



Parent and Family Newsletter

MAY 2023 Issue 1

May 1, 2023

Dear parents and families,

As we approach Commencement Day on May 12, we take time to celebrate the accomplishments of several hundred students. This is an exciting time of year on campus and I would like to thank and congratulate all of the students who will be graduating and their families. It has been an honor to be a part of their journey.

As we close the chapter on this semester, I feel a special excitement for 2023-24. All of us look forward to seeing you in person at events this fall. There is no denying that Minot State is not the same vibrant place without your student and you participating in our campus life.

Please don't hesitate to email me with any questions at kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu.

Respectfully,

Kevin Harmon,
Vice President for Student Affairs



IMPORTANT DATES

MAY

8 – 12 – Final exams

12 – Commencement,
MSU Dome, 10 A.M.

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



SAVE THE DATE!

Parent & Family Weekend

Sept. 14 – 17, 2023

Finals survival strategies for college students

By *Connie Lisner*, [CollegiateParent.com](https://www.collegiateparent.com)

It's that time of year again, when college students across the country go into full-on panic mode: cramming into libraries, pulling all-nighters, and drinking way too much caffeine. It doesn't help that the last few weeks of the semester tend to coincide with longer, warmer days making it even harder to stay on task.

Fortunately, with a little planning and some mindfulness, your student can make it through finals relatively unscathed. Here are seven suggestions to pass on to your students to help them finish this year strong.

The master plan

1. Get organized NOW.

Don't wait until the week before finals to figure out what you need to do. Organize your notes for each class and write down all of your deadlines, study sessions, and exam dates so you can see exactly what you have to do and when. Just 30 minutes of planning can save hours of wasted time.

2. Triage your preparation.

Prioritize your tasks the same way a triage nurse prioritizes treatment — based on what needs immediate attention. Evaluate every assignment on the list to determine what is “Must Do Now!” versus “I have two weeks to get it done.”

Consider what classes you're doing well in and where you need to spend more time. This may be when you decide that a skipped five-point writing assignment isn't going to change your grade so, instead, you may choose to use that time to focus on studying for something that will make an impact.

That said, don't assume that just because you think you know the material in a class you can stop studying altogether.

3. Create a calendar.

Now make a schedule of what you'd like to get done each day and set a realistic time frame for each activity. A color-coded Excel spreadsheet isn't required



— a simple list will do —but, if you need the tech support, of course [there's an app \(or 20\)](#) for this.

4. Focus on academics.

Try not to worry about what comes after this semester. Again, triage. Figure out what non-schoolwork can be pushed back and what can't.

One thing that can't wait until after finals is your plan to move out of your residence hall or apartment. Dedicate a few minutes during your organizing session to confirm your move-out date, make transportation arrangements, and figure out how to store your stuff if you aren't lugging it back home. (This is something your family can help with, BTW.)

Support and self-care

5. It's never too late to ask for help.

If there's an assignment you don't understand or a concept that's giving you trouble, don't waste time trying to figure it out on your own. Reach out to your instructor, track down the TA, ask your classmates for help.

DO NOT BE EMBARRASSED to get help at the 11th hour. Don't discount your university's academic resource center, either. They often offer group study sessions, peer tutoring, and even [stress management workshops](#). [Read about end-of-semester options for difficult courses here.](#)

6. Take care of yourself.

Don't skimp on sleep, make sure to eat well, drink plenty of water, and find a way to relax. Relaxing may seem impossible when you are only three pages into a 15-page paper but figure out what calms you and do it. It will make you more productive. Go to the gym if that's what you need, meditate (there's an [app for that](#), too), go out with friends, play a game, go pet an on-campus therapy dog if you have that option. Burnout is real, so take a break before it breaks you.

On that subject...

7. Take regular breaks (but don't procrastinate). The sun is finally shining. Who could blame you for wanting to play Frisbee on the quad instead of sitting in the library?

Who says you can't do both? Go ahead and play for 15 minutes, then head back to the library. Taking breaks will actually help you focus. A study from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign found that taking a brief mental break improves performance on prolonged tasks like studying for exams.

Brief is the operative word. Fifteen to 20 minutes seems to be the sweet spot, so if you know you can't spend just 15 minutes playing a video game, or if Snapchat is like a black hole that would take you an hour to escape, find a less distracting activity and save the others for later. Use your break to get out of your seat, get a glass of water, take a walk outside, anything that creates a physical distance from your workspace.

Remind them they're not alone

Whatever steps our students are taking to stay on top of the semester, this can still be a very stressful season. We can remind them that they have a support network — at school and at home.

Scenes from the 33rd Annual MSU Spring Honor Dance and Powwow, held April 21 – 22 at the MSU Dome



Left: Miss North Dakota USA SaNoah LaRocque of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa with MSU Native American Cultural Center director Annette Mennem



How many classes should they take?

[CollegiateParent.com](https://www.collegiateparent.com)

Congratulations! Your high school graduate is heading to college this fall. Now it's time for reality to set in. Here are some tips for success when it comes to course selection.

1. Register for New Student Orientation

It's very important to register for [freshmen orientation](#), which will be your student's best opportunity to meet with an academic advisor on campus. Depending on the school, orientations are held over the summer or at move-in, and colleges work hard to make them fun as well as informative.

Chances are your student will have a chance to register for first-semester courses during orientation. How do they choose?

2. Have a graduation plan

Simple: Begin with the end in mind.

When choosing classes for a first semester, begin with a graduation plan. As in high school, find out which classes are needed to graduate, and which will meet the requirements for graduation in your student's major. If they are undecided about a major or field of study, make sure the classes chosen can be used in multiple departments.

Most colleges and universities require about 120 credit hours to graduate with a degree. If a student takes five three-credit courses, that's 15 credit hours per semester and 30 credit hours a year, which translates into a four-year degree. And the college will want them to graduate in four years because the higher the percentage of four-year graduates, the higher the college is rated in a variety of rankings.

3. Understand how credits work

What does it mean to take a three-credit or three-hour class? This literally means you get one credit or credit hour for each hour you spend in class each week.

Therefore, a Monday-Wednesday-Friday class that meets for an hour will give three credit hours for the semester. Tuesday-Thursday classes typically meet for

90 minutes to reach three hours. If there's a lab or a required discussion group, a course may provide four credit hours.

Each hour of credit will also require out-of-class work. Yes, there's homework in college; in fact, there's much more than in high school. For each hour spent in class, students will study two to three hours outside of class.

4. Take life balance into consideration

Are 15 credit hours, or five courses, right for your student? It's not just a numbers game. Consider the homework load of a course and their extracurriculars, such as athletics and rushing a fraternity or sorority.

If your student is a worker bee and you're confident in their ability to adapt to college, they could go for 15 credits. If you're feeling less confident, 12 credits, or four classes, might be a safer choice, with a one-credit gym class for good measure.

If they are entering with advanced placement, dual credit, or CLEP credit, they can safely take 12 hours the first semester. And, remember: They can always make up hours by taking a summer class or two at a local community college (for much lower tuition, too).

5. Maintain full-time student status

But don't drop below 12 hours a semester, which is usually the threshold to be considered a full-time student. Scholarships, financial aid, and a parent's ability to cover a child on their insurance may all require them to remain a full-time student.

So, there are a lot of considerations, but your family won't go it alone. A school academic advisor or a professional can be there to help you, either during orientation, via email, or in virtual sessions. The advisor will help your student with course selection for their entire first year, make sure they're getting the required courses, and monitor progress toward graduation.

A college dad's reflections on the last semester

By Scott Sager, CollegiateParent.com

My oldest child recently returned to campus for her final semester, happy to see friends, looking forward to fun and challenge during these last precious months of college, and of course excited for her expected graduation in May. Meanwhile I am completely overwhelmed thinking about the long and demanding list of things she needs to accomplish in such a short time. Does she have *any* idea what she's in for?

In addition to diving into the job search, she's taken on two capstone projects (large, in-depth assignments for credit and honors recognition), one in each of her majors. She's involved in a number of theater productions, has an off-campus job, all while staying on top of her classwork since this is her last chance to bump up her GPA, which might be important if and when she decides to apply to grad school.

I've become more sympathetic to all those millennials who return home exhausted and sleep for a couple of months after graduation, working on their resumés and job applications in the early afternoons at the local coffeehouse. The college exit certainly seems more demanding than I remember it.

Right now, at the beginning of this messy process, my daughter's eyes sparkle with hopes and dreams. She wants to live abroad, can envision many fulfilling careers, is making tentative plans to do projects with friends (simultaneously in different cities it seems). I'm excited for her and easily get caught up in her enthusiasm.

Experience, though, tells me that, sooner than she'd like, she will have to make choices. By the end of May, she'll at least need to know where to ship her boxes and forward her mail, even if that's home. The first job or internship offer will come and she may face a difficult decision to compromise or wait for that perfect, most-hoped-for situation.

I try to remember how I felt during my own senior spring but find it hard to connect with my past self and that untethered time of seeing possibility everywhere I looked. The weight of cumulative adult

responsibilities — a house, a car, insurance, shopping, cleaning, and raising two children — makes it hard not to say to my daughter, "plan, earn, now is NOT the time to mess around." Then I catch myself, knowing this really is that time in her life, the best chance she'll have to take risks and venture into the unknown.

So when she mentions, almost off-handedly, that she's applied to the Peace Corps and requested placements in distant countries I've never seen, I say, "That's exciting!" with as much conviction as I can muster. When she mentions a friend asked her to direct a play this summer, for no money, I remark, "How fun!" while choking back the questions about how she'll pay the rent.

I won't be the naysayer; still, I do my best to inject reality into our discussions, balancing support for her dreams with practical considerations. With each proposal I help her think through how she can make it work, what she can expect from me, and what she'll have to solve on her own.

One of my jobs as her parent is to worry about her choices and her future. Another is to push her to find those moments when she will leap with excitement and joy. Her graduation will be one such moment, leading to another and another I hope...if she feels free, at least for now, to follow her heart.

