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

Good news! Today is the last day of instruction for the fall semester. Starting Friday, students will be taking final exams and are shifting into full study mode. As a parent or family member your support matters; encourage your student to engage in some self-care while preparing for final exams. We wish all of them the best as they complete their course work for fall and transition into a slower pace for the winter break.

The last day of final exams is Thursday, December 20. If an exam is delayed due to inclement weather, it will be rescheduled for Friday, December 21.

Spring registration and winter session

All returning students should have completed spring semester course registration by now. If for some reason your student hasn't done so, encourage them to contact their academic advisor now to set up an appointment. It's important that they have a spring schedule before leaving for winter break.

For students registered for winter session, the first day of classes is December 26. More information about winter session is available on the Continuing and Professional Education website.

Winter break information for residence halls and off-campus housing

Residence hall closing

- All residence halls, except break housing halls and the North Apartments, close at 10 a.m. on Friday, December 21. Students and families should plan to depart campus accordingly.
- Students who don’t vacate their residence hall by the deadline will be charged a $150 unauthorized occupancy fee. On-campus students are strongly encouraged to take all essential medications and valuables home.
- Due to heavier than normal campus traffic on December 20 and 21, please allow for extra travel time. New traffic patterns and parking restrictions may be in place at your time of arrival.
- Remind your student to pack before their ride arrives, so departure can be quick and easy. Expect some congestion in the Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community, as space to park and load is limited.
- Students who’ve cancelled or changed their housing assignment for spring must fully check out of their current room assignment by removing all of their belongings and returning their key to the Residential Service Desk before leaving campus for winter break.

For more information about residence hall closing, visit the Living at UMass website or call the Student Services office, (413) 545-2100.

Mail and packages

Thursday, December 20 is the last day to receive mail and packages at non-break residence halls. Please remind your student to update their mailing records for any packages that may be delivered after this date.

Spring 2019 opening

Students may return and check into residence halls for the spring semester on Sunday, January 20, 9 a.m. – 10 p.m., or Monday, January 21, 8:30 a.m. – 11 p.m. Visit the Living at UMass website for more information on check-in procedures.

Off-campus students

Off-campus students leaving for winter break should take the following steps to prevent problems in their apartments and houses:

- Lock doors and windows and close blinds.
- Remove trash and perishable foods.
- Leave your heat at least at 55 degrees so your pipes do not freeze and/or burst.
- If you will be gone for more than a few days, stop mail delivery or arrange for a neighbor to pick up your mail.
- Make sure valuables are out of sight.
- Do not leave any notes for friends or service people on your door.

**Tuition bills**

Starting December 14, students can view their spring tuition bills on SPIRE. Encourage them to check their bill several times a semester to ensure all charges are current and accurate. Spring semester bills are due by January 10; it’s the student’s responsibility to pay the balance in full and on time every semester to remain in good financial standing. More information about billing and payment plans is available at the [Bursar's Office](#).

**Topics to discuss with your student over winter break**

**Education abroad**

Winter break is the perfect time to discuss education abroad programs with your student. Education abroad opens up a world of academic, professional, and personal opportunities; it equips students with real-life skills and fosters a deeper global awareness and emotional resilience.

To learn more about UMass Education Abroad, the study abroad application process, and tips and resources related to pre-departure and beyond (including adjusting to culture shock, finances, health and safety, emergency contacts, etc.) visit the [Education Abroad website](#) and the [Family to Family blog](#).

**Note:** Students are strongly encouraged to visit the Advising Center on the ground floor of the IPO Building (70 Butterfield Terrace) or the IPO Advising Desk in the Learning Commons (lower-level W.E.B. Du Bois Library), to meet with a peer advisor to explore their study abroad options and schedule an appointment with an area advisor. Check the hours on the [IPO website](#).

**Domestic Exchange**

Students can study at another school in the U.S., Guam, Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands for a semester or year. Reasons to consider Domestic Exchange:

- Live in a different geographical location.
- Gain independence and a valuable life experience.
- Take courses not available at UMass and easily transfer the credits earned on exchange back to UMass.
- It’s affordable. Students will not pay more for tuition and fees than they currently pay, and Financial Aid applies.
- Students are not restricted to a Domestic or International Exchange. They can frequently do both with good planning!

Info sessions are held every Wednesday 4:45 p.m. and every Thursday & Friday 2:30 p.m. in 511 Goodell. Encourage your student to attend a session for applications and necessary details.

**Senior year**

While graduation and a degree may be right around the corner for many students, there’s still a lot they should do during their final year to ensure a successful graduation and entry into the workforce. Seniors who put off tasks such as meeting graduation degree requirements and searching for a job will miss out on many opportunities. In addition, they should:

- Clean up their social media accounts to present a professional image. Employers may google students before making an offer. They should also create a LinkedIn account to network with people in their profession.
- Invest in professional attire. Seniors need to attend career fairs, networking events, and interviews looking professionally dressed. Winter break is a good time to shop.

For more insights and tips, we encourage you to read the latest [Family to Family blog article](#) by Chuck Kaufman, parent of a UMass Amherst senior and member of the UMAPA Advisory Council.
Introducing eCampus@UMass
Starting with the 2019 winter and spring semesters, eCampus.com is UMass Amherst's new virtual bookstore for textbooks and other course materials. Students can sell back their used textbooks on campus, December 14–20, or online anytime. Learn how to order from eCampus @ UMass via SPIRE.

Family Weekend: Save the date
Family Weekend 2019 is October 18–20. Registration opens in August, but you can make hotel reservations at off-campus locations now.

December graduates
Congratulations to all December graduates' parents and families! You and your student have every reason to feel proud. They have reached a very important milestone, and we're honored to have been a part of their remarkable achievement. Because the university does not offer a winter ceremony, December graduates are invited to attend commencement in May. Detailed information is available on the commencement website. We certainly hope your student will stay connected to their alma mater as an active member of the UMass Amherst Alumni Association.

Important dates
December 14-20: Final exams
December 14: Bills post for spring semester
December 20: Last day of mail and package delivery for fall semester
December 21: Residence halls close for winter break at 10 a.m.
January 10: Spring semester bills due
January 20: Residence halls re-open for the spring semester at 9 a.m.
January 22: First day of spring semester classes
January 31: UMAPA Advisory Council spring semester application deadline

Links to UMass Amherst websites
Bursar's Office
Office of the Registrar
Residence hall opening/closing information
UMass Amherst Alumni Association

Happy holidays!
Happy holidays to all of you. We hope that you and your family enjoy winter break together, and that your student will return in January with a renewed sense of energy. Our office will be closed for the holiday season, December 21 through January 1. We look forward to welcoming you and your student back next year.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns, feel free to get in touch with us, Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 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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