



# Parent and Family Newsletter

## APRIL 2023 Issue 2

April 14, 2023

Dear parents and families,

Today, we welcomed our first group of new students and their families to Minot State University for Fall 2023 registration. This time of year is exciting as we celebrate both our new students and those preparing for graduation. Commencement is set for 10 A.M. on May 12 in the MSU Dome.

Registration for summer and fall semesters began on March 28 for currently enrolled students — please encourage your student to register yet. I am also pleased to announce new dining and residence hall packages for 2023-2024. These if they have not done so plans offer extraordinary value. To learn more about our residence halls and dining plans, visit [MinotStateU.edu/life/meal-plans.shtml](https://MinotStateU.edu/life/meal-plans.shtml).

Looking ahead, make sure to mark your calendar for Homecoming and Parent & Family Weekend Sept. 14 – 17.

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

Respectfully,

Kevin Harmon,  
Vice President for Student Affairs

Be seen. Be heard. Be empowered.



## Champions and accolades



**MINOT STATE  
ATHLETICS**

Congratulations to our national champion men's hockey team and runner-up women's hockey team! Jake Swirple also placed eighth in the NCAA wrestling tournament and earned All-American status. Thank you to all our student-athletes who represent MSU so well on the grand stage!



Photo by David Herman - Hockey House



Photo by Sean Arbaut



Photo by Sean Arbaut

# End-of-semester options for difficult courses

By Ianni Lee, [CollegiateParent.com](https://www.collegiateparent.com)

Every student, at some point in their college career, will find themselves dreading the end of a difficult semester and worried they won't be able to find a way to save their grades.

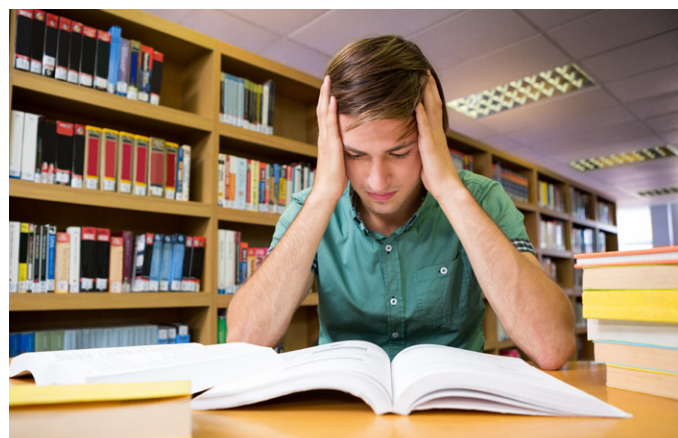
There are many reasons a student may be staring down a D or an F in one or more of their courses. On the surface, it may seem straightforward — they didn't do the work, attend class regularly, or get the academic support they needed.

But often, the real reason is something deeper: a [mental health issue](#) that wasn't addressed.

Balancing mental health needs with academic pressures is always challenging, and it can take a student all four years to figure out the importance of putting themselves first.

Throughout my time in college, I watched quite a few friends struggle with personal issues while juggling classes and other responsibilities. Many students don't realize that their college has various resources to help them prioritize their mental health needs. Alongside traditional therapy and counseling, your student's school may offer specific programs for dealing with an experience of trauma or the death of a friend or family member.

Health challenges will crop up throughout your student's life, and it's essential that they learn [how to seek help](#) and take the time to heal.



Students may be hard-pressed to tend to their mental health. When grades suffer, for whatever reason, there are several options your student can consider.

## Withdrawals

If they're struggling in one particular class more than others and worry their [grade point average](#) (GPA) will suffer for it, your student can choose to withdraw from the course and take it at another point in time.

Of course, students hesitate to do this for numerous reasons — not wanting all the work they put into the class to go to waste (not to mention the cost of the tuition), fighting that sense of failure, etc.

Take the time to talk this over with your student and help them understand that putting their health first is a victory in and of itself and a crucial life skill for them to develop. Make sure they know you support them wholeheartedly and love them unconditionally.

The timeline and rules for [withdrawing from a course](#) vary by school, so you and your student should research this on the registrar's page of the college website. It's also strongly recommended that your student meets with their academic advisor to compare options. Keep in mind that dropping a course late in the semester may impact your student's GPA and also their financial aid.

## Incompletes

In some cases, it's possible for a student to take an Incomplete rather than a W. Again, this varies from case to case, so your student will need to ask their professor or department head directly to see if they qualify for this.

The language may differ from school to school, but essentially an incomplete allows a student to finish the coursework over the next few months or within a specific time frame, depending on the course and college. Sometimes time just runs out while a student is juggling other things, and they may have a better chance of submitting quality work given a little more time.



## Medical leave of absence

Colleges grant medical leaves of absence (MLOA) for various physical and mental health reasons. A medical leave of absence essentially allows your student to withdraw from all their classes far past the add/drop deadlines and may even include partial tuition reimbursement.

A student's GPA will be unaffected by any grades earned that semester; at the same time, they won't receive credits for the unfinished classes.

A medical leave of absence allows a student to step away from college and take the time they need to recover while leaving them the option to return to school and resume their studies when they're ready (the length of the leave permitted differs from school to school). Check in with your student's school to find out how your student can qualify for a medical leave of absence and to see what resources are available to help your student throughout their leave.

## Don't forget professors

Students sometimes forget that **professors are there to help**. If it's been a tough semester, encourage your student to reach out to their professors and explain their situation as best they can. If they are honest and transparent and own up to their mistakes (missing assignments, lack of communication, not asking for help sooner), it's more likely the professor will be willing to work with them on a plan for making up those lost points.

Assessing the situation with the professor will give your student a better idea of how they can succeed while also getting a second opinion on their options for the semester. Their grades might be salvageable, especially if they can now entirely focus their attention on the work!

## Financial Aid Information

### Getting ready for 2023-24

If your student hasn't already submitted the 2023-24 FAFSA to apply for federal student aid, now is the time to submit at [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov). We encourage students to submit the FAFSA by April 8 to meet the Minot State priority funding deadline of April 15. Applying by the priority deadline helps students maximize their eligibility for federal and state aid programs, allows additional time to provide verification materials if needed, and helps students avoid delays in disbursement of funds in the fall.

If your student has already submitted the FAFSA, remind them to watch for emails or items on their "To Do" list in Campus Connection related to financial aid documents.

Returning students who have completed the FAFSA will be notified by email when their federal aid eligibility is posted in Campus Connection for the 2023-2024 school year shortly after the end of the Spring 2023 semester. They will be able to accept or decline financial aid in Campus Connection at that time.

If you or your student determine that you need to consider additional resources to assist with paying for the coming school year, some options to consider might be:

#### 1. Minot State Tuition Payment Plan

The payment plan allows students to spread out payments over three months. Students must make the first payment and be enrolled by the semester fee payment deadline. The fee payment date for Fall 2023 is Sept. 7.

#### 2. Federal PLUS Loans

The Federal Direct PLUS Loan is available to parents of dependent students who file the FAFSA. Parents can apply for the PLUS Loan online at [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).

#### 3. Private Education Loans

Private loans are non-federal loans available from a variety of lenders. Students are the borrowers on these loans but will typically need a co-signer with good credit.

Feel free to contact the Minot State Financial Aid Office at 701-858-3375 if you have any questions.

# Making a personal connection in the residence hall

By LaTrina A. Rogers, [CollegiateParent.com](https://www.collegiateparent.com)

Since I began working in residence life as a professional, I've been referred to as "The Dorm Mom." In recent years, I've fully embraced this title because alumni told me what I meant to them while they were students. I don't have biological children, so at first, I wasn't sure the name fit, but the more I talked to my own mother, the more I learned I do behave as a mother to my students. The fact that I consider them "my" students was the first indicator.

Reaching out to students as a professional can be difficult. Aside from being older, I'm viewed as a disciplinarian and the enforcer of policy — essentially the person you see when trouble happens. If I stop a student, text, call, or visit, they immediately think they're in trouble.

The reality is I check in with students more often than I contact them because of an issue. Online and in person, I encourage students to lean into independence and responsibility. However, I'm aware that I'm working with what I call "beginning adults." The road requires adjustments, so I reach out to students about several things in several ways.

## Homesickness

[Homesickness](#) is common even for students who don't live far away. Students live in an enclosed community of strangers. Everyone one quickly learns someone else's actions can impact their life. Home is nothing like the new environment they're encountering.

Years ago, I would visit students after the dust from the move settled. Those students lived more than three hours away from campus. We'd talk about what they missed about home and why they chose the college. I wanted the student to be reminded why they chose to move and that their feelings were not only valid but completely natural. We'd talk about the best ways to remind themselves of home and remember the breaks aren't very far away. They could also call and talk to family.

My favorite homesick moment was with an out-of-state student. His mother and I got acquainted over the summer as he prepared to attend school. One night she messaged me on social media (we weren't connected on social media) after working hours, explaining her son was crying about being homesick. They lived five hours from campus.



I replied that I'd check on him and went to his room. A 6'2" former linebacker answered the door wiping tears from his eyes. I told him about the message from his mom. He burst into tears and hugged me! My heart ached for him because I remember that feeling being 12 hours away from home when I went to college.

We talked things through — the reminder of why he attended, and that he was going home for a long weekend in just two weeks. I encouraged him to navigate the new environment using the resources in place. He did very well. He graduated (six years ago), has a great job, and is now a homeowner, married with a 1-year-old son!

### **Making friends**

This, in my opinion, is the toughest part of living on campus for students. It doesn't matter if a student is an extrovert or introvert — it's hard to make new friends.

I watch students like an anthropologist. Students will make friends first by proximity. This could be based on where they live or the classes they're taking. The friend groups tend to change mid-semester due to students realizing they don't like the behavior of some of their new pals. This is a good thing because students learn more about who they are and the people they'd like to surround themselves with as they progress through school.

When I speak with students about making friends, I encourage them to attend events or join clubs based on their interests. They will meet like minds at the events and/or meetings. It takes the pressure off making the initial move because the situation is set for interaction. At that point it's up to the student to engage consistently to develop friendships.

### **Campus resources**

I am a champion for resources! I acknowledge everything at my disposal is a resource. Students need [campus resources](#) for all types of reasons — academics, mental health, physical health, spiritual development, etc. Although we can easily research topics online, many students want to talk to someone in person about their experiences.

This is one of the few times where my age is equated with wisdom for students. I talk to students about resources on campus for their needs and how to

navigate them. Many students have never completed any of their own paperwork before attending college. Those are skills I teach along with [self-advocacy](#).

We discuss how to approach resources based on their individual communication skills and style. Students with social anxiety now have the benefit of email and text to initiate a process to gain access to resources. I also remind students that their ability to access and use resources is not only important in the short term but necessary to accomplish the goals in their lives.

My approach is motherly, but I emphasize accountability. I'm loving but stern, because students need to know someone believes what they say they want and will hold them to their stated goals. I remind them that this is their journey, and I can't accomplish their goals for them. I can only support, encourage, and guide them on their path.

**Ask your new college student if there's a dorm "mom" (or "dorm dad" or sibling figure) in their residence hall — an RA or residence life staff person they can confide in and lean on.**

I've embraced my title so much; I created a brand and soon a coaching business around it. I've learned from colleagues that my approach is somewhat uncommon but appreciated by parents. The best part of it: I'm just being myself and students can benefit.

There are many students I stay connected with and they've made me part of their lives. My "babies" now have babies and they call me TT Trina. The beauty of the reach is it's gone farther than I could've imagined.



## **IMPORTANT DATES & DEADLINES**

### **APRIL**

**15** – Minot State FAFSA priority deadline

**19** – Last day to drop second 8-week classes

### **MAY**

**12** – Commencement, MSU Dome, 10 A.M.

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