



# Parent and Family Newsletter

## SEPTEMBER 2023 Issue 2

September 18, 2023

Dear families,

We are about a month into classes, and this is an important time in the semester as many of the first exams and projects have been completed and graded. That's why this week's word is "encouragement." The [Academic Support Center](#) offers tutoring in all key academic areas. Also, we continue to provide student activities throughout the month of September. Encourage your student to get help with their studies, talk to their professors, and participate in our wide variety of on-campus events.

Again, welcome to our family and please know that you may contact me at any time. I can be reached at 701-858-3140 or by email at [kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu](mailto:kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu) if you have questions or concerns.

Respectfully,

Kevin Harmon,  
Vice President for Student Affairs

Be seen. Be heard. Be empowered.

# NOTSTOCK 2023: Sept. 21 – 23

NOTSTOCK is an annual live, hands-in, hands-on arts event held at Minot State University every fall since 2007. NOTSTOCK is a portmanteau derived from the words Woodstock, Flatstock, and Minot's mantra, "Why not, Minot?"

This signature event returns for its 16th year with an impressive lineup of artists, events, and exhibits. For three days, guest artists will share their talents,

passions, expertise, and work with the community. All events are free and open to the public and take place on the Minot State University campus or in downtown Minot Sept. 21-23.

The epicenter of this year's event is a major exhibit in the Northwest Arts Center, "Piotr Szyhalski: Prints from the Labor Camp." Szyhalski will print live in the Northwest Arts Center, located in the lower level of the

Gordon B. Olson Library, Sept. 21 and 22 from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. and Sept. 23 from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. Szyhalski will also give presentations and lead a march around campus.

WordStock returns with guest Kyle Tran Myhre – aka Guante – a poet and activist whose work explores the relationships between narrative, power, and resistance. Sasha Barrett, a Ukrainian native who moved to the United States as a youth, is the featured ceramics artist at PotStock. There will be a concert featuring Bart Goop and Products Band on Friday, Sept. 22, in addition to many other hands-on activities and programs over the event.

Read the full press release [HERE](#). Get more information at [MinotStateU.edu/notstock](http://MinotStateU.edu/notstock) or search @msunotstock on social media.





# The rhythm of the first semester

By David Tuttle, [CollegiateParent.com](http://CollegiateParent.com)

## NOW WHAT?!

After all the applications, tours, decisions, packing, unloading, and last-minute (if not outdated) parental advice, your students are on their own. As someone who sent four kids to college and served as a campus administrator over several decades, I've found there is a cadence to the first semester.

Here's what to expect.

### **Uneasiness and anxiety**

You can tell by the look in their eyes. Pulling up to the residence hall, meeting other students...your kid is feeling the pressure. How does the meal plan work? Where are my classes? Am I a nerd? Is my roommate a nerd?

For many, these feelings will quickly pass. For some, though — especially introverts — the stress may last until they get further into the semester. The best thing you can do is check in, be available, and listen. The resident assistant (RA) is a great resource — nudge your student to talk to them and lean on them for support.

### **Euphoria**

The early days of the semester have a special energy. Everyone's putting their best foot forward and students are drawn in by their diverse and dynamic classmates. Connecting over social media prior to move-in means there's a comfort level already among many of them. They have a lot in common — they all want to be at college, in particular THIS college.

The truth is, a lot of them are doing what we all do in new and uncomfortable situations: faking it. This is a handy survival skill. New students may latch on to the first people they meet, especially in the residence halls. (Note: The first friends aren't always the lasting ones — or even the ones that are there by the holidays.) What's more, how often do we get chances to reinvent



ourselves? Students can leave their high school personas and reputations behind, make changes, and start fresh.

### **Freedom**

Students can stay out late and sleep in. They can clean their room — or not. They're meeting new people. They are becoming new people. And the stuff that gave them anxiety? They have mastered it. As they manage their own decisions and emotions, they become more surefooted. You may notice over the holidays that your adolescent is blossoming into a confident adult.

### **Hurdle one: homesickness**

At some point, most students face a bout of homesickness. The euphoria fades, and with freedom comes accountability. Often something minor will happen. Maybe their roommate didn't invite them to breakfast, or they saw all their friends at a different school on Instagram having a great time. Maybe sustaining the reinvention feels exhausting and inauthentic. And maybe, just maybe, parents, siblings, and the family home provide some real comfort.

Expect the call. The one where they say they don't fit in. They want to see you (or they want to see the

dog). This is normal. Listen a lot, knowing that after the call they may end up going out and having fun while you toss and turn with worry. If homesickness is sustained, have them home for a visit or go see them if resources and time allow. Some parents set an arbitrary rule that their kids can't come home until Thanksgiving. To me, that seems more punitive than productive. Sometimes having the visit early on can help get them through and understand that their new lives can co-exist with their old ones.

### **Fall Family Weekend**

If the school hosts Family Weekend and you can attend, it can be fun and reassuring. Programs give you a chance to learn what's happening on campus. Your student will want to see you, show you off, go out to eat, and maybe come away with a little cash.

Whether a structured campus event or a random fall visit, it's nice to take your students and some friends out for a meal. You can learn a lot from the friends that your student has found at this point. Mostly, you can gauge that they are happy and fitting in. Don't be surprised if the group is made up of various genders. College breaks down these barriers more than high school.

Finally, let your student show you around campus with their new eyes. You can see where they go to class, study, and hang out. Our son gave us a tour of the recreation facility he worked at. He took great pride in showing us how his key worked. This display in the obvious made us proud, too.

### **Hurdle two: grades**

College is hard. Professors love their disciplines and know a lot. Students may be checking off requirements, but the faculty is committed to teaching and learning, and they want to entice students into their majors. Students will read and write more in the first semester than they did in one or two years of high school. The other students are also the brightest of the bright. Academics are competitive and no one gets by any longer on talent alone.

The first subpar grade on a test or paper can create self-doubt or trigger imposter syndrome. Some students aren't used to seeing so much red on their written assignments, and it can be very humbling.

Know that most instructors are fully aware of this. They are laying the groundwork of expectations for the quality of work that is expected in college. For you, maybe temper expectations about first grades, including for the whole first semester. Students will learn what they need to do to succeed, and you will often see a bump up in the second term.

### **Get used to being shut out**

Instructors don't give as much graded work except in languages and STEM (science and math). This makes it difficult for students to assess their progress and even more difficult to report it to you. They may have two or three papers and a few tests. What instructors want to see is that the students are engaged. Urge your student to attend class, participate in discussion, and turn in their work. The grades will follow. Professors love it, too, when students go to their office hours.

Professors will likely not communicate with you if you reach out. The faculty treats students as adults, and that's how they're viewed by the institution as a whole. If you contact the school with a question about your student, they will want to know if your student has filled out a Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) release, usually available on the college website. You should stress that you're not asking about grades but want to discuss how your student is doing if that is the case. And you can always just share your concerns and hope they act on them.

Finally, your student may also shut you out. They've gotten the message that they are adults, so they want to handle things. That's what you want, too. But sometimes you need them to rise to your expectations. And don't forget, you probably have leverage.

Don't be afraid of your student. One of my kids told me he felt like I was micro-managing him. I was proud of his assertive communication. Still, he needed to know that our investment in him meant that we should have input and some authority. We reached a satisfactory understanding moving forward.

### **The holidays**

This may be the first time your student has been home since fall move-in. They're long-term tired after being "on" for several months and will want to sleep and see their old friends. Discuss expectations in advance and

let them know when they need to be with family. And be prepared for them to have new perspectives, new beliefs, and even a new voice to disagree with you and other relatives. This is your new, educated, emerging adult!

### The end of the first term

The first thing on everyone's minds is how grades turned out. If your student is in the average to above-average range, see this as a win. Discuss what they will do differently in the next term and ask about scheduled classes. Let them regroup academically and emotionally. If the grades are subpar, it may be time to dig deeper and possibly reach out to the advisor or academic support people.

By the time your first-year student goes back to campus in January, they will be ready and you probably will be, too. They may say they're going "home." Don't take it personally. They want to get back to their freedom and friends and start fresh on this next lap. And they will likely be sad to leave you as well. But you'll all have less angst than you had the first time. Everyone is getting the hang of this!

### A note on weed-out classes and registration

Schools say they don't have weed-out classes. But many students in the pre-med track learn that the rigor of chemistry, calculus, and biology is simply too challenging.

If the student switches majors, they have weeded themselves out. That is normal. Sometimes it's best to drop some of these classes by the deadline if they will have severe negative impacts on the grade point average. And maybe it's time to look at different majors.

In late fall, students register for the next term's courses. This can be stressful because heading into the first semester, class seats were set aside for them; now they're in with the general population and at the back of the line. Don't be surprised if you get a call that they have a crummy schedule.

Direct them to ask their advisor or the registrar's office how to navigate waitlists or find other classes that will fulfill requirements. And knocking out some electives isn't a bad thing. Many a student has taken a class in something they would have never considered

only to find a passion area as a major. The main thing is to make sure highly sequenced courses are completed so the student's graduation schedule isn't thrown off.



## UPCOMING EVENTS & DEADLINES

### SEPTEMBER

- 19** – Student Success Workshop: Conflict Management, 11 A.M., Academic Support Center, lower level of library
- 20** – Last day to withdraw from all first 8-week classes with a 50% refund
- 21 – 23** – NOTSTOCK 2023
- 22** – Women's Soccer, 6 P.M., Herb Parker Stadium
- 24** – Women's Soccer, 12 P.M., Herb Parker Stadium
- 27** – Last day to drop first 8-week classes
- 28** – Student Success Workshop: Communication – Are You Sending the Right Message?, 1 P.M., Academic Support Center, lower level of library
- 29** – Last day to withdraw from all 16-week classes with a 75% refund
  - Women's Volleyball, 6 P.M., MSU Dome
  - Men's Hockey, 7:30 P.M., Maysa Arena
- 30** – Women's Volleyball, 10 A.M., MSU Dome
  - Men's Hockey, 7:30 P.M., Maysa Arena

### OCTOBER

- 4** – Student Success Workshop: Study Skills for Success, 12 P.M., Academic Support Center, lower level of library

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

# Getting involved on campus

By Kate Gallop, [CollegiateParent.com](https://www.collegiateparent.com)

As you hear on every campus tour, colleges have clubs for everything. Whether your student wants to get involved in sports, volunteering, advocacy, cultural groups, Greek life, or something related to their academic interests, there's a club or organization ready to welcome them (or they can start their own). Here are ideas to share with your student as they acclimate to their new campus community this fall!



## Do initial research

While attending activities fairs are important, there are also other ways to learn about clubs even before classes start. You can usually find a list of clubs with a short description and contact information by searching “campus life” or “student life” on the college website. This is a great tool and helped me navigate my second activities fair better than my first because I knew what I was looking for.

## Ask questions

When considering which groups to join, be sure to understand their expectations for members. This includes what the joining process is like, the time commitment, how lenient they are about attendance, and whatever else you're curious about. This will help you anticipate if the club will be a good fit. Many groups host information sessions after the activities fair

where you can learn even more. It can be tempting to sign up for a ton of clubs — make sure you're excited about each one you join.

## Reach out at any time

It's never too late to join. If you stumble upon a club that sounds fun, don't be afraid to reach out, no matter how far into the semester it is. Some groups only accept new members at the start of the term, but contacting them will help you be aware of when you can join and your interest will be appreciated. My roommate emailed the photography club halfway through fall semester and attended her first meeting the following week.

## Support other activities

There are other ways to make campus feel small. Supporting friends in their activities throughout the year is a great way to feel connected on campus. I attended improv comedy sketches, acapella concerts, and fundraisers. Going to events around campus helps you meet new people and support your friends, and you may even find something you want to join. Look at posters, follow student activities on social media, and ask around!

## Don't try to do it all

At the start of freshman year, I felt pressure to find all the groups I wanted to join immediately. Looking back, I could have paced myself better. Activities are a great way to meet people but there will be time to try new things and get more involved as the semesters go by.

## My experience with activities

When I arrived on campus as a freshman last year, everything felt so new. I woke up in a new room, found new classrooms, learned from new professors, ate new food, and met new people. Those new things were all exciting, but there was also something unsettling about starting over completely. Each day I grew more



used to my routine, but a few weeks in, something still seemed to be missing.

Then I attended the activities fair. I wandered around tables, and wrote out my name and email possibly too many times. Afterwards, I got emails from the clubs that looked interesting and went to a few first meetings.

When I joined Club Basketball, it wasn't like starting over because it was a sport I'd played growing up. It quickly felt natural to bond with the team, practice twice a week and, later, ask older players for advice.

Getting involved with sports early on helped me hold onto the things I loved to do. It was fun meeting

people who shared the same interest, and I felt more situated on campus. However, by the end of the first semester, I felt I needed something else.

I joined Greek Life because I wanted to be part of a smaller community. The scheduled social and philanthropic events added another element I'd been missing.

I love the things I'm a part of at my school, but I still don't feel like I'm involved in everything I want to be. This fall, I might join the school newspaper, or a club centered around community service or mental health advocacy. Four years will go fast! I want to make the most of it.



MSU Life makes it easy for your student to get involved with 100+ can't-miss student events throughout the academic year! The excitement of homecoming week kicked off with Flannel Fest at the North Dakota State Fair Grounds on Sept. 11.



# Five things I'm trying not to do since my college student left

By Christine Carter, [CollegiateParent.com](https://www.collegiateparent.com)

Just a few weeks ago, we traveled over 500 miles to move my college freshman into an apartment she'd be sharing with five other roommates she had yet to meet.

It was exciting and scary, exhausting, and emotional. It was new and stressful, fun, and hopeful. We said goodbye, and there wasn't enough time to linger — probably a good thing for her and for me.

On the long drive home, I actually felt good! I was proud of myself, surprised by my strength. I could handle leaving my baby so far away to live on her own. The college is exactly where she needs to be. Letting go is easier when you're confident your kid is ready to leave.

But ever since we returned, I've felt a deep ache. I struggle with missing her, with worrying and wondering about her, with wishing I could hug and be with her. I've since learned this is the hard part — coming home and doing life without her here.

There are so many things I'm trying not to do to keep myself from falling apart, but these are the five most important I'm working on now...

## **I'm trying not to wish back the past.**

I've spent a lot of time reflecting on my baby's childhood. It surrounds me in pictures all over my home and everywhere I go.

Although I love to think about all the special times we shared during her growing-up years, I try not to linger down memory lane too long. I find that when I do, I wish it all back. I want to start over and savor every moment just a little bit longer, knowing now how fast it all goes.

Those years are sacred to me, and I'll cherish them for the rest of my life. But I can't dwell on them or I'll miss out on where my big kid is now. She is moving on and I must, too. There's so much more ahead — so much life right in front of me I dare not miss. So I try to celebrate these days instead.



## **I'm trying not to cry so much.**

Crying hurts my head. It exhausts me and makes my eyes swell.

It's important to release all that grief, but I'm trying to stay steady and positive. When I see a car that looks like my college kid's car, and my heart sinks with sorrow, I allow the emotions to gather in my throat but then try to remember how great it is that she's experiencing so many new and exciting adventures on her own.

I'm being intentional with my thoughts, shifting the heaviness into something lighter. Thinking about how much she's learning and growing helps lessen the heartache. I will always miss her and want her here with me, but that's not how it's supposed to be.

## **I'm trying not to worry about her.**

Not knowing everything that's going on in my daughter's life causes me to worry more about everything that's going on in her life.

I worry about whether she's feeling comfortable with the new roommates she's just getting to know. I worry that she might be tired and run down with her busy schedule.



I worry if she's making friends and feeling secure in her own skin. I worry about her finding contentment about where she is and why she's there. I worry she's not pacing herself or practicing self-care. I worry that she's not advocating for herself when she needs to be heard.

My worries can get out of control if I let them. So to stop my mind from spiraling, I pause to remember how strong and wise my girl is. I remember all I've taught her and realize she will slowly but surely find her own way. She's brave and responsible and compassionate and kind. All those traits in her will surely shine. I must trust that and believe she can make good decisions and care for herself well.

### **I'm trying not to bug her with my needs.**

If I could, I would text my girl as soon as I wake up (and possibly every other hour of the day until I go to bed).

I want to check in every time I think of her which is, basically, A. LOT.

I want to hear her voice, and make sure she's well from the sound of it. I want to share my day-to-day stories and listen to hers, too, just like we used to do when she lived at home.

How are her classes going? Is she learning interesting things? Is she cleaning up after herself, and sorting her darks and lights? Is she making friends?

I want to hear every detail because I feel lost without knowing.

But I can't expect her to think about me the way I think about her. As she navigates a new life, she doesn't need the added burden of responding to my texts or calls. She doesn't need to take care of me when she's learning how to take care of herself. This is not her job.

So I wait and let her do her thing. Building a new life takes a lot of energy, time, adapting, and strength. I let the hours go by, and sometimes the days, and when she calls, I listen and praise, encourage, and support.

### **I'm trying not to take it personally when I don't hear from her.**

Eighteen years of raising a child adds up to 6,570 days you dedicated to their physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being. After all the time and energy and hard work you poured into raising your kid,

through every stage and phase, and age and season, it's suddenly over.

It can feel like you've been abandoned, left in the dust of their childhood memories, withering away with your wrinkled-up face and swollen eyes, wondering how this could be. Shouldn't your precious baby miss you so much (as you do them) and want to share every single thing that's going on in their life?

Alas, the long road of hands-on parenting has come to its end. Your child has moved on to discover a new world without you in it. Thanks for the job well done!

Ouch.

This part of parenting is hard. It hurts. But what I've come to realize (and accept) is that my girl must detach from me in order to be empowered and to prove to herself she can do this on her own. She still loves me, and she'll still need me. But right now, she must find her own way and be her own guide.

Also, our kids are BUSY trying to learn how to manage SO MANY THINGS. They're not reaching out for help or wanting our affirmation or counsel because they're trying to figure it out themselves as best they can.

Isn't that what we want most of all? Our goal is for our kids to be secure in who they are and what they do. All our parenting comes down to this very truth. We best not get in the way of them testing out those wings we've nurtured all these years to prepare them to fly.

### **Letting go of my baby is hard.**

But the five things I'm trying not to do will help us both. I'll still cry and send random texts now and then. I'll still feel a bit slighted she hasn't taken the time to fill me in. But mostly I'll know this is how parenting goes. We feel joy and we ache and we just keep taking it one shaky, uncertain step at a time.