



Parent and Family Newsletter

JANUARY 2020

Dear parents and families,

Happy New Year! January is a time for new beginnings, and many students find their “groove” in the spring semester. Gone are the emotional twists and turns of being a new student, and now is the time to celebrate the first semester and to look towards registering for sophomore year. We want your student to graduate in four years. How many credits did your student complete? How does that number of credits translate over eight semesters? Does he or she need to think about picking up a class this summer?

Speaking of summer, does your student have a job or an internship planned? If summer plans need to be made, please encourage your student to visit Career Services, located in the Academic Support Center on the lower level of the Gordon B. Olson Library. We are ready to help find employment or an internship that will enhance your student’s resume. Summer is also a great time to test drive careers if your student is undecided about their major.

As always, I’m open to any questions or concerns you may have as we begin a new semester at Minot State. I can be reached at kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu.

Respectfully,

Kevin Harmon
Vice President for Student Affairs



IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

January

- 13 – Spring semester classes begin after 4 P.M.
- 14 – First full day of classes
- 20 – Martin Luther King Day, University closed
- 23 – Last day to add classes
- 23 – Last day to drop a class or withdraw from all classes and receive a 100% refund

February

- 17 – President’s Day, University closed
- 24 – Last day to withdraw from all classes and receive a 75% refund

View more dates, deadlines, and events at [MinotStateU.edu/calendar](https://www.minotstateu.edu/calendar).

Be seen. Be heard. Be inspired.

△ Evaluating Your College Student's First Semester — Winter Break Conversation Starters

By Suzanne Shaffer, CollegiateParent.com



Winter break is upon us! Soon your college student will be home for some much-needed rest and relaxation. You are certainly looking forward to family time, and I'm sure you're also bursting with questions you'd like to ask them.

"Winter break is an opportunity for students to reflect on the semester — on ways they have changed, on what they have learned and on how their goals are evolving. Conversations between parents and their college age children about these topics can be extremely rewarding for both parties," says Karen Levin Coburn, co-author of *Letting Go: A Parent's Guide to Understanding the College Years*. After the dust from their homecoming settles (and your student has slept for what seems like 24 hours straight), your parenting kicks in.

You might discover your student dealing with one or more of these common first-year challenges: homesickness, depression, academic frustration, social struggles and financial difficulties. During winter break, you might also notice signs that college isn't quite the dream your student had anticipated.

Even if they're adjusting well, naturally you're curious about their college experience thus far. These simple questions will open the door to your student sharing what's been happening over the last few months. (Just be careful not to bombard them all at once!)

How was your first term?

Starting with an open-ended question gives your student freedom to share whatever they want about their first quarter or semester at college. They may open up about anything from academics to the social life on campus to feelings of self-doubt or even depression.

The key is to listen intently and get a general sense of their progress. Your student may exude enthusiasm or be underwhelmed. Be alert for any early signs of trouble that need addressing now to stave off more serious problems.

What's it like living in a residence hall?

Roommate issues are common among new college students. For most, it's the first time they've lived with someone other than family. It's an adjustment. Unhappy living situations and roommate conflict can negatively impact your student's academic performance and overall mood. My daughter was in a funk when she came home for winter break after her first semester. I could tell she needed space, so I waited a few days before nudging her to tell me what was wrong.

It turned out her roommate was barely sleeping in her own bed. After a month of boyfriend sleepovers, she was now sleeping in his dorm and going home on the weekends. My daughter felt abandoned. She

had other friends, but at the end of the day, she went back to her room alone.

Some freshmen might welcome a development like this (kind of like having a single room!), but for my daughter, who thrives on social interaction, it was a downer. Just talking about it helped, though, and we came up with a plan to help her overcome the feelings of loneliness.

Have you made any close friends?

Social struggles are common in college. After having the same friends throughout high school, it can be difficult to make new ones. And friends can greatly affect your student's outlook and overall adjustment to college life.

When my son began college after four years in the Marines, he found it hard to make new friends. He'd unknowingly chosen a school where most students left campus on the weekends. This made it tough to forge connections with classmates. He started driving home on the weekends himself and as he spent less and less time on campus, his grades suffered and his attitude toward college soured. In the end, he left school and came home to attend a community college.

Making the wrong kind of friends can also lead to problems. Friends influence behavior, and peer pressure around drinking and hooking up will negatively impact your student's college experience. Ask follow-up questions about the social life on campus and what your student and their friends do to have fun.

If your first-year student still seems to be a bit lost on their campus, share these tips for finding community.

What were your classes like?

Instead of asking about grades, ask your student about their classes. Remember that academic struggles happen with most new college students. Was your student comfortable with the academic pace this past fall or overwhelmed by the workload? Did they struggle in one class or subject area or were there problems across the board?

Talking about classes, professors and studying can help you gauge your student's academic progress (or lack thereof) and brainstorm ways to improve. These conversations also allow students to introduce parents to ideas and books they've discovered through their coursework and maybe even brag a little about their new insights. Be prepared for some lively exchanges — and to expand your own intellectual horizons!

How's your bank account holding up?

Your student has had several months to establish a pattern of spending. If you provide an allowance, it's time to evaluate where that money is going and whether it's enough to meet their expenses. This is also a chance to identify overspending and review the importance of budgeting.

Sadly, my daughter did not budget wisely her first semester. We gave her an allowance, but she called constantly to say she was out of money. Looking at her spending patterns, we discovered she was eating out often instead of using the meal plan we were paying for. When she went back to school for spring semester, she began eating in the campus dining hall at least once a day, which helped her live within her allowance.

Is there anything on your mind you'd like to talk about?

You may assume your student will easily share any concerns they have about college, but fear may hold them back. Maybe they're worried they'll let you down if their grades are lower than expected. They might be afraid of your reaction if they're disappointed by their overall college experience. If they're homesick or depressed, they might hesitate to voice those feelings unless they're sure they won't be met with judgment or condemnation.

The goal of these conversations is learning all you can about how your student is adjusting to college life. Allow your student to let their guard down and talk freely. Home is where they should feel safe and supported. Whether they're sharing triumphs or confiding failures, assure them that you love them and there is nothing they can tell you that will ever change that.

Working with Professors

By Suzanne Shaffer, CollegiateParent.com

Your student's college professor is more than just an educator. The professor can be a valuable asset both during college and after graduation. The relationship between your student and their professors is also an important mentoring opportunity. It's important for your student to establish relationships with their professors early in their college career.

Where does your student begin?

Professors long for students who aren't simply there to occupy a seat, get a grade, and move on to the next class. Following these simple steps should help your student create a relationship during class and beyond the classroom.

- **Pay attention to the syllabus.**

Your student should study each course syllabus carefully, noting assignments and due dates and using it to plan research papers and group projects. They shouldn't wait until the middle of the semester to begin a major project and, if they're unsure about a requirement for the class, they should ask early for clarification. The syllabus is a guidebook to the class and the professor expects every student to follow it.

- **Make a positive impression — be alert and participate.**

It's easy to impress a professor: be on time for class, sit near the front, be prepared and

engaged, and contribute to class discussions. It also helps to ask thoughtful questions and complete assignments on time.

Your student should always pay attention to what the professor writes on the board, in course blogs, and in emails. This information may be critical for exam preparation.

- **Build a working relationship.**

Students shouldn't be afraid to develop a relationship beyond the classroom. Office hours are your student's best friend. During office hours, students can get to know the professor and receive one-on-one guidance and advice. Professors remember who shows an interest in their class and who merely occupies a seat.

This doesn't mean your student should be overly informal, but if your student shows a sincere interest in the course material and a mature attitude, it will not go unnoticed.

If your student says, "I don't know what to say at office hours," check out these great tips from College Parent Central about how to help students start talking to professors: <https://www.collegeparentcentral.com/2012/03/help-your-student-get-started-talking-to-professors/>. And share a hilarious video about overcoming "FMOOWMP" (*Fear of Meeting One-on-One With My Professor*) created by Arizona State University (search for "ASU FOH" on YouTube.com).

- **Show appreciation.**

Professors often go beyond their job responsibilities: answering an email late at night, staying an hour after class or extending office hours to help students, or offering help with scholarships and internships. When this happens, your student should be sure to say thank you in person or send a note or email.

What are the advantages of working with a professor?

Students who build relationships with their professors are more likely to succeed during college and after college as they enter the job market.



- **References**

Your student will need recommendation letters and references when applying for jobs or graduate programs. When they have a relationship with the professor writing the letter, the professor will take the time to write a personalized and detailed recommendation. Employers value a professor's input when interviewing prospective graduate employees.

- **Networking**

Professors in a student's major can help them build a network better than anyone else. They have numerous professional contacts because they have spent years building their own network. When your student graduates and is looking for a full-time job or internship, professors can be an invaluable resource for career advice and industry connections.

- **Teaching and research opportunities**

Developing a relationship with a college professor also opens doors to becoming a teaching assistant (TA) or participating in an Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP). Professors look for students who both excel in and exhibit a serious interest in their area of study. Hanging out after a lecture and asking questions and/or visiting during office hours shows the professor they would be a good candidate for either of these opportunities.

TAs earn money by working with professors, grading papers, helping run labs, administering exams, and handling other tasks. Your student may be invited to apply for a TA position, but they can also ask a professor about possible opportunities. With UROP, projects occur during the academic year and/or in the summer session — lasting for an entire semester or continuing for a year or more. UROP students often receive course credit for their research. Each college has its own criteria for UROP projects — your student should consult the UROP section of the college website for more information.

- **Grading power**

In courses where grading is somewhat subjective,



like essay exams or written papers, a professor's opinion of a student may make a difference in the grade they receive. An engaged, conscientious student may see a bump from a B to a B+, which will make a difference in their overall GPA.

- **Extra benefits**

If your student gets to know their professors, there's a better chance for leniency if the need arises. We had a death in our family when my daughter was in college, and she missed a mid-term exam in order to attend the funeral. Because she had developed a good relationship with her professor, he allowed her to take the exam at a later date. Illnesses and schedule conflicts sometimes mean missing a class or being late with an assignment — professors are more likely to accommodate a student who is communicative and proactive.

- **Mentoring**

Many college students avoid contact with their professors — they don't make eye contact in class or stop to chat after class or during office hours. What a lost opportunity! Successful students ask questions and solicit conversations where they can dig deeper into the subject matter of the course. They also seek advice about careers and networking. Professors will help if asked — the burden is on your student.

What if your student has a disagreement with a professor?

College students should always handle problems on their own. Parents should not call or intervene. (For more about the appropriate way to support your student in this kind of situation, read “Your freshman and the one tough class.”)

Encourage your student to make an appointment with the professor during office hours. You can help them plan the discussion and how to explain the problem as they see it. It’s important for your student to listen to the professor’s perspective as well. Most problems can be worked out at this level. But if your student is not satisfied, they can go up the chain of command by first talking to their academic advisor, the department chair, and possibly a student advocate designated to mediate these kinds of problems. If none of this works, your student can make an appointment with the Dean or the Provost of the college.

In most instances, it’s wise to remind your student that the term is short. If the problem is not serious, they may just need to tackle the class and move on. In the meantime, your student will learn lessons about interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and self-advocacy that they will carry into their future classes, internships, and the workforce.



Student Employment at Minot State

Minot State on-campus student employment opportunities are flexible, convenient, and designed to fit into your student’s class and study schedule. Most students work a maximum of 20 hours per week, encouraging them to keep college their top priority, and are paid a minimum of \$9.25 per hour. Minot State employment gives your student experience and customer service skills.

Federal work-study employment is a part-time employment opportunity for students with financial need, allowing students to earn money while enrolled on campus. On the FAFSA — Free Application for Federal Student Aid — the applicant is asked if they are interested in work-study. Eligible students that marked interested may be offered work-study for the academic year. Eligible students that selected not interested or unsure may still be awarded federal work-study funds. Students not eligible for federal work-study may still be employed by Minot State in departments that have available funding to hire students.

If your student is interested in employment on campus, an employment application can be picked up at the Minot State Financial Aid Office, located on the second floor of the Administration Building. While there, they can find out if they are eligible for Federal Work-Study or to pick up an application for any available on-campus student job.



Financial Aid Information

▲ 2020–21 Minot State Scholarship Application is OPEN!

Minot State wants to reward students for their academic achievements. Be empowered by encouraging your student to submit their scholarship application. Go online at MinotStateU.academicworks.com and click on the 2020-21 Minot State General Scholarship Application to get started. Deadline is Saturday, Feb. 15, 2020.

▲ Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress

Schools that participate in Federal Student Aid programs are required to monitor all enrolled students for Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP). SAP standards apply to eligibility for all forms of Federal Student Aid and some non-federal private education loans and some scholarship programs. At Minot State, SAP is evaluated at the end of each semester after grades are posted. In order to continue eligibility for applicable aid in future semesters, it's important for students to be aware of and meet SAP standards.

In order for students at Minot State to maintain eligibility for programs that fall under SAP standards, the following criteria must be met:

1. Minimum grade point average

Undergraduate students are required to maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 at the conclusion of each semester based on all Minot State and transfer undergraduate credits.

2. Completion of attempted credits

Students must successfully complete a minimum of 66.667% of the cumulative attempted credits. Attempted credits include any credits students are enrolled in as of each semester's census date (the last day to drop

a full semester course and receive a 100% refund; approximately the 10th calendar day of fall or spring term or the fifth calendar day of summer term) and any credits added after the census date. Credits dropped or withdrawn from after the census date and failed credits are considered attempted but not completed.

3. Maximum time frame

Students must successfully complete their degree within 150% of the published number of credits needed to complete their program of study. The maximum number of credits includes all prior credits attempted while attending Minot State University and any credits attempted at other colleges or universities whether or not federal financial aid was received while completing those credits.

The complete Minot State SAP policy is available at MinotStateU.edu/finaid/policies.shtml. Curious? Have more questions? Visit the Financial Aid Office, located on the second floor of the Administration Building, or call 701-858-3375 or 800-777-0750.



Parent and family submissions needed

The Student Affairs Office is trying something new this year and we need your help! It is our intent to produce two publications next spring for Mother's and Father's Days. We are looking for short essays written by you, our parents, about your experiences as your student attends Minot State. For more information, please email kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu.