



Parent and Family Newsletter

JANUARY 2024 Issue 1

Jan. 3, 2024

Dear parents and families,

Happy New Year! January is a time for new beginnings and many students find their groove in the spring semester. Gone are the many emotional twists and turns of being a new student, and now is the time to celebrate the first semester and look towards registering for sophomore year. How many credits did your student complete? How does the number of credits completed translate over eight semesters? Can they graduate in four years or do they need to think about picking up a class this summer?

Speaking of summer, does your student have a job or an internship planned? If summer plans need to be made, please have them visit [Career Services](#) in the Academic Support Center, located in the lower level of the Gordon B. Olson Library. We are ready to help find employment or an internship that will enhance your student's resume. Summer is also a great time to test drive careers if your student is undecided about their major.

Full-day classes are scheduled to begin in-person on Tuesday, Jan. 9. As always, I'm available to answer any questions or concerns you may have as we begin a new semester at Minot State. I can be reached at kevin.harmon@MinotStateU.edu.

Respectfully,

Kevin Harmon,
Vice President for Student Affairs

Be seen. Be heard. Be empowered.

Cozy winter break conversations

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



You won't have all these chats by the fireside, of course. They'll happen in the kitchen, in the car, and while walking the dog or building a snowman.

Whether you and your student need to check in about practical things like grades, their budget, or roommates or dive into weightier topics, we've got tips to help you navigate these important conversations.

Roommates

Your student may be at school for a week, a month, or even a year before they have a roommate issue, but it's bound to happen at some point.

Most of the time, roommate conflict is short-lived. In other cases, the drama can be more complicated. If your student shares details, feel free to offer sympathy and advice but remember that they should resolve these disagreements on their own. Learning to get along with all kinds of people is part of the growing up process.

Encourage your student to address any concerns first with their roommate. If things don't improve, they can enlist the help of their RA (Resident Assistant/Advisor). And point out that getting along is a two-way street — your student is responsible for communicating and adapting as well.

Here are a couple of helpful reads: [10 Types of College Roommates](#), [An RA's Best Tips for Helping Roommates Get Along](#), and [What to Consider When Choosing Next Year's Roommate](#).

Academic adjustments

Of course, you'll want to talk to your student about how school is going. What was their favorite subject last term, and where could they use help? Should they make it a goal to be more proactive in the future: go to faculty office hours, join study groups, and find a tutor when needed?

Learning to manage time

The "time budget" conversation is a valuable one to have now that they've spent a semester at school and can recognize the importance (and challenge) of good [time management](#).

Help your student create a time budget. How can they best align how they spend their time with their goals and priorities?

- Suggest they start by keeping a time inventory for a week when they get back to campus. They'll log the minutes and hours they spend on each daily activity: studying, working, going to class, eating, sleeping, using social media, hanging out with friends, etc. The object isn't to pass judgment but simply to see how they currently use their time so they can make the adjustments they need to be successful students.
- An old-fashioned planner is more useful than ever in college. Encourage your student to buy one at the campus bookstore or any office supply store.

Check in about their tech, too.

Can they count on their current laptop to make it through the year? Students still using an older high school laptop may be overdue for an upgrade. A new laptop or tablet could be in order for Christmas or Hanukkah, or a backup hard drive or new charger.

Money check-in

Winter break is a perfect time to assess your student's bank balance. Together, look at how much money they spent each month this past fall, and on what. Did they stick to their budget?

In general, do they appear to [have enough spending money](#) to cover food outside the meal plan, toiletries, clothes, and school supplies? What about extra expenses like going out to eat or an occasional off-campus activity or trip?

If they're not making ends meet, or if they have a goal to save up funds for something big, major adjustments may be needed. Sometimes, just a little belt-tightening is in order, and they may recognize that they're spending too much on coffee and snacks.

Our [budgeting worksheet](#) might be exactly what you and your student need to realign your financial expectations and stay on budget for the rest of the school year.

If your student needs an on- or off-campus job to help pick up the slack next semester, here's how you can [help them with the job search](#).

Drinking and drug use

College is the first time most freshmen have lived away from home. Many find themselves making tough decisions on their own for the first time.

One challenge that every generation of college students seems to face is the social pressure to drink and experiment with drugs. From a distance, you can't control what your student does in their spare time. But keeping a dialogue going about drugs and alcohol can be key to helping your student make better, healthier choices.

Their visits home offer a terrific opportunity to talk about their social life and how they are managing stress.

The [holiday party season](#) brings extra risks and temptations. Make sure you're clear about the rules you expect your student to follow when they're out with friends, especially if/when they'll be driving. Remind them they can always call you if they need a ride — or take Uber or Lyft.

You're not alone if you tend to avoid some of these complex and difficult topics. Find helpful talking tips [here](#).

Personal safety

By this point in the year, your student has acclimated to their new routine and environment. That makes it the perfect time to check in about what they do on a daily basis to keep themselves safe. Are there places near campus where they shouldn't walk, jog, or bike? Are they good about using the buddy system?

You can help by supplying good advice and the best safety tools available. Make sure your student has a personal safety app on their smartphone and share this [essential safety checklist](#).

Healthy relationships

When your student was in high school, you were probably in the habit of talking about relationships and dating (even if these conversations weren't always comfortable). You knew their boyfriend or girlfriend, if they had one, and the friends they socialized with.

Typically once college starts, parents are in the dark about their students' romantic relationships. And students often want to keep it that way!

Nevertheless, it's important to [keep talking about sexual health and consent](#), and you can do this while respecting your student's privacy.

You might talk in a general way about the social scene on campus and their new friends (is there anyone special?). News stories can springboard a discussion; even during the pandemic, campus sexual assault continues to be an issue. Your student will be able to tell you about the culture on their campus and how they're proactive in their own behavior.

And don't be afraid to ask them if they are using online dating apps like Tinder and Bumble or if any of their friends are.

Make sure they know that if they're sexually active, they can get check-ups, contraception, and advice at the [campus health center](#). They can also get mental/emotional health support at the [counseling center](#) for issues relating to personal relationships or any other college-life pressures.

Lingering homesickness

If your student was homesick earlier in the school year but has hit their stride, you're probably feeling pretty good. But if they're still struggling to find a place on campus, you will share that pain.

It may help to know that it takes many students a full semester or longer to [settle in and feel at home](#) and happy in college — even if they enrolled at their “dream” school.

A burned-out student may brighten up after a few restful weeks at home. However, if your student insists they [don't want to return to campus](#) in January and would rather take time off or transfer, you'll need to listen and be supportive while helping them dig into

why they're not satisfied with their college experience.

There are practical and financial as well as personal considerations when taking such a step. Together you can come up with an action plan. Here are helpful suggestions for [transfer/time off conversations](#).

The most important chats to have?

The relaxed ones about books, movies, sports, clothes, food...and how great it is just to be together.

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. 24, 2024. Students can view a detailed list of their charges for a specific semester by clicking on Account Summary under the Financial Account tile in Campus Connection.

Bookstore charging

Students who have enrolled for Spring 2024 classes may choose to charge their books at the [MSU Barnes & Noble Bookstore](#) from Tuesday, Dec. 26 through Thursday, Jan. 18, regardless of whether the student has financial aid available or not. This change makes it possible for all students to easily acquire textbooks needed for academic success.

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 enroll in direct deposit

in Campus Connection by selecting the Financial Account tile, and then choosing Direct Deposit. Additional directions are available at [MinotStateU.edu/busoffic/pages/direct-deposit-of-financial-aid.shtml](#).

2024-25 Minot State scholarship application

The Minot State general scholarship application will open to accept applications for the 2024-25 school year in early December. The application form will be available online at the Minot State Financial Aid Office website at [MinotStateU.edu/finaid](#). The application deadline is Feb. 15, 2024. All returning students are encouraged to submit the general scholarship application every year.

2024-25 FAFSA

The 2024-25 FAFSA will be available by Dec. 31, 2023. The FAFSA is undergoing a significant overhaul of the processes and systems used to award federal student aid, including changes to the formulas that determine student eligibility. We encourage students to watch for [the launch of the 2024-25 FAFSA](#) and submit the new FAFSA when it becomes available. More information about the changes can be found at the [studentaid.gov](#) website and on our [website](#).

Second semester fresh start

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

Your student completed the first semester of college. Congratulations!

Second semester is an opportunity for a fresh start. Your student can build on their successes from last fall, but they may also need to re-evaluate and readjust based upon lessons learned.



What can I expect as my student heads toward a new semester?

Returning to school after winter break is a very different experience from going to college for the first time. Students bring their newly-acquired wisdom and their mistakes along. There may be less anxiety, since they know what to expect, or anxiety may be high... since they know what to expect!

Be prepared for mixed feelings.

There is less build up and excitement than there was in the fall, so returning to school may seem a bit of a letdown. Some of the novelty has worn off. Your student understands the realities of college life so the

road ahead may look longer and harder than it did in the fall. This is a more thoughtful return to college.

Your student may be worried about their ability to succeed.

If the first semester was less than hoped for, your student may be concerned about how to make this next semester better. They may or may not be able to express these worries.

Your student may have confidence that wasn't there in the fall.

They have confidence in their ability to make friends, to navigate the college community, to get to class, to talk to professors, and to do what needs to be done.

Your student may be optimistic about this new beginning.

Just as we are all encouraged by the possibilities of a new year in January, your student may be energized at the prospect of a fresh start.

Start a conversation

It can be difficult as a parent to know how to help. If you're too involved, it feels as though you are not respecting your student's growth and allowing them to experiment with newfound independence. But stepping back entirely may make you feel as though you're not doing your part to guide your student.

The second semester is a perfect opportunity for some conversations. Plant a few seeds, offer food for thought, and gently remind your student of your trust and support.

- **Reinforce the opportunities that a fresh start brings:** new classes, new professors, perhaps new friends, and new activities. Encourage your student to take advantage of a new perspective.
- **Remind your student of how much they know now that they didn't in the fall — both about**

college life and about themselves. Help them find areas of strength and build upon confidence gained.

- **Ask about your student's goals for this semester.** What do they hope the next four months will bring? What will be required to accomplish those goals? Putting goals into words makes them more tangible. Thinking about what will be required to reach those goals will provide your student with a plan of action.

What concrete things can my student do to prepare for a great second semester?

Getting a few tasks out of the way during what's left of winter break will give your student a running start on spring semester.

1. **Attend to any unfinished business from fall semester.** Is your student carrying over any incomplete grades? Is their spring schedule complete? Are there outstanding financial issues?
2. **Create a budget for spring semester.** Your student now has a better idea of their day-to-day living expenses. A budget provides a sense of control; they'll spend less time worrying about finances.
3. **Decide if they will work.** Having completed a budget, your student can assess whether or not they need to work. If they intend to get (or continue) a part-time job, you can help them consider how many hours of work a week will be manageable given their other responsibilities as a college student.
4. **Order textbooks now.** It's a busy season for textbook companies; ordering online early ensures your student has books at the start of classes, not a week or more into the semester.
5. **Check to see if professors have assigned pre-semester work.** If there are any assignments, get them done. Read the first chapter or two in the textbook to get a jump on the class.
6. **Commit to time management.** [Time management](#) is one of the most important life skills for student success. Take some time now to

set up a system (using a print calendar or planner or an app) and start plugging in dates in order to be ready to go on day one.

7. **List specific changes for the new semester.** Whether or not fall semester was a good one, some changes can enhance the new term. Make sure that goals are attached to action plans. Will your student try out some new activities — or drop one or two? Will they spend more time studying or sleeping? What's the plan to make that happen?

No matter what year your college student is, the new term is a chance for a fresh start, and you can guide them in setting realistic expectations and goals. They'll be one step closer to maturity and independence. You will be more comfortable taking a step back and watching them grow.



UPCOMING DATES & DEADLINES

JANUARY

- 8 – Classes begin after 4 P.M.
- 9 – First full day of spring classes
- 15 – Martin Luther King Day, University closed
- 18 – Last day to add a 16-week class, drop a 16-week class, or withdraw from all classes and receive a 100% refund

FEBRUARY

- 19 – President's Day, University closed
- Last day to withdraw from all 16-week classes and receive a 75% refund

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