



# Parent and Family Newsletter

## DECEMBER 2021

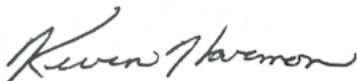
Dear parents and families,

December is upon us and that means end-of-semester activities. As your student readies themselves for final projects and tests, this is a great time for some extra boosts from home: supportive phone calls and texts, maybe a special delivery food item, really any little show of support.

It's been a great semester filled with many activities for our students. I hope you are finding this newsletter as a positive way to stay engaged with Minot State University. I always appreciate any feedback about newsletter contents as well as any suggested topics or potential engagement activities for families. I would love to hear your ideas on improving the family experience at MSU. You may contact me at [kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu](mailto:kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu).

*Wishing you a happy and healthy holiday season!*

Respectfully,



Kevin Harmon,  
Vice President for Student Affairs

Be seen. Be heard. Be empowered.

### Some November campus highlights:



*International Cultural Celebration – students shared their home countries through colorful displays, music, and more.*



*Wellness Fair with student organizations, campus resources, and local businesses.*



*The MSU Concert Choir performed "Inherit the Earth," songs of remembrance commemorating the Souris River Flood of 2011.*

## Financial Aid Information

### Spring fees

Spring semester tuition, residence hall fees, and meal plan fees will be posted to student accounts in Campus Connection in early December.

Spring semester fees are due to be paid in full by Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2022. Students can view a detailed list of their charges for a specific semester by clicking on Account Summary under the Finance section in Campus Connection.

### Bookstore charging

Students who have enrolled and have accepted financial aid in Campus Connection for the spring semester have the option of charging their books at the MSU Barnes & Noble Bookstore from Monday, Jan. 3 through Thursday, Jan. 20.

### Direct deposit of excess financial aid

Students who expect to receive a refund of excess financial aid, which occurs when the total of the student's financial aid is greater than the amount owed to Minot State, are encouraged to sign up for direct deposit rather than receiving a paper check. With direct deposit, the funds are deposited directly in the student's bank account and the check is never lost in the mail. Students can sign up in Campus Connection by clicking on the Enroll in Direct Deposit link. Additional directions are available at [MinotStateU.edu/busoffic/pages/direct-deposit-of-financial-aid.shtml](https://minotstateu.edu/busoffic/pages/direct-deposit-of-financial-aid.shtml).

### 2022-23 Minot State scholarship application

The Minot State general scholarship application will open to accept applications for the 2022-23 school year in early December. The application form will be available online at the Minot State financial aid website at [MinotStateu.edu/finaid](https://minotstateu.edu/finaid). The application deadline is Feb. 15, 2022. All returning students are encouraged to submit the general scholarship application every year.



## IMPORTANT DATES

### DECEMBER

6 – Minot State University scholarship application opens; deadline is Feb. 15, 2022.

13 – 17 – Final exams

17 – Jan. 6 – Sodexo dining closed

24 – Christmas Eve, University closed

28 – Official grades available

### JANUARY

10 – Spring semester 2022 classes begin after 4 P.M.

11 – First full day of classes

17 – Martin Luther King Day, University closed

20 – Last day to add classes

20 – Last day to drop a class or withdraw from all classes and receive a 100% refund

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





## First-year students and the one tough class

### From [CollegiateParent.com](#):

We received a question from a new college parent that we know many readers will relate to, especially at this point in the semester.

### The question:

*I am a first-time college parent with a student attending a private college. My student completed the first major week of tests and was greatly surprised by one of the classes where the professor tested on things that were not in the syllabus, not discussed in class, not in the book, or on the study guide. The teacher is a visiting professor filling in for a professor on sabbatical. The class has all freshmen, and the teacher struggles to teach the material so the students understand. This is a fundamental class for my student. What is the parent's role in this situation? So far, I've just listened and offered advice.*

We reached out to CollegiateParent contributor Vicki Nelson, a longtime higher education and student success expert who teaches at a college in Massachusetts. The following is her response.

Although it's difficult, I'd suggest that the parent not get involved. College officials and faculty are not very sympathetic when they get calls from parents — especially about classroom issues. It sounds as though this parent is serving in exactly the correct role of listening and offering advice.

In such a situation, start by asking your student what they've already tried. Here are suggestions to share (and this will involve genuine commitment and self-advocacy on your student's part):

### 1. Talk to the professor.

Take the syllabus, textbook, lecture notes, test. Be specific about what material on the test doesn't seem to be included in any of the other sources.

The student's attitude is important, so rather than complaining about the material on the test, the approach might be to say, "I want to do better and I seem to have missed where I should have gotten this information. What can I do next time to make sure I find and study the material that I need for the test?" Since the professor is filling in, they may not realize that students are missing some basic knowledge.

### 2. The comment states "the instructor struggles to teach the material so the students understand."

This might require another visit with the professor — perhaps a couple of students going together. Again, being as specific as possible without being accusative is important. Why aren't the students able to understand? How does the teacher "struggle?" Does the teacher go too fast, cover too much material, include technical material, lecture too much, or not enough? If the students take the attitude that "we want to learn but we're struggling in class" rather than "you're not teaching us well," the instructor may be open to feedback.





### 3. Form a study group.

Are other students in the class struggling as well? Is the student studying with others or forming a study group? A few students working together might bring different perspectives and different understanding of the material that will help all of them.

### 4. If neither of these approaches seem to help, I'd suggest that the student (or several students) go to the chair of the department to talk.

As with other approaches, rather than going to “complain” about a professor, going with the open attitude that “we want to learn but we’re struggling” will help. The chair may be able to speak to the professor to help the professor understand what the students need or what some issues might be. This is especially important with a visiting instructor who may be used to a different type of student at another institution.

### 5. Finally, it's simply a fact that many first semester freshmen struggle in classes.

They haven't yet learned enough about how to “do college.” Their first tests aren't good. They aren't sure how to take notes in class beyond what may be on a Power Point slide. Things that may seem like casual conversation or an aside about the subject may actually be information that they are expected to get. They may not be used to reading college level texts.

So it's frustrating not to be doing well in a foundational class, and your student should certainly address the situation but should also understand that the frustration is not uncommon. They can use this experience as a learning situation to build good study skills — and the ability to work with different kinds of professors — for the future.

### In all of this, it's on the student, not the parent.

As uncomfortable as it may be to sit on the sidelines, that's the appropriate place for a parent. But offering advice can help your student see that they have options for action and aren't just stuck.



# Calculating GPA in college — what students need to know

Amy Baldwin, Ed.D., [CollegiateParent.com](http://CollegiateParent.com)

Recently I counseled a student who wanted to drop two classes because he worried that he would sink his GPA. After a lackluster fall term, he needed to be sure he could get off academic probation and knew that his low grades in those two classes could drag him under yet again. But he wasn't aware of the potential consequences his low GPA could have on his overall progress.

GPA — grade point average — is a term most students are very familiar with, but they often don't know how it is calculated in college. While a student's GPA doesn't equal their worth or potential, GPA can affect a student's ability to earn a degree at an institution and create a barrier to post-graduation plans.



## TERMS TO KNOW

**Grade points** = the grade translated into points. A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F/NC (No credit) = 0

**Quality points** = the grade point multiplied by the number of credit hours.  
Example: 4 (grade points for A)  
x 3 (credit hours)  
= 12 quality points

**Grade point average** = the total quality points divided by the total number of credit hours. For example, two A's and three B's in 3-credit-hour courses results in a 3.4 GPA for that semester.

## Why is it important to know how to calculate a GPA?

The short answer is that it can help your student keep track of their progress. The longer answer is that knowing how to calculate GPA will help them make realistic plans and adjustments to their current academic habits.

For example, the student I advised used what he knew about GPA calculation to consider dropping two classes for fear the grades would drop his GPA even lower.

Understanding the calculation process can also help your student create short- and long-term academic goals. If your student wants to earn a spot in a competitive nursing program, for instance, they may need to earn at least a 3.7 GPA to be considered. Earning a 3.7 GPA will require a strong academic plan to study and monitor grades along the way.

## What can GPA affect?

- **GPA affects academic standing.** Depending on the institution's policies, a low GPA may put your student on alert, probation or suspension. And this can affect your student's ability to progress toward a degree.
- **GPA affects financial aid.** A low GPA can affect renewable scholarships, grants and loans, which could hamper the ability to pay for college.
- **GPA affects life outside of college.** Some students are not aware that on-campus work and participation in certain student and leadership organizations such as a fraternity or sorority can be affected by a low GPA. A low GPA can also affect your student's ability to earn an internship or a spot in a competitive professional and graduate school program.

## How do you calculate GPA?

Most likely your student's college or university has an online GPA calculator, and I encourage you both to find it and use it. However, it is still important to know the process as it can help in estimating the effect of final course grades and in planning how best to use a student's time and energy.

Consider the following grades on 13 credit hours: A, A, A, A and D. If a student needs a 3.5 GPA to keep a scholarship, will they be able to with those grades? It depends on how many quality points they earn for each grade. If the D is in a 1-credit-hour course, the student will earn a 3.76 GPA. If the A is in a 1-credit-hour course, they will earn a 3.3 GPA. Same grades, same total number of credit hours, but different weights based on the credit hours of the course.

Grade	Grade Points	Credit Hours	Quality Points
A	4	3	12
A	4	3	12
A	4	3	12
A	4	3	12
D	1	1	1
Total		13	49
GPA			3.76

Grade	Grade Points	Credit Hours	Quality Points
A	4	3	12
A	4	3	12
A	4	3	12
A	4	1	4
D	1	3	3
Total		13	43
GPA			3.30

For the student who needed advice about his GPA, I walked him through all of the considerations including calculating what he could possibly make this semester and how that would affect his academic standing and his future plans to go to medical school. I wanted him to realize that he could make improvements to his GPA and that doing so could help him reach his long-term goals.

## What to do when your student's GPA crashes:

- **Talk with financial aid.** Any time your student has a dip in their GPA, check in with the financial aid advisor to see how it may affect scholarships, grants or loans. If it is the first time the GPA has taken a nosedive, there may be a grace period in which your student has time to improve before aid is taken away. Note that there may be different GPA requirements for different types of aid. For example, your student's scholarship may require a 3.25, but your student's major may require a 2.0.
- **Talk with an advisor.** A low GPA can affect your student's ability to gain entry into or graduate from an undergraduate degree program. An advisor can help your student troubleshoot potential issues related to progressing through a degree plan.
- **Review what happened.** Find out why your student's GPA bit the dust. Academic struggles may be just one explanation. Other reasons can include mental health issues, lack of motivation, a misunderstanding, or a careless but costly mistake such as forgetting to turn in an assignment. The more your student knows why it happened, the more likely they can make changes next time.
- **Create a plan to improve habits that will improve GPA.** Talk with your student about what steps they will take to improve their GPA. Will they go to tutoring? Will they eliminate distractions? Will they check in with you if they need some guidance?