participate in the poll and view previous poll results [here](#).

**Important Dates**

**March 29:** Mid-semester date: Last day to drop a class with a record of "W"

**April 5:** Registration begins for fall 2021

**April 14:** Wellness Wednesday observed (no classes)

**Links to UMass Amherst websites**

[Coronavirus](#)  
[Commencement](#)  
[Off Campus Student Services](#)  
[Office of the University Registrar](#)  
[Residential Life](#)

We encourage you to look through our sites and become more familiar with campus resources so you can better direct your student to the appropriate office or department as they learn how to handle their problems and concerns.

OPS staff is working remotely this spring semester to monitor emails and return call back requests. 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,  
 Rose M. Boulay, 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](http://www.umass.edu). The website will display a distinctly colored stripe at the top containing pertinent status information related to ongoing emergencies.

Email: [umassparents@umass.edu](mailto:umassparents@umass.edu)  
[Office of Parent Services](#) • [UMass Amherst Parents on Facebook](#)  
 • UMass Amherst [Family to Family blog](#) and [Facebook group](#)

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