

Dear parents and families,

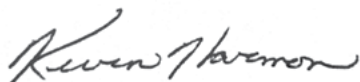
With seven weeks remaining in the semester we are thankful we have been able to offer classes on campus as well as remotely. By delivering education in a combination of modes including face-to-face, online, and HyFlex, we are doing everything in our power to deliver the highest quality education in a way each student wants or can experience it.

This semester has certainly pushed us to places and practices previously unknown. There have been moments of difficulty while trying to offer everything to students in the way they wanted it. In some cases, we were able to make it work and in other situations, we were not. Hopefully, our commitment to your student is apparent and not wavering in these difficult times. Our determination to make this semester as successful and safe as possible continues.

As of this writing, we plan to finish the semester in person. We have authorized advisors available to work with students who intend to return to home countries where quarantines are in place. Any such arrangements will not be available until December when clinicals and other field experiences are completed. We continue to monitor the number of COVID-19 cases on campus and in the community, and we will continue making decisions based on the safety of our students and employees.

Thank you for your patience and trust as we navigate the final months of this semester. As always, please reach out to me if you have any questions at kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu.

Happy Thanksgiving,



Kevin Harmon

Vice President for Student Affairs

△ Fighting Off the Lonely Feeling

By Jennifer See, [CollegiateParent.com](https://www.collegiateparent.com)

Jamie was 20 years old when, after two years of living at home and attending community college, she moved on campus at Texas State University. She looked forward to the academic opportunity, as well as the social scene and the many new friends she hoped to make living in an apartment complex.

But then the loneliness set in.

“I had a roommate, but she was invisible — she literally stayed in her room all the time,” Jamie said. “I was surrounded by people on campus, but the reality was I didn’t know anyone and felt really, really alone. I thought it would be so easy to meet people in my classes, but everyone kept to themselves. It was totally different than I thought it would be.”

Three years ago, Cornell University student Emery Bergman posted a [video](#) talking about how lonely she felt and how difficult it was to find friends on campus. The video went viral, and students everywhere piped up about the epidemic of feeling lonely during a time when everyone thinks they should be meeting tons of new people and having the time of their life.

Adjustments to college can be tough for various reasons. Kids have left a familiar environment, a close-knit group of friends that grew up together, and comfortable living arrangements. Students who were once academic or athletic superstars can feel like a small fish in a big pond, and the feeling of “starting over” can be downright overwhelming. In a study conducted by the American College Health Association, 64 percent of students surveyed said they experienced feelings of loneliness within the last 12 months. Twenty-nine percent stated they felt very lonely within the last two weeks.

In the fall of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, loneliness is an even bigger challenge than before.



What can college students do to feel LESS lonely and MORE connected? For starters, they can take these six steps.

1. Unplug Electronics

If your student is feeling lonely, encourage them to spend less time online viewing social media accounts where everyone they know appears to be having fun and posting pictures with big groups of people (one possible silver lining of the pandemic is that there are fewer of these photos!).

Turning off the computer or phone and venturing out in the common areas of the residence hall or apartment building is the first step in meeting new friends. A note for fall 2020: Whether your student is living on or off campus, they need to follow the rules about socializing during COVID-19. This may mean wearing masks, limiting the sizes of groups and maintaining social distance. People can still have conversations and make friends!

2. Find a Tribe

“Find people that care about you and that you care about,” said Jamie. It will take effort to connect with new people, so attend the residence hall mixers and social event nights (even if in 2020 these events are virtual).

Your student may not always feel like putting themselves in situations where they can meet new people — your encouragement might be just the nudge they need.

3. Get Involved

The great thing about colleges and universities is that there is something for everyone. Encourage your student to *immediately* join a group, club, or organization so they can meet people with similar interests. They don't have to wait for the start of a new semester.

4. Reach Out

Make sure your student knows the importance of reaching out to friends and family when they feel lonely. "I was horrible about telling my parents or friends how I was feeling because I didn't want to burden them," said Jamie. "Don't try to handle it alone." Simply telling someone you're having a bad day and talking about it can help you get through it.

5. Distract Yourself

If your kid was on the track team, suggest they go running. If they enjoyed art, set them up with supplies so they can paint or create something. If your student misses their pets, encourage them to volunteer to walk dogs at a local shelter.

Finding an enjoyable activity to occupy their mind and body can help get your student through a rough time. For Jamie, it was cleaning her apartment. "I love order and cleanliness, so I spent a lot of time doing that when I felt lonely," she said. "When the apartment was clean, I always felt better."

6. Find a Counselor

If your child is still struggling, insist they seek counseling at the campus counseling center or make an appointment with an individual therapist. You can search by zip code to find a counselor who specializes in working with college-aged students at www.psychologytoday.com.

Telehealth is another popular option, especially during the pandemic. The health and counseling page on the college website may link to resources, and online resources like [U Are Heard](#) are available to consult with students and parents about whether this type of service might be a good fit.

Parents: make sure to ask your child if they feel lonely.

Reassure them that it's perfectly okay to feel lonely every now and then, but if it's a constant pattern, then it needs to be addressed.

As for Jamie? She advises students that things will get better — including loneliness. "Don't forget to take care of yourself," she said. "You are balancing a job, homework, life and school, and it is difficult. Give yourself a break, but also, take charge of yourself. Even when you're not motivated to go out and meet people, make yourself do it. You'll feel better."



IMPORTANT DATES

NOVEMBER

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

11 – Veterans Day, University closed

13 – Last day to drop

25-27 – Thanksgiving vacation
(University closed Thursday)

DECEMBER

14-18 – Final exams

28 – Official grades available

2021 SPRING SEMESTER (full 16 weeks)

Jan. 11 – Classes begin after 4 p.m.

Jan. 12 – Classes begin

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

Unpaid Balances

When students have an unpaid balance on their Student Account in Campus Connection after any waivers, scholarships, grants, and federal loans have been applied, there are a few options that we often discuss with families. We always encourage eligible students to submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to ensure they have accessed all types of federal aid available first, but when those options have been exhausted, there are some additional options that might be considered.

1. Personal savings or earnings from work

Some families are able to cover the remaining balance by accessing funds from savings or earnings from employment.

2. Minot State University Financial Aid Office Facebook page

Follow the MSU Financial Aid Office Facebook page to learn about scholarship opportunities from various organizations that come up throughout the school year.

3. MSU Tuition Payment Plan

The MSU Tuition Payment Plan allows families to spread out the payments for fall and spring semesters over three months, rather than having to pay the entire balance in September for fall semester and in January for spring semester. There is a \$50 fee for enrolling in the plan each semester. Students typically must enroll in the Tuition Payment Plan and pay their first payment on or before the standard fee payment deadline for the semester. More information about the tuition payment plan is available here: [MinotStateU.edu/busoffice/pages/tuition-payment-plan.shtml](https://www.minotstate.edu/busoffice/pages/tuition-payment-plan.shtml).

4. Federal PLUS Loans

The Federal Direct PLUS Loan is a loan available to parents of dependent students who file the FAFSA. Parents apply online at studentaid.gov.

5. Private Education Loans

Private education loans are non-federal loans offered by a variety of lending institutions. Students are the borrower on these loans but typically, students will need a co-signer with good credit in order to qualify for these types of loans. For more information and a link to FASTCHOICE, a tool that allows students to compare the terms of several different private loans borrowed by MSU students in the past three years, visit [MinotStateU.edu/finaid/loans/index.shtml](https://www.minotstate.edu/finaid/loans/index.shtml), select Private Loans, then click the FASTCHOICE icon. Students are not limited to using lenders on this list.

If you or your student would like assistance determining how much to borrow in a PLUS Loan or private loan, our staff members are happy to assist you. Please call the Financial Aid Office at 701-858-3375 with any questions that you may have.

2021-22 FAFSA

The 2021-22 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) opened on October 1, 2020 at studentaid.gov. The 2021-21 FAFSA covers the Fall 2021, Spring 2022, and Summer 2022 semesters.

Get an early start on applying for federal financial aid for next school year by submitting your FAFSA now!

