

A photograph of the Minot State University administrative building in winter. The building has a brick and concrete facade with a large clock face. Snow is falling and covering the ground and bushes. A wooden sculpture of a Native American figure stands in the foreground.

Parent and Family Newsletter

MARCH 2021

Dear parents and families,

March 8 marks the midway point of the spring semester. Mid-term grades will be available and — while often a time of celebrating accomplishments — can be a stressful time for students. Sometimes we are left interpreting how our students really are doing. In any case, it is important to continue to support our students and continue to offer positive, constructive advice.

Empower your students to cultivate a relationship with a “go to” mentor on-campus. This person might be an advisor, a professor, or a staff member with whom they connect. Like any successful partnership, communication is the key to good planning. We have excellent faculty and staff ready to have these conversations; encourage your students to reach out and create conversations with the people on campus that positively influence them.

On March 30, summer and fall registration will begin for currently enrolled students. We are preparing for a bustling campus with students in the classroom, at athletic events, involved in student organizations, and being seen and heard. We are excited for Minot State to showcase our vibrant student life and the 250+ activities per year once again in our vibrant, growing community. Make sure to mark your calendar for Homecoming Oct. 3 – 9.

Finally, some additional good news: as of now, an in-person commencement is scheduled for May 14 in the MSU Dome. More details will be available in the coming months.

As always, I’m available to answer any questions or concerns that you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Harmon".

Kevin Harmon,
Vice President for Student Affairs

Be seen. Be heard. Be empowered.

Staying on track during another pandemic semester, Part 2: Focus on connection and engagement

By Vicki Nelson, [CollegiateParent.com](https://collegiateparent.com)

This is the second in a series of three articles about staying motivated and productive during what we all hope is the final lap of remote pandemic learning. This is an ideal time for parents and students to think about how they will stay focused during this spring semester. [Click here to read Part 1: Focus on moving ahead.](#)

Most of us began “pandemic school” believing we were in a sprint. We shifted quickly to remote learning, clumsily adapted to classes online, and hung on until the end of the Spring 2020 semester.

Spring turned into fall, and now as we begin the Spring 2021 semester with many students still learning remotely, our sprint has become a marathon.

Most students and faculty have come to terms with online learning technology. Whether we like it or not, we’re more comfortable with Zoom classes, learning management systems, discussion boards, video lectures and chats, and other forms of technology we had barely heard of before March of last year.

We’re better prepared to teach and learn this spring, but we’re also exhausted.

For many students, remote and hybrid classes, curtailed activities, masks, plexiglass partitions, quarantine, and social distancing have really become social isolation. Students feel disconnected and definitely not very social.

Connection matters

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, “Connecting with others is more important than you might think. Social connection can lower anxiety and depression, help us regulate our emotions, lead to higher self-esteem and empathy, and actually improve our immune systems.”



For many students, the problem right now is not *learning* online, it is staying *motivated* and *feeling connected* while learning online.

We can’t motivate students who don’t want to be motivated, and although we can offer opportunities for connection and engagement, we can’t force students to engage. Engagement and connection need to be proactive.

One of the important factors in motivation is feeling that you have control over aspects of your life. Students can take control over building connections and staying engaged in four important areas of their academic life — even while learning remotely: in the classroom, with their professors, with other students, and with their school.

Talk to your student about what engagement might look like for them and how they might stay connected.

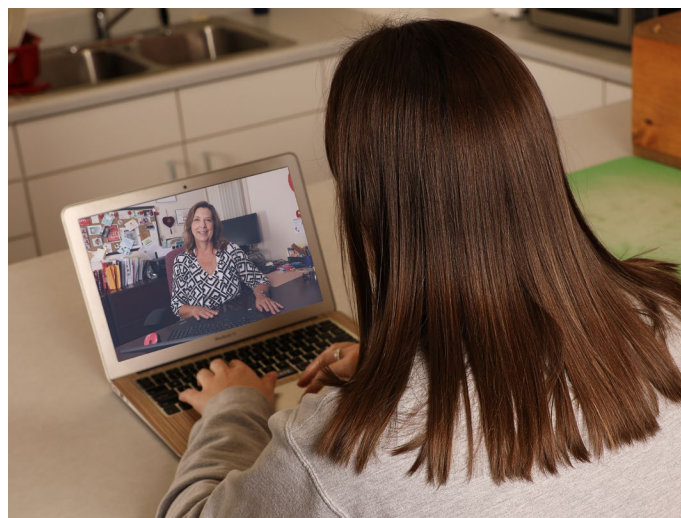
1. Engage in the classroom.

Engaged students feel better about their education and are more likely to do better work.

- **Be there.** It starts with something as simple as showing up. Don’t miss class.

- **If you have an early class, give yourself time to wake up and be ready.** Pull yourself together, get your cup of coffee, wake up your brain!
- **Keep your camera on during class.** Let the professor see not only that you are present but that you are paying attention.
- **Participate as much as the format allows.** Speak up if you can. Use chat features to make a comment or ask a question. Participate in discussion boards.
- **Be prepared.** Do the reading. Review before discussions or quizzes.
- **Sit at your desk or a table (not on your bed!).** Look as though you are interested and focused.

These small strategies will show the professor that you are not just present but are ready to learn. They will help you be ready to learn.



There are many other ways to stay connected with your professor — even with remote learning. Take a few minutes to read the CollegiateParent article [“Connecting with professors during Covid”](#) for eight more ways to stay connected!

2. Connect with your professors.

Remember that professors are people, too. They need and value connecting with their students. Most professors appreciate students who make an effort to get to know them.

Some relationships will be more successful than others, but making the effort will help students and their professors maintain a good working relationship.

- **Establish contact early.** Don't wait until there is an issue or problem. Reach out early and introduce yourself.
- **If you're not sure about the best way to contact your professor, ask.** Would they prefer a phone call, an email, text?
- **Check to see whether your professor is holding office hours — either in person or online.** If so (and most do), use them. Drop in (physically or virtually). Ask a question. Touch base.
- **Be patient with your professor.** Remember that this online format is still new to many of us. It may not be the way your professor prefers to teach. Try to give your professor the benefit of the doubt if things are still a little rocky.

3. Connect with other students.

If your student is taking classes remotely (whether at home or at school) they may feel cut off from other students. Virtual connections are not the same as the spontaneous encounters that happen in the residence halls and classrooms, in the dining halls, and on the athletic fields.

Students need to work harder at making connections, but the opportunities are there if students work at finding and taking advantage of them.

- **Take a new attitude toward group work.** Now is the time to embrace the opportunity group work provides to get together with other students — even if it's virtual. Get the project done, but spend some time getting to know the students in the group as well. It may make attending class more comfortable when you know some of the others who are there.
- **Set up a regular study group.** Several studies have shown that students who study together do better. Reach out to a few people in your class and set up a regular study group. Meet at least once every week. Review your notes, fill in the gaps, share questions, and keep each other on track. Then take some time just to talk and

get to know each other. Double bonus: better grades and some new friends!

- **Use your phone to call someone and have a real conversation rather than texting.**
- **Find your tribe.** Identify some people who have similar interests or who just seem to have an upbeat, positive attitude. Spend time with them virtually. Watch a game or movie, have a dance party, or do something together outdoors.



4. Stay connected to your school.

There's an old adage — "Out of sight, out of mind."

Unfortunately, for some students this is true. Students who are attending their classes from home are focused on individual classes. When you're not on campus, walking across the quad, going to concerts or plays, attending games or seeing the mascot, it's easy to forget about the bigger picture.

A sense of belonging is an important part of being a resilient learner. According to Adina Glickman, founder of the Stanford Resilience Project and co-founder of The Academic Resilience Consortium, "Because resilience is not an individual trait but rather a relationship between the student and her institution, it is essential that students become knowledgeable about the culture, politics, structures, and processes of the educational institution of which they are a part."

Schools have not forgotten about their students. When The Institute of Higher Education conducted a study of college presidents early in the pandemic, 81% indicated that they were very concerned about keeping students engaged.

Although campus life may be minimal or even non-existent now that so many students are remote, schools are working hard to continue to connect with students through newsletters, daily bulletins, video messages, and texts.

- **Open the messages from the college.** Stay up to date on the latest campus news and activities. You may be surprised at how much is actually happening.
- **Check out whether student clubs and organizations are holding virtual events.** Attend a new or different event just to see what's going on.
- **Reach out and use the services provided by your school.** Most tutoring and writing centers have online appointments. Career service offices may be offering online resume review or practice interviews. Counseling centers offer online appointments.
- **Check out whether there are any service or volunteer opportunities.** Find ways to work together with others toward a common goal.

We will all reach the end of this marathon!

Many who've run a marathon say it was the other runners who kept them going through the hardest miles. Help your student look for ways to reach out to others — not only to receive that boost that comes from running with others, but also to provide the support someone else may need.

No one needs to run this race alone.

Financial Aid Information



Know what you owe

If your student has borrowed a federal student loan or has received a Federal Pell Grant, they have a federal student aid history. Their federal student aid history is available for them to view online at studentaid.gov. They can log in with their Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID and password, the same ones used to file the FAFSA, to view their borrowing history, the contact information for their Federal Direct Loan servicer, and their Pell Grant history.

Although students are not required to make payments on their student loans while they are enrolled on a half-time or greater basis, borrowers or their parents can choose to make early payments on the principle or interest (if the student has borrowed an unsubsidized loan) at any time. Keeping track of amounts borrowed and Pell Grant usage can help students keep loan debt reasonable and it can also help them avoid exhausting their eligibility before they complete their program. For more information about federal student loan limits, visit studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans.

FAFSA time

Don't delay — file today! If your student has not yet filed their 2021-22 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), we encourage them to submit it this month. Filing the FAFSA now helps students avoid delays in the fall and helps them maximize their eligibility for federal and state financial aid programs.

We also encourage students and parents to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT) to retrieve their financial information if possible when submitting the FAFSA. Using the DRT helps assure accuracy of the data submitted and can help students avoid having to provide additional documents to the financial aid office later.



IMPORTANT DATES

March

- 6** – Summer and fall semester graduation applications due to Registrar's Office
- 8** – Midterm grades posted
- 15 – 19** – Spring Break
- 25** – Last day to withdraw from 16-week classes and receive a 50% refund
- 30** – Summer and fall registration for currently enrolled students begin

April

- 2 – 5** – Easter Break
(University closed Friday only)

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