Greetings from UMass Amherst Office of Parent Services (OPS)!
As we enter week six of the fall semester, students will be completing their first assignments and papers and taking their first exams. We hope they’re keeping up with their tasks, managing their time, and being productive. This message includes updates, highlighted academic resources, information on the Family Weekend Amherst Survival Center Food Drive, and much more.

FAFSA available for filing
The 2019-2020 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is available for filing. It’s never too early to start completing the form. Students must apply for financial aid each year by filing the FAFSA. The purpose is to determine students’ eligibility for financial aid awards, which are made on a first-come, first-serve basis. For questions about the FAFSA, refer your student to Financial Aid Services, whose staff is well equipped to answer all of your student’s questions about Pell Grants, loans, scholarships, student employment, and work study.

Academic advising
Encourage your student to visit with their academic advisor at least once a semester. All undergraduate students, including students in an Exploratory Track, are assigned to an academic advisor and academic dean within their school, college, or program. Advisors are an excellent source of information on academic regulations and requirements, career exploration, graduate school, life after college, and letters of reference, and can help your student find answers to any of their questions. Students can find their assigned advisor and contact information through SPIRE or they can contact their advising center.

Last day to drop a class with a ‘W’
October 30 is the mid-semester date. It’s also the last day students can drop a course with a ‘W’ (for withdraw). If your student is considering withdrawing from a course, remind them to maintain a full-time status and strongly encourage them to meet with an academic advisor before withdrawing from any of their courses. Full-time status means your student is registered for a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester. Anything below 12 credits may impact their financial aid, athletic eligibility, health and car insurance benefits, graduation timeline, etc. Meeting with an advisor helps ensure that they stay on track for graduation. Visit the Registrar’s website for more information on academic policies.

Mid-semester resources
As the middle of the semester approaches, some students may start to feel additional stress from coursework and midterm exams. There are myriad resources on campus that support students and their learning.

- First-Year students have access to live-in Peer Mentors and academic support services at their Residential Academic Success Center (RASC).
- The Campus Recreation Center provides a varied recreational program to encourage and help students stay active.
- To help students manage stress and develop effective coping skills, the Center for Counseling and Psychological Health (CCPH) offers skills workshops; support & therapy groups; free, friendly drop-in sessions; and web-based interactive therapy.
- The Dean of Students Office can facilitate conversations that guide students toward success and offers support for students struggling financially and socially.
- The Center for Health Promotion (CHP) offers programs and events related to health and well-being.
- The Learning Resource Center in the W. E. B. Du Bois Library offers a regular tutoring program and supplemental instruction. Students must make an appointment ahead of time. Appointments can be scheduled up to two weeks in advance.
• The Writing Center helps students of any level and any discipline become better writers. Staff members help with all aspects of the writing process including brainstorming, refining ideas, and grammar.

Majors Fair
All undergraduates are required to declare a major by the second semester of their sophomore year. Encourage your student to attend the Majors Fair, Wednesday, Oct. 24, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. at the Mullins Center. Representatives from more than 100 UMass departments come together so undergraduates can explore their options. If your student is seeking to declare a major, thinking about changing a major, or interested in exploring another subject area for a certificate, minor, or double major, this is the place to be.

New campus bookstore for winter and spring semesters
We are pleased to share that the university has entered into a new virtual bookstore agreement with eCampus.com to provide textbooks and other course materials. Students will see minimal changes in the eCampus purchasing process, which will start later in October for the winter and spring 2019 semesters. Amazon has discontinued its textbook program, but will continue to provide course material related to fall semester. We invite you to preview eCampus at UMass and review the details of the university’s eCampus agreement in Inside UMass.

Fight the flu – get vaccinated!
Flu season is approaching, and now is the time for your student to get vaccinated! University Health Services offers walk-in flu clinics around campus and at the health center now through early December. Vaccinations are also available upon request during scheduled appointments. For your convenience, a flu clinic will be available during Family Weekend, Saturday, October 20. Meningitis B vaccine will also be available. Immunizations are billed to your student’s health insurance; remind them to bring their plan ID card with them.

On-site registration available at Family Weekend
We can’t wait to see everyone at Family Weekend! For those of you who haven’t registered, we encourage you do to so within the next two days to avoid the fee increase. The registration fee is $40 for a family of one to five, and $80 for six or more people, starting October 13. We’ll also hold on-site registration on Friday, October 19, 1 – 8 p.m. and Saturday, October 20, 8:30 a.m. – noon. The fee covers program materials, refreshments, information sessions, and all non-ticketed events, including the parents/family reception, late night movie, tours, wagon rides, and pumpkin decorating. Come for one day or the whole weekend! Check out the full schedule of events on our website and join in this UMass tradition.

Donate to the 5th Annual Family Weekend Food Drive
The UMass Amherst Parents Association will hold its 5th Annual Food Drive to benefit the Amherst Survival Center’s Food Pantry during Family Weekend Registration. The UMAPA’s goal is to collect 1500 pounds of non-perishable food. Please bring donations to the Campus Center Concourse on Friday, October 19, 1 – 8 p.m. and on Saturday, October 20, 8:30 a.m. – noon. The drive is especially seeking items for special Thanksgiving boxes, including instant mashed potatoes, stuffing mix, canned cranberry sauce, pumpkin pie filling, sweet potatoes, and soups. For other items being collected visit our website. Note: The Survival Center cannot accept items in glass jars or bottles.

Remind your student to register to vote
Wednesday, October 17 is the last day to register to vote in the November election in Massachusetts. Encourage your student to exercise their constitutional right to vote. They can vote at home, in Amherst, in person, early, or by absentee ballots. If they’re voting for the first time, they may need some help figuring out where and how to vote. This guide can smooth the process and help ensure they are registered and well informed. Be sure to attend the “Get to Know the Vote” session at Family Weekend to learn more.

October polling question
What topic(s) is/are most difficult for you to discuss with your student? Participate in the poll and view previous results on the OPS website.

Important dates
October 19-21: Family Weekend
October 24: Majors Fair, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., Mullins Center
October 30: Mid-semester; last day to drop classes with a 'W'
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.