

Dear parents and families,

The last few weeks have been a rollercoaster of emotions and health for many of our students and families. On Friday, Sept. 11, we received results from the North Dakota Department of Health indicating 64 students and employees had tested positive for COVID-19. Since Sept. 11, we have had 34 and then 17 positive test results at our subsequent mass testing events. For current COVID-19 cases and reporting, I encourage you to check out our Minot State Beavers Restart website at MinotStateU.edu/covid.

To best monitor the safety conditions at Minot State University, we are intentionally taking a direct approach by offering extensive testing opportunities to our University community. Additional test dates are scheduled for Sept. 22, 26, and 30, with weekly testing scheduled for the rest of the Fall 2020 semester.

I have received numerous inquiries from parents and students about “a magical number” of cases that would move classes fully online. While we don’t have a magical number, we certainly do have a goal to keep students as safe as possible in the classroom and at other on-campus spaces. We monitor our positive cases daily; however, we also examine our testing positivity rates, the symptoms of our students who have tested positive or been identified as close contacts, and the recoveries of our identified students.

We have also learned that positive cases are typically attributable to congregate living and being around other students not wearing masks or following physical distancing requirements. In other words, exposure to the virus does not appear to be happening in classrooms where physical distancing and masking protocols are strictly followed. At this point, we do not have one case tracked back to a classroom setting. Therefore, we are working every day to follow masking, physical distancing, and cleaning protocols while making adjustments when necessary to our



Outdoor and HyFlex learning in action.

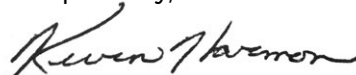


congregate living situations, athletics spaces, cafeteria, and other less-controlled environments.

In conclusion, I want to assure you that we are determined to make this semester as successful and safe as possible for our students. This is not a survival of the fittest or gladiator experience. The North Dakota University System has given us a charge to deliver education in a combination of modes including face-to-face, online, and HyFlex. We are resolute to do everything in our power to deliver the highest quality education in a way each student wants to experience it. Each student and family have a choice to be on or off campus; this is a choice that only your student and family can make.

As always, please reach out to me if you have questions at kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu.

Respectfully,



Kevin Harmon, Vice President for Student Affairs

Be seen. Be heard. Be inspired.

Helping with homesickness during a pandemic

By Cambria Pilger, CollegiateParent.com

This semester is far from normal. Many classes are completely online while the in-person ones require students to wear masks and keep their distance from one another.

Some students are taking classes from home, and others are braving the dorms. For those living on campus, move-in weekend brought an abnormal slew of stress, with increased safety precautions on top of the usual overwhelm of transitioning to college.

Students are much more restricted in where they can go, who they can spend time with, and what they can do this year — but their needs are still the same. Your student may be feeling nervous, homesick, or lonely right now and not know where to turn.

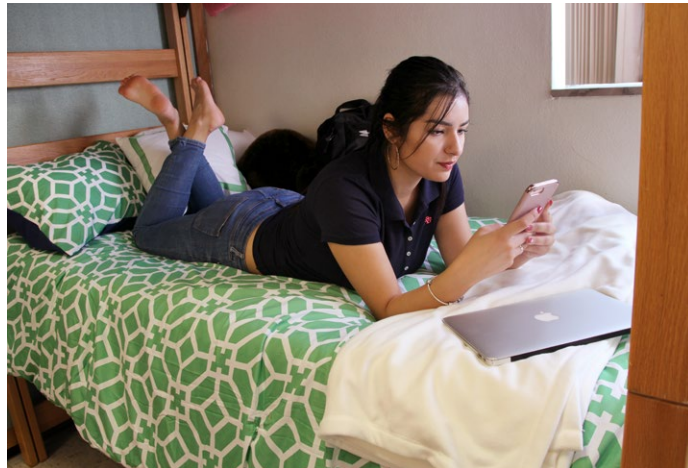
And you, the parent, may be searching for ways to show them extra support knowing that, in order to reduce the spread of COVID-19, they may not be able to make the occasional visit home and any plans you had to visit for a fall Family Weekend have also been put on hold.

There are still ways to comfort and connect with your student. As a college senior working in Residence Life, I'm happy to share some ideas.

1. Schedule a virtual visit.

If you can't visit your student in person, do it online! I know, video calls are starting to feel like an overused mode of communication right now, but you can get creative. Meet your student's roommate! Show your student some of their favorite memories from home. Ask them to give you a tour of their room, their dorm, or even the entire campus. Have a meal together... virtually.

Ever since my freshman year, my family has done weekly video calls. It gives us two hours to catch up on what happened throughout the week and to check in on big and small things in our lives. For me, those calls help remedy the distance (more than 1,000 miles) between us.



2. Send encouraging messages.

Giving your student a positive, encouraging message can go a long way. Whether they're feeling homesick or not, sending a cute image on social media or a supportive text will brighten their day.

Remind them that you're available if they ever need support and ask if there are tangible ways you might help (sending food, checking in at certain times, talking through a class assignment, etc.).

3. Explore online counseling.

Counseling can benefit any student. Talking to a counselor is a great chance to process everything going on and get advice from a professional.

If your student can't go to their college counseling/mental health center, or is reluctant to, consider some online options. Whether they meet weekly or once in a while, connecting with an online counselor could be very beneficial.

Your student can start by seeing if their campus leadership has any recommendations — some universities have online assistance programs in place or will link on the website to recommended off-campus therapy resources. You can help your student identify which counselor or group might be a good fit. There are many online options — I like

[BetterMynd](#), a student-focused online therapy site, and [Better Help](#), a comprehensive e-counseling platform.

4. Suggest an online group or activity.

If the pandemic limits your student's ability to join the usual clubs or on-campus groups, encourage them to search for one online. There should be lots to choose from depending on their interests: faith groups, clubs for chess and other games, groups that meet for outdoor activities, movie-watching clubs, and more.

Some groups meet in-person (socially distanced, of course) while others are completely virtual. Help your student look for a supportive online group to keep them socialized during this isolated time. One bonus — if a group is based in their college town, this is a good way to begin getting to know the community beyond campus as they establish a new home away from home.

5. Plan family game nights.

Encourage your student to take a break from school and play games with the family. It's a great way to bond, and also a chance to check in on how everything is going.

There is a lot of variety of games you can play, so try out something new each time. The [Jackbox Party Pack](#) is a fun, video call-friendly choice. I recommend looking into different online board and card games to find a few the whole family can enjoy!

6. Mail some love.

One way to feel close to your student is to send a care package. There are pre-made options online, but you can also put together a custom box at home. Ask your student what they need and want, and then use your imagination. You might include a stuffed animal to hug when they feel down, a picture of your hometown to remind them of a place they love, or just loads of snacks to keep them well-fed.

When I lived on campus, I loved receiving packages. Sometimes I didn't leave campus for weeks and getting a box in the mail helped me feel connected

to the larger world. Snacks and coffee/tea were the best gift, but I also enjoyed the occasional spontaneous item my family put into the boxes — the fun little surprises.

7. Focus on the future.

You and your student might not see each other in-person for a few months, but if you already know that they will be coming home at Thanksgiving or for winter break, you can both put this exciting date on the calendar. Having something to look forward to is a good way to stay positive during a tough semester.

All in all, check in frequently with your student about their emotional, social, and physical health. Ask how you can support them best and be intentional about showing you care. I wish you and your student luck during this time. It is challenging but full of opportunities for growth.



IMPORTANT DATES & INFORMATION

OCTOBER

2 – Last day to withdraw from all classes and receive a 75% refund

2 – Spring semester graduation application due to Registrar's Office

19 – Midterm grades

27–29 – Spring registration for currently enrolled students

NOVEMBER

1 – Last day to withdraw from all classes and receive a 50% refund

View more dates, deadlines, and events at MinotStateU.edu/calendar.

2021–22 FAFSA Available Soon!

The 2021–22 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) becomes available at fafsa.gov on Oct. 1. The 2021–22 FAFSA covers the Fall 2021, Spring 2022, and Summer 2021/22 semesters. While it might seem strange to already be thinking about completing the FAFSA for the 2021–22 school year, applying early helps students avoid delays in the future and helps them ensure consideration for as many types of financial aid as possible. It's important to submit the FAFSA every year to apply for federal and state financial aid programs, and Minot State also uses the FAFSA results to determine student eligibility for need-based scholarships. Some private financial aid providers may also use the FAFSA information to determine eligibility for their aid programs.

On the 2021-22 FAFSA, students and parents will report income information from their 2019 federal tax returns. Most students and parents will be able to use the IRS Data Retrieval option within the FAFSA to automatically retrieve and import 2019 tax information directly from the IRS into the FAFSA, making the FAFSA easier than ever to complete.

We encourage students planning to attend Minot State during the 2021–22 school year to submit the FAFSA by April 1, 2021 to meet the Minot State priority funding deadline which helps ensure that students are considered for all federal aid programs available. Returning students planning to attend Minot State for the 2021–22 school year who have successfully completed the FAFSA and listed the Minot State school code can expect to receive an official award notice in early June 2021. For questions about completing the FAFSA, contact Minot State Financial Aid Office at 701-858-3375.



Keeping Track of Student Loans

Your student's federal student aid history, including their Federal Direct Loan and Pell Grant history, is available at studentaid.gov. Students can log in with their FSA ID and password, used for filing the FAFSA, to keep track of their loan and grant history and view contact information for their loan servicer. Encourage your student to be mindful of the amounts they are borrowing, as well as the total borrowing limits for the federal loan programs to avoid overborrowing or exhausting their eligibility before they complete their program. More info about federal loan limits is available at studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans/subsidized-unsubsidized.

Helpful Tip to Keep Overall Debt Low

If your student borrowed an unsubsidized federal direct loan or a private education loan, those loans will begin accruing interest as soon as they are disbursed. Although students are not required to pay interest on those loans while they are enrolled at a half-time (six or more credits) or higher status, voluntary payments on interest while they are enrolled can help keep the overall debt amount down. Students can contact their loan servicer to make a payment at any time.